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| **Sheffield City Council**  **Fostering Service**  **Recording Daily/Weekly Records and Other Documents - Guide for Foster Carers**  **June 2023** |  |

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# **FOSTER CARERS’ DAILY/WEEKLY RECORDS**

# Introduction

As a foster carer, you are required to maintain accurate and complete daily/weekly records for each child in your care during a placement. This is a legal requirement and part of the Foster Care Agreement.

Your role as a foster carer is crucial in gathering information about the children in your care, providing valuable insights into their well-being and progress. You have the unique opportunity to record important milestones, such as first steps, significant achievements, and awards, while also reflecting on both positive and negative aspects of the child's daily life.

Daily/weekly records serve various purposes, including:

* *Documenting a child's life in foster care:* Records offer children and young people the chance to look back on their time in your care, maintain memories and their individual life story, understand why decisions were made, clarify your role in their life, and improve their sense of self and identity.
* *Reflection and analysis:* Recordings allow for reflection and analysis of behaviour, sharing of information with other professionals to enhance the child's life, and assisting in continuity when there are changes in care.
* *Informing plans and assessments:* Records provide accurate information that can be used in plans and assessments for the children.
* *Legal proceedings:* The information may be required in court for current and future proceedings.
* *Fostering accountability:* Recordings are an essential part of the fostering role, ensuring you meet the National Minimum Standards and Fostering service requirements.
* *Supporting supervision, learning, and development.*
* *Addressing concerns or allegations: Records* will be referred to in all instances of a concern or allegation raised regarding a child or young person.

Any records you produce or maintain remain the property of Sheffield City Council Fostering Service at all times and may be used or referred to by the Local Authority, the Police, or the Courts when necessary. The contents of these recordings must not be shared with others beyond the team around the child, including your personal network or family if it is not essential for the child's care.

Children need to be informed that daily/weekly records are maintained during the placement and explained their purpose. When writing the records, we encourage you to ask the child to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and to include them in the record. This will create a more accurate picture of the child's progress and well-being. Children may ask to see what is written about them, and you should seek advice from the child's social worker on how these records can be shared with the child during their placement with you. Additionally, children may request to access their records via a 'Subject Access Request' later in their lives.

# How to record

# **Recording Practices**

# Each child requires a separate physical or electronic daily/weekly record.

# You can either write to the child directly, which is preferable (e.g. “This morning, **you** woke up at 5 AM.”), or refer to the child by their name (e.g. This morning, Peter woke up at 5 AM.”).

# Record events or observations promptly and accurately.

# State the date of the record when written on a later date (e.g. Day: 10/04/2022, Record Date: 15/04/2022)

# Use plain language; avoid jargon.

# Distinguish between facts and opinions, providing explanations when necessary.

# Write respectfully and appropriately for various readers.

# Refrain from offensive or abusive language.

# Do not use records to vent frustrations or retaliate.

# Avoid amending any records once they have been written. If you need to clarify, add, or correct any information at a later time, create a new entry in the record rather than amending the original. This will help ensure that the records remain accurate and transparent, and that any changes or additions can be easily identified.

# If any part of the record needs to reference another child in placement, that child should only be referred to by their initials. This is to protect their confidentiality and privacy.

# Document the child's views or comments in their own words when possible.

# Ensure records are valuable for the child or young person now and in the future.

# Write in a way that is comfortable for the child to read.

# Offer a balanced view of the child's life, highlighting both positive experiences and challenges.

# Record personal or professional information about yourself only if it directly affects the child.

# You may choose to use headings in your logs to provide structure, and scales (like 0 – 10) to record any differences in mood, behaviours, etc.

# You may find it helpful to make quick notes on your phone throughout the day. Some apps even allow you to voice record your notes. This way, when you sit down to write at the end of the day, you will have an accurate prompt of the day's events.

# What to record

**Daily Activities and Routines:**

* Daily activities and routines of the child, including eating habits, sleeping patterns, hobbies, interests.

**Health:**

* Dates of health and therapy appointments, treatments, immunisations.
* Illnesses, injuries, accidents, and your response, including physical restraints if necessary.
* Instances of a child refusing treatment.

**Education:**

* Concerns, achievements, important conversations with the school, open evenings, missed school days.

**Behaviour:**

* Concerning behaviour, context, and your response.
* Positive improvements, achievements, significant events for the child.
* Alcohol or drug use and other risk-taking behaviours.

**Emotional Well-being:**

* Signs of emotional distress or anxiety, mood or behaviour changes, difficulty sleeping, decreased appetite.
* Positive changes in emotional well-being, increased confidence, self-esteem, social skills.
* Mental health concerns, significant life events impacting emotional well-being.
* Concerning comments in the child's own words.
* Suspicions or evidence of child exploitation, grooming, bullying etc.

**Care Arrangements:**

* Dates when the child is away from the foster home, reasons.
* Times with other carers, their identity.

**Safety, Security & Significant Incidents:**

* Instances when the child goes missing, involvement with the police, theft or damage caused by the child.
* Complaints, disagreements with the child or their family, disclosures, allegations, notable incidents.
* Changes in household circumstances.

**Development:**

* Significant milestones in the child's development.

**Family Time:**

* Details of family time visits with the child's family, their reaction, (when relevant) observations about the quality of family time, the child’s mood and behaviour after the family time.
* Other forms of contact, such as phone calls, letters, birthday cards.
* Visits, meetings with social workers or other professionals, child's reactions, if any.
* Dates for reviews, case conferences, decisions made.

**Memorable Experiences:**

* Experiences that the child will cherish and want to read about in the future, such as first-time experiences, special moments, or funny memories. These could be the same kind of stories and anecdotes that parents and grandparents often repeat to their (adult) children.

The amount of recording required may vary depending on the placement, but it is expected that your daily/weekly records will overall reflect the above requirements. Your fostering social worker will discuss the specific requirements with you. However, as a minimum, daily records should include the following:

* A brief description of the child's day (activities, routines & appointments).
* An overview of the child's well-being and behaviour.
* Notable events or incidents, and actions taken by you.
* Any accidents, injuries, however small, or concerns, and your response.
* Issues that need to be addressed and the actions taken.
* Additionally, at least once per week, your records need to reference, when applicable, the child's health, education, care arrangements, development, safety, family time and memorable experiences.

Some events will require more detailed descriptions, these include disclosures, allegations, instances of the child going missing, injuries, violent behaviour, police involvement, alcohol or drug use, suspicions or evidence of exploitation or grooming, high-risk activities, accidents, serious illnesses, self-harming, suicidal thoughts and behaviours, sexual behaviour and activity, physical restraints, and your response to these events.

# When to record

Make records daily or as soon as possible after an event or incident to ensure accuracy.

**Criteria for Changing from Daily to Weekly Recording** (applies to individual children, not all children in placement)

To change from daily to weekly recording, the following criteria must be met and formally agreed by the fostering social worker and their manager:

* Regular, quality recordings by the foster carer for at least 3 months.
* Child has been in placement for over 3 months or considered a long-term placement.
* Placement is stable.
* No ongoing court proceedings or uncertainty in the child's Care Plan.
* No significant safeguarding or safer caring issues.

The decision to change from daily to weekly recording needs to be recorded by the fostering team manager on the carer's LCS record.

*Factors to consider while recording weekly*

In your weekly records, when relevant, you will still need to cover the child’s:

* Daily activities and routines
* Health
* Education
* Behaviour
* Emotional well-being
* Care arrangements
* Safety, security, and significant incidents
* Development
* Family time
* Memorable experiences.

You will have to record the following as soon as possible, ie. not wait until the end of the week:

* Significant events, incidents, accidents, injuries, concerns, issues, disclosures and allegations and actions taken by you to address them. You will still need to provide detailed descriptions of these.

**Criteria for Changing from Weekly Back to Daily Recording**

If any of the following criteria are met, the fostering social worker and their manager must consider requesting a change from weekly back to daily recording:

* Lack of regular or quality recordings by the foster carer.
* Standard of care concerns.
* Unstable placement.
* Court proceedings initiated or changes in the child's Care Plan.
* Significant safeguarding or safer caring issues.
* Significant change in the child's circumstances.

# **Expectations for Recording as a Foster Carer in the Sheffield Fostering Service**

# If your recordings become significantly outdated, your allocated fostering social worker will address the issue. Outdated *daily* records are those that are 2 weeks behind, while outdated *weekly* records are those that are 4 weeks behind.

# Initially, your fostering social worker will discuss the delay with you, offer advice, and create a plan for you to update the records. If you do not follow the agreed-upon plan, the following steps may be taken:

* Your fostering social worker will discuss the situation with their team manager to agree on a way forward.
* A discussion involving senior management and/or the Fostering Reviewing Officer, and you will take place to offer advice and support, and to establish an action plan with specific timeframes for improvement. While specific events or circumstances will be considered whenever possible, it is crucial to address ongoing issues with recording to maintain the best possible care for the child, and continuous failure to do so cannot be overlooked.
* If no improvement is made, the matter will be discussed during a senior management meeting and meeting with a Fostering Reviewing Officer or during your Annual Review to determine the appropriate consequences. These consequences may include, but are not limited to:

# You returning to daily recording for a period;

# A financial penalty, such as downgrading your Skill Level or delaying you progressing to the next Skill Level;

# Implementing mandatory training for you;

# Referring the matter back to the Fostering Panel due to your failure to comply with basic expectations, in order to reassess your continued approval.

# Storage and Security of Daily/Weekly Records & Responsibilities of Your Fostering Social Worker

Your daily/weekly records must be made available to your fostering social worker or the child’s social worker upon request.

**Physical Daily/Weekly Records**

During a placement or support care, you must ensure that information is kept secure and cannot be accessed by anyone else. Ideally, physical daily/weekly records should be kept in a lockable file or cabinet.

Your fostering social worker will routinely ask to see the daily/weekly records during each supervisory visit or following any notable events, incidents, accidents, injuries, concerns, allegations etc. They will put their initials beneath your most recent entry and take a photo of any new entries written by you since their last visit. During the visit or following the visit, they will review the records to ensure that they follow the required standard. If necessary, they may ask you to improve the records. After the visit, they will convert the records into a PDF document (using a photocopy machine, [Microsoft Lens App](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OByudtRUgGo), or equivalent) and upload them to the child's file.

At the end of the child's Task or Permanence placement, holiday, or one-off or ongoing support care, you will give the physical daily/weekly records to your fostering social worker, who will provide you with a receipt, outlining when and to whom the information or documents were given. Your fostering social worker will then scan the entire daily/weekly records into a PDF file. They will give the daily/weekly records to the child's social worker, who may then pass it on to the child's parents, new carers, the child themselves if they have reached adulthood, or back to you should you secure the child's placement with a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order, or Adoption Order.

**Electronic Records**

Electronic daily/weekly records should be in a Word document or equivalent, password-protected on a computer that is also password-protected.

Your fostering social worker will request that you send the records to them on the day of their supervisory visit or following any notable event, incident, accident, injury, concern, allegation etc. Once received, they will review the records and upload them to the child's file.

At the end of the child's Task or Permanence placement, holiday, or one-off or ongoing support care, your fostering social worker will ensure that you have sent them all the electronic records. They will upload any records not already uploaded to the child's LCS record. Once all records are on the child's LCS record, they will ask you in writing to delete the records from your computer. You will confirm in writing that you have done so.

You can only email the records to the fostering or child's social workers via secure email or in a standard email where the document is password-protected, and the password is shared through other means than the same email address.

**Foster Carers Requesting Daily/Weekly Records Once the Placement Has Ended**

If you need to review the child/young person's daily/weekly records later due to a complaint, standard of care concern, or allegation and can demonstrate that your request is legitimate, you can make a request to the fostering service manager via your fostering social worker, who will decide whether to disclose the required relevant information in connection with an inquiry or investigation.

# Short Break, Holiday, and Support Care

If a child goes for an overnight short break, holiday care or support care with a support carer, the child's main carer will provide the support carer with all the necessary information about the child during a verbal handover. The child's main carer may choose to share the child's daily/weekly records with the support carer at the beginning of the alternative care. In some cases, the Fostering Service may request that the child's daily/weekly records are shared, particularly when the child has complex health needs. If the main carer shares the child's daily/weekly records with the support carer, the support carer must return the records to the main carer upon the child's return.

During the short break, holiday care or support care, the support carer will maintain a separate daily record for each child for the duration of the care, following the guidance above.

While the support carer may choose to share a copy of their daily records with the child's main carer, they will keep the original record and provide it to their supervising social worker upon request. Both the support carer and their fostering social worker will follow the 'Storage and Security of Daily/Weekly Records & Responsibilities of Your Fostering Social Worker' guidance above to ensure that the records are of a good standard, properly stored, and secured. The fostering social worker will upload the child’s records from short break, holiday care, or support care on the child’s LCS record; they can do so separately to any records from the child’s main placement.

# Foster Children Staying with Foster Carers' Family or Friends

If you arrange for a child in your care to stay with your family or friends during your holiday, please note that they are not required to keep any formal daily or weekly records. However, we strongly suggest that you encourage them to maintain a simple 'mini-diary' and take photographs. These can contribute to the child's life story work. It is vital that you stress to your family or friends the importance of confidentiality - all records and photos need to remain private and not be shared with anyone else.

# Training and Support

All newly approved primary Task or Permanence foster carers must complete Recording training within 1 year of their first approval. All newly approved primary Holiday and support carers must complete Recording training within 3 years of their first approval.

If the Fostering Service identifies concerns regarding a foster carer's recording standards, the foster carer may be required to repeat the Recording training. Additionally, foster carers who were approved when Recording training was not mandatory may also be asked to complete the course to ensure the quality of their recordings.

Foster carers are encouraged to seek help when they are unsure about their recording practices. They may choose to repeat the Recording training themselves or seek 1:1 support from their fostering social worker. In such cases, the Fostering Service will provide the necessary support to ensure foster carers meet the required recording standards.

# Examples of Daily Records

**A brief daily record for a settled child**

“In the morning, you followed your daily routine without any difficulties and went to school. You told me that you enjoyed school and got a certificate for helping your teacher tidy up. After school, we went to an animal farm - you said you loved holding the baby guinea pig the most and that you will have a guinea pig farm when you are an adult! In the evening, you had a bath and fell asleep as soon as you went to bed. You looked happy and well throughout the day; there were no incidents or accidents.”

**Daily records on the day 5 into a new placement**

“You woke up in the morning, crying that you were missing your mummy. You wanted me to sit with you and give you lots of cuddles which I did. You seemed to be happier afterwards and ran to the kitchen to have breakfast. During breakfast, you ate a banana - this was the first time you tried fruit since moving in with us and you seemed to like it as you ate the whole banana!

Following breakfast, John and I took you to Endcliffe Park. You were laughing as we were swinging you on the swings; you then spent an hour climbing up and down the big tower; you seemed very proud when we praised your climbing abilities. You said you would become a climber climbing up all the climbing frames around England when you get older.

John and I then took you paddling in the stream. As you were paddling, you cut your left shin on one of the large stones in the water - you walked straight into it. You cried with pain. The cut was 1cm long and thin; I took a photo of it. I dried it, put antiseptic cream and a plaster on it straight away and gave you many hugs. I sent a photo to your social worker, explaining briefly what happened. Once the plaster was on, you seemed to have forgotten all about it and have been happily running around for the rest of the day.

We came home for lunch - mash potatoes, sausages and vegetables; you ate the potatoes and sausages but did not want to try any other vegetables.

At 1pm, I supervised your 20-minute video call with your mum. She pretended that you were a waiter/cook and was giving you various ‘orders’. You noted them all down, cooked them and brought them to her; she said you were a good cook. You were smiling and laughing throughout the call and so was your mum. You cried when you were saying good bye to her at the end of your call and your mum said she will see you again tomorrow. You were then quickly distracted by our dog Poppy who came to play with you.

You then watched TV followed by me reading various books to you. We had pizzas for dinner – you ate well.

In the evening, you had a bath during which you played with many bath toys – you did not want to leave! I checked the cut on your shin and it seemed OK. John read you a bed time story and put you to bed. You came out of your bedroom after 10 minutes, asking to watch TV. John took you back to bed, explaining it’s time for bed and stayed there with you for 5 minutes. You then fell asleep. “

**MEDICATION LOGS**

As a foster carer, it is mandatory for you to record any medication given to a child in your care using a medication log, which can be downloaded from the resources section of our handbook at [www.fosteringhandbook.com/sheffield/local\_resources.html](http://www.fosteringhandbook.com/sheffield/local_resources.html). The log should include details for prescription medication, over-the-counter medication, as well as any vitamins or supplements given. When recording medication, it is important to include the name of the medication, the dosage, and the time it was given, as well as any medication that the child refused. Additionally, any side effects or adverse reactions experienced by the child should be documented in either the medication log or the child's daily/weekly records. During their supervisory visits, your fostering social worker will ask to view the medication log or request that it is securely emailed to them. They will also upload a copy of the log to the child's LCS record.

**FOSTER CARERS’ APPOINTMENT DIARIES**

As a foster carer, it is essential to keep track of the child's appointments and activities to ensure their needs are met. You are encouraged to keep an appointment diary for the child in your care. The diary should include appointments for medical or therapy sessions, school meetings, extracurricular activities, and visits with birth family or other important people in the child's life. It is important to keep this diary confidential and not share it with anyone outside of the fostering team or relevant professionals. To protect the child's privacy, please use only the child's initials.

**FOSTER CARERS’ OWN PRIVATE DIARIES**

Foster carers can keep their own private diaries for personal use, which are not the property of the fostering service. However, it is crucial to respect the child's privacy and confidentiality when keeping a diary. Use only the child's first name initial (or change it completely) and avoid any identifying information that may compromise their safety or privacy. Additionally, the diary should be kept in a secure location and not left in a place where it could be accessed by others. It is important not to share it with anyone outside of the fostering team or relevant professionals.

**FAMILY TIME COMMUNICATION BOOK**

If a child in your care has supervised family time with their birth family, you may be asked to maintain a 'family time communication book,' also known as a 'contact book.' The purpose of this book is to outline any necessary information and updates for the family. The book is sent with the child to their family time, where the family can read it and update it with any events that occurred during their time together, before returning it to you.

The decision to use a family time communication book should be made at the placement meeting and form part of the placement plan.

Each child should have one family time communication book. If a child has separate family time visits with different birth family members, they must have separate family time communication books, each clearly labelled (e.g., one family time communication book per child for Mom and one per child for Dad).

When writing in the book, include any information for the family that they need to know before the family time. You should also anticipate any questions that the parent is likely to ask, such as explaining a bruise on the child's face. Birth families would appreciate information about the child's daily routines, school performance, medical appointments, emotional well-being, social activities, hobbies, interests, achievements, challenges, and strategies for addressing them.

For infants, also mention their sleeping patterns, diet, milk intake, nappy changes, medicine usage, and any new developments, such as smiling, taking their first steps, or growing a tooth.

Use a respectful, professional, and supportive tone when writing updates, and remember to use the child's name to make the entries personal. Focus on the child's needs and experiences, and avoid making comparisons or using judgmental language. Keep the information concise when necessary but ensure it remains informative and useful.

Maintaining confidentiality and privacy is crucial when using the book. Be mindful of the information you share and avoid disclosing unnecessary personal details. Store the book securely, allowing access only to authorised individuals.

If you have any concerns or issues, report them to both the child's social worker and your fostering social worker. If a contact book is misused by family members, it may be withdrawn at the professionals' discretion.

Encourage the child to participate in updating the contact book, either by sharing their thoughts and feelings verbally or by writing or drawing in the book themselves. This helps the child maintain a connection with their birth family and ensures their perspective is included.

Acknowledge and respond to the birth family's entries in the contact book, addressing any concerns, questions, or disagreements respectfully and collaboratively. Periodically review the contact book's content with your fostering social worker and the child's social worker to ensure effective and appropriate communication.

If the family does not return the book to you, please inform the family time worker and the child's social worker.

At the end of the placement, return the family time communication books via your fostering social worker to the child's social worker, who will ensure the book is scanned into the child's LCS records. The child's social worker will then decide where the original book will go. Good practice dictates that once scanned, the contact book should be given to the adopter, permanent carer, or kinship carer. The contact book must not remain with the foster carer once the child has moved on, nor be passed directly to the adopter, permanent carer, or kinship carer by the foster carer.

**FOSTER CHILDREN’S PRIVATE DIARIES**

If a child expresses interest in keeping their own private diary, please provide the necessary materials, such as notebooks and writing utensils, and create a safe and comfortable environment for the child to write in their diary. Respect the privacy and confidentiality of the child's diary by not reading it without their consent and storing it in a secure and private location, accessible only to the child.