

Children's Services

FOSTER CARER RECORDING

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INTRODUCTION

Record keeping is a vital part of being a foster carer. It helps to give a picture of the child(ren) you are looking after. It may provide evidence for what triggers particular behavior, how children respond to contact or whether a particular way of working with the child is producing the desired outcome. It gives an opportunity to reflect on a child's progress. All of these things are important if we are to work successfully with a child.

Foster carer records are a significant part of the child/ children's history, and will be used to inform care planning. During court proceedings, carers may be asked to comment on how children are in placement, and your evidence may help to secure the best outcome for the child. It may be that carers are asked to write a report for court and we would provide legal advice on how this should be formatted.

It is also possible that any recordings on the child(ren) may be requested by court. In both instances it is possible that carers may be called to court to give evidence on what they have written.

If you are looking after children in care proceedings it is possible you will need to go to court to give evidence on the child/children, you will be supported by your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's social worker.

The Learning and Development team offer training on giving evidence in court.

Maintaining good records may also assist carers should an allegation be made. If a child has injuries/bruises or has an accident this should be recorded immediately with a full explanation of how they happened. It is also necessary for the Supervising social worker and/or the child's social worker to be informed. If a child exhibits any sexualized behavior or behaves in a way that you feel is inappropriate for a child this again should be recorded and the information passed to the child's social worker and discussed with your Supervising social worker.

Recording such information will not only help to protect carers, it may also protect children from further abuse

If a child discloses abuse to you it is likely to be very distressing both for the child and the carer. It is important to allow the child to tell you what happened in their own words and however difficult you need to show the child that you are not shocked and that s/he is not to blame. You should not question the child, listen carefully and reassure them it is ok to talk, as soon as possible after the disclosure you should record what was said in the child's own words. You should then inform your Supervising social worker and the child's social worker (if this is outside office hours you should inform CSOOH, Children's Services Out of Hours and a decision will be made as to whether immediate action is necessary to protect the child.

Carers should record information on the following:

- Diary sheets provided by your Supervising social worker
- Red health book (for under 5s)
- Or Green health passport (for over 5s)

- Accident forms
- Violent incident forms

1. Policy

1.1 In Hertfordshire, we are aiming to develop best practice in all our foster placements and to ensure we meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for fostering services as well as the Data Protection Act.

1.2 The following guidance is issued to help carers and staff understand the importance of good record keeping for children and to introduce some of the forms we are issuing to help with this.

2. Why is it important for Foster Carers to keep a written record?

- Maintain history for the child or young person
- Protect foster carer from allegations
- Opportunity to reflect on placement and learn from mistakes and good ideas
- Highlight training and development needs
- Highlight issues for the child or young person
- Provide continuity for the child or young person
- Save time and energy – future reference for carers and staff
- Analyse patterns of behaviour.
- Court

3. Key Issues and Events to Record

- Day to day record (brief)
- Improvements and achievements of the child
- Any changes or concerns in behaviour or mood – including details of actual behaviour observed, what was happening before it started and your or anyone's response to it
- Dates or times child is away from foster home – friends, missing, away with family
- Specific incidents, events or changes in circumstances of family members

- Disagreements or complaints concerning any family members and how you dealt with it
- Disclosures or allegations from child about abuse or neglect
- Accidents or injuries (even if slight), any incidents of violence, distress or dangerous occurrences
- Dates of meetings, attendance and decisions (sometimes these will be part of minutes sent out to you)
- Any medical appointments and treatment/decisions from these
- Contacts with school, social worker, family
- Contact visits, child's responses or moods before and after
- Requests for help or assistance, advice or guidance given
- Occasions when alternative carers have been used, e.g. babysitters, with details of who they were and what they did
- Details of any damage or theft by the foster child
- Involvement with police – reasons and outcomes

4. What help will I get with keeping records?

- a. The Department provides training and your supervising social worker will be able to assist you. Your social worker will be looking at your records when they come for their regular visits and they will sign that they have seen your written notes. You can discuss with them if you have any worries about what you are recording and whether it is too much or too little! There will be a few forms that may be helpful to guide you but you may work out with your supervising social worker the way that suits you best. The notes you keep should be on separate A4 sheets which can be photocopied and are easy to store on files.
- b. In exceptional circumstances you may be asked to supervise a child's contact with their family, your supervising social worker should be involved in these discussions and training will be provided prior to commencement of this work.

5. Who will see what I write?

- a. Your written notes about your work with any child and their family are part of the Department's record and form part of the case file. Under the Data Protection Act, a service user has the right to ask to see their record. Any foster carer who works for the Department, and is paid a reward element for

this work, must be prepared to have their written notes seen now or in the future by the child or person they are writing about. Similarly, foster carers can ask to see records held about them in the Department. When you are writing, remember to be accurate and clear about facts and what you have seen and heard directly. If you are writing about your opinions, be sure to state the evidence for your views.

- b. Social workers from the Department have the right to see your notes and others such as Children's Guardians can see them too. Parents do not have the right to see the files we hold on children although we obviously keep them informed.
- c. It can be useful to involve children and young people in the process of writing about their progress and their lives. You may want to think about how best to share your notes with them and to allow them to make their own comments. Encourage them to keep a diary – they may find it helpful to put their own thoughts and feelings into words.

6. How will I know how much to write or what else I should keep?

- a. It is probably best to start by getting into a routine of writing a brief note every day. You may find the check list above helpful in working out what is most important to write about.
- b. The care plan for each child will vary and the Placement Planning meeting will be a good place to discuss the level of detail that the social workers want you to keep in your notes. This may depend on individual circumstances such as the need to monitor medication or contact with birth family in contested care proceedings.
- c. The recording for each child must be kept separately so that it can be entered on their file and available for them to see when they are old enough.
- d. All children and young people, however short a time they are with you, should have a photo album to record their stay with you and your family. Pictures of you, family members, pets, the house and their birth family should be standard wherever possible. Take photos of outings, parties, school events etc and always remember to write the dates and details on the back.
- e. Other mementos can be so important too. Plan with the child/young person, if they are old enough, how best to keep school certificates, drawings, cards, invitations, souvenirs. Memory boxes or files can be decorated and personalised to keep precious items for the future.

7. How do I keep the record safely?

- a. You should consider carefully where in your home is best to keep written records securely so that they may not be read by others living in or visiting the household. A locked cupboard or filing cabinet would be ideal. If you use

a computer, ensure it is password protected and that any data is kept securely.

- b. E-mails that are sent to recipients who do not have e-mail addresses ending with hertscc.gov are not secure; it is advisable to pass on sensitive information by other means if possible. Non-HCC addressed mail must travel across the Internet where it could be intercepted. Never send confidential information as part of the e-mail message itself. Make sure that you don't put anything obvious in the subject line of your e-mail that could make it attractive to a potential snooper.

8. What happens when the child or young person leaves?

- a. The written record must be returned to the Department for safe storage with the rest of the child's file. The photos and mementos of the child's stay go with the child. They may be passed to birth family or other carers or be entrusted to the child or young person themselves to keep.

DR1

DETAIL RECORD

Client Name:

Tel. No:

Name of Worker:

Date:

DIARY SHEET

Client Name: _____ Tel.No: _____

Date Recorded by:	Type of contact: To/From/With whom	
Date Recorded by:	Type of contact: To/From/With whom	
Date Recorded by:	Type of contact: To/From/With whom	
Date Recorded by:	Type of contact: To/From/With whom	
Date Recorded by:	Type of contact: To/From/With whom	
Date Recorded by:	Type of contact: To/From/With whom	
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