



FOSTER CARERS HANDBOOK

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Leicestershire
**Fostering
& Adoption**



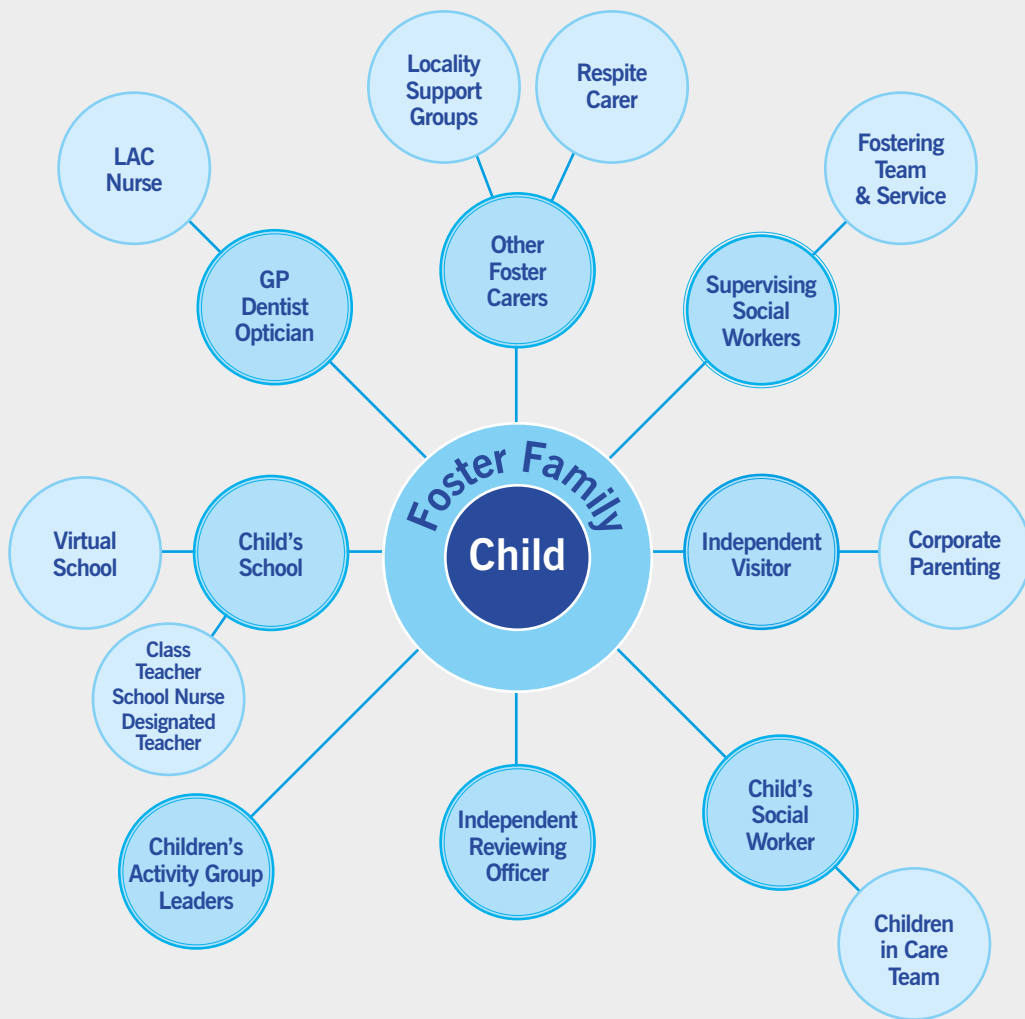
Phone: 0116 305 3051

Email: familyplacements.info@leics.gov.uk

Post: Leicestershire Fostering & Adoption Service,
Room 500
Leicestershire County Council,
County Hall,
Glenfield,
LE3 8RA

FosteringLeicestershire.com

THE SERVICES CENTRED AROUND THE CHILD



You are part of the **Team Around the Child**

MISSION STATEMENT AND PHILOSOPHY

The Fostering Team is part of Leicestershire's Children and Family Services.

Below is the Department's Mission Statement and Philosophy:

Mission Statement and Philosophy

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

In order to deliver our Mission, we put the needs of children and young people, their parents (or carers) and their natural networks of support, at the centre of all aspects of our work.

Family Work: The Departmental Philosophy

- **Working to keep families safely together wherever possible**

Children must be protected from harm and neglect and children's safety remains our priority. For a small minority of children and young people, we know that it will not be safe for them to live with their families. Children and young people who are living away from their families need stability and permanence in their lives. Current departmental policy sets out our principles in this matter:

'All children have a right to experience family life, and wherever it is consistent with their health and welfare, this should be with their own families (Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Permanence Policy 2013, Revised 2016).

- **Building resilience and reducing risk for families**

The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) highlighted the importance of 'building resilience and reducing risk for families'. We know that for the vast majority of children, growing up in their family networks and being close to their own communities is far better for them than living with strangers. In Leicestershire, we want to work with families in ways that ensure more and more children can live within their own support networks and communities.

- **Proportionate and individual responses**

Children need to receive the right help at the right time. This means providing the lowest level of intervention necessary to meet need and working with families to help them resolve their issues and support them to get back on track as quickly as possible. Workers need to be 'risk savvy' and robustly monitor the changes that families and their networks put in place. We believe that almost all families are the experts on their own lives and that most want the best for their children. However, we will continue to check and challenge families so that children are safe, can achieve success and have stability in their lives.

- **Constructive working relationships are key to achieving lasting change**

The Department will work with the child's wider family and their supportive networks and connections to help families do their best for their children and achieve the changes that will work for them in the longer term. The strengths, skills and knowledge of families and their networks will help build solutions and support the family's capacity to change and keep children safe. Sometimes referred to as 'restorative practice', our focus is on building, maintaining and restoring relationships. It is not so much a model or a tool...more a way of working with families.

- **Families who are isolated with few or poor social networks**

We know from both national research and our own practice experience, that the children living in families who are isolated with few or poor social networks are at higher risk of poor outcomes, neglect, abuse and poor mental health. Helping parents identify concerns and seek support at the earliest point, from within their neighbourhood or naturally occurring networks, can help strengthen families and support parents when they are struggling or feel overwhelmed. Working in this way helps to build solutions owned by families, providing greater safety for children and young people.

“ A foster carer needs to be kind, friendly and helpful. If a child has a pet then you should be able to take care of the pet and the child. ”

Quote from a Child in Care 2018

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WELCOME

Dear Foster Carer,

Welcome to the Foster Carers' Handbook, which I hope you will find useful in your foster carer role.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome new carers to Leicestershire County Council and to thank those carers who have worked hard over many years to provide some of our most vulnerable young people with the care and stability they need to help them reach their full potential. The way you have opened your hearts and homes to our young people is an inspiration to us all and without you we could not provide the care and support to our young people who need to overcome some very challenging experiences.

This year we have launched our 'We Are Family' brand for the recruitment of foster carers to emphasise our understanding of the unique contribution foster carers make and the close working relationships that best supports us all to work together to support young people. Your contribution to the service and in supporting the recruitment of new carers is very much appreciated.

Thank you for all that you do.

Sharon Cooke

Assistant Director, Children's Social Care

Dear Foster Carer,

I would like to welcome you to Leicestershire County Council's (LCC's) Fostering Service.

I manage the Team Around the Child (TAC), which has a number of Supervising Social Workers (SSW's) who will meet with you regularly to support and guide you on this remarkable journey of fostering. Part of the reason we call ourselves The Team Around the Child is to emphasise that you are never alone when you choose to foster. This handbook will inform you about the role you're undertaking, about the professionals you will be working alongside and about the support that you can expect as you care for the child(ren) placed with you and your family. I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Heather Hughes

Fostering Assistant Service Manager

INTRODUCTION

The Foster Carers' Handbook has been written for all foster carers and has been approved by Leicestershire County Council.

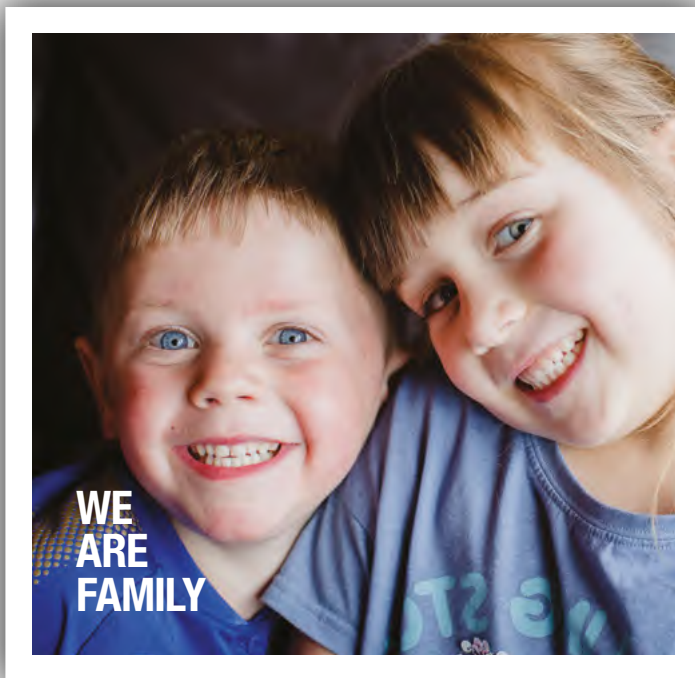
The handbook reflects the policies, procedure and guidance of the fostering service, covering many common situations faced by foster carers on a day to day basis. It has been written in an accessible way to help you understand the sort of things that your fostering service requires of you and what it provides to support you.

It also makes reference to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and to the relevant Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers. You should also use the handbook to support your learning and development, particularly in relation to meeting the Induction Standards.

Foster Carers play an important role in the lives of Looked After Children and their families, so it is important that you have the necessary tools to assist you with this task. The handbook is one of these tools.

You will work closely with a number of professionals, including your Supervising Social Worker and with other foster carers.

This is the start of a great journey for you and the child(ren) and young people you will work with.



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 16 - Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide.

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

- Part 2 - Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide.

Please see Leicestershire County Council's website for the Statement of Purpose.

The Fostering Services Regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, state that a fostering service needs a Statement Of Purpose with clear aims and objectives. Leicestershire's Fostering Service works in partnership with children and young people, their families and carers to provide safe, nurturing homes which value the differences children and young people bring and help them to achieve their full potential.

We aim to achieve this by providing:

- Safe, warm and caring family environments.
- Comprehensive support for children, young people and carers when they need it.
- Encouragement for children and young people to meet their full potential and to mark and celebrate their successes.
- Personal and group support for carers and their families.
- A flexible service which respects individual needs and values diversity.
- Measurable outcomes which strive to achieve, or exceed, National Minimum Standards.
- A professional service which is accountable, financially viable, and maximises partnership opportunities.
- Out of hours support for carers.

The Fostering Statement of Purpose is reviewed and published annually.

FOSTER CARERS CHARTER

The Charter sets out clear principles on how you should be treated and recognises your invaluable contribution to the lives of children and young people. The Charter was jointly produced by the Government, fostering organisations, charities, children and young people. It was part of the Government's wider programme of reform to improve the care system. The overall aim is to make sure that all children in care have greater stability, less upheaval and a better chance at a stable family life into adulthood.

Children come first

Children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible, as part of a loving foster family with carers who can make everyday decisions as they would for their own child and without the child feeling that they 'stand out' as a Looked After Child.

Children must be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talents and skills. Above all, children and young people should be listened to.

Local authorities and fostering services must:

- Recognise in practice the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and can endure into adulthood.
- Listen to, involve foster carers and their foster children in decision-making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with full information about each other.
- In making a placement, be clear about the continuing care or support there will be (including for the child into adulthood), be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child in making and ending placements and have contingency plans should the placement not work.
- Treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the 'Team Around The Child', and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Ensure that Foster Carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. That includes liaising with local foster carers groups, seeking to respond to problems and disseminating best practice.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees, and holidays they will receive, including in cases of dispute with the service or during gaps in placements.

Foster carers must:

- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and be a 'pushy parent' in advocating for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment, physical and emotional health and wellbeing; and co-operate fully as part of the team with key professionals in the child's life.
- Support their foster child and do all they can to make the placement work. Take part in learning and development, use skills and approaches that make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her full potential.
- Support their foster child to help them to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of their care status.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175444/Foster_carers_charter.pdf



PART 1: BEING A FOSTER CARER

1

1.1 Support and supervision

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 21 - Supervision and Support of Foster Carers.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 7 - Develop yourself.

You will face many challenges when you become a foster carer and you will also feel very rewarded when you see a child placed with you progress in a positive way. Once you are approved you will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker (SSW).

There will also be a number of other places where you can get support from including:

- The child's Social Worker.
- Other foster carers through Locality Support Groups
- Professionals.
- The Foster Carers Support line.
- Advice from the Out of Hours Service.

The Supervising Social Worker is responsible for ensuring you have the necessary guidance and support you need. This will include an understanding about working within the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and all the Fostering Service's policies, procedures and guidance.

It is the Social Worker for the child/young person in the foster placement who holds responsibility for specific advice and support for the child and his or her Care Plan and Placement Plan.

Regular supervision meetings

Every 4-6 weeks you will have supervision meetings with your allocated Supervising Social Worker who will agree times and dates with you. Each session will be recorded and you should receive a copy.

Supervision should be seen as a two way process to:

- Ensure you are taking into account the child's wishes and feelings.
- Ensure you have the opportunity to discuss children placed with you.
- Help you to identify possible solutions to any issues/concerns.
- Discuss any issues you may be having with your own children.
- Ensure you understand how you contribute to Children's Services' objectives.
- Give you feedback on your work to make sure you have/develop the right skills and competencies.
- Ensure you are accessing relevant training and resources and are working towards achieving the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) within a year of approval (18 months for Connected carers).
- Ensure you are working within the National Minimum Standards for Fostering.
- Sort out any financial or practical issues.
- Keep you updated about new policies, procedures, training and good practice.

Leicestershire County Council have implemented the Signs of Safety Framework in all areas of Children's Services.

Your Supervising Social Worker will ask you questions like "What is going well?" "What are you worried about?" and "What needs to happen?" and will record your discussion using these headings.

The supervision meetings will be an important part of collecting information for your annual review as a foster carer. The supervision session will be confidential, however, the Supervising Social Worker will discuss relevant information with the Child's Social Worker, or other professionals working with the child or family.

As a foster carer, you are seen as a professional, and both you and the Supervising Social Worker are expected to work within a framework of respect, honesty and trust.

Supervision helps you to evidence how you are developing, meeting the Induction Standards and providing an appropriate placement for the child or young person.

If you are not happy in any way with the arrangement or content of supervision, speak to your Supervising Social Worker or the Team Around the Child Team Manager.

Your Supervising Social Worker will complete two unannounced visits to your home per year. The main purpose of the unannounced visits will be to look at the home environment that a child is living in with you. The findings of the visit will be recorded.

You will be provided with information about what support will be available from the Fostering Service outside office hours, including contact details.

What your Supervising Social Worker will do after approval

Your Supervising Social Worker will arrange an introductory visit where they will talk you through some of the paperwork and records used to manage placements and ensure that you are paid:

- Recording log.
- Medical log.
- Contact details.
- Bank details.
- ID card application.
- Foster carers charter.
- Foster carers' handbook.
- Foster care agreement.

Your Supervising Social Worker will also support you with any specialist issues for disabled children, for example, support in completing applications for Carers' Allowance, Disabled Living Allowance etc.

Your Support Network

The assessment process will have looked at, and considered, the natural support network you have from extended family and friends. Identify as soon as possible, anyone who you may consider a support and discuss them with your Supervising Social Worker.

Fostering is more manageable if you have a network of people that both understand what fostering is and want to be part of supporting the fostering role. Your support network can play an important part in all sorts of ways, from picking a child up from school, doing some shopping, a timely phone call, day care or babysitting. All parents, as well as foster carers need a break and will at times have to leave their children with relatives or a baby-sitter. It is always preferable for the child to be looked after by adults they know well.

We ask that babysitters have an Enhanced DBS Check and that you advise your Supervising Social Worker when this is happening.

Peer Support

Carers tell us how essential peer support is throughout their fostering journey. Having someone who will listen to your worries, and with whom you can share openly, can give you the strength to keep going in tough times. Carers share advice and offer support to one another both formally and informally.

Locality Support Groups

There are a number of Locality Support Groups (LSG's), which run throughout the County. In the main these take place monthly, facilitated by experienced foster carers and are usually held in a foster carers' home. This meeting is often ran informally to share information and experiences. Ask your Supervising Social Worker for details of the nearest LSG to you. There are specialist support groups for foster carers who offer parent and child placements and short break placements.

Mentoring Scheme

Leicestershire run a Mentoring Scheme. Mentoring is a way an experienced foster carer can provide support and guidance to prospective carers. Prospective foster carers will be asked during their assessment process if they would like a mentor. We then look at our pool of approved foster carers for a suitable match.

The mentor will make themselves available in order for the prospective carer/approved carer to ask questions and to learn more about the realities of the role, as well as empowering and motivating them throughout the Assessment process, and for up to six months after their first placement.

The scheme is jointly co-ordinated by a member of the Fostering Assessment Team and a member of the Team Around the Child. The prospective carer, the approved foster carer and mentor will be introduced by the Assessing Social Worker. A meeting to agree and sign the mentoring agreement will take place.

If we are not able to provide you with this opportunity initially for any reason, we will aim to put this in place after you have been approved. Ask your Supervising Social Worker for more details.

Monthly Newsletter

This will be uploaded each month onto the On line portal This will give you information about fostering events, training events, offers and general information about fostering nationally and locally. We have articles from members of staff and foster carers. It is always worth a read!

Foster Events

You will find that we have regular events for foster families throughout the year. These range from craft days, picnic days, family fun days and our annual celebration events. Details will be advertised in 'Fostering News' and sent to you by email.

Online Portal

This is an online communication place where we share all fostering news information and where you can see your reviews and uploaded memories

Email - OnlinePortalSupport@leics.gov.uk Telephone – 0116 305 3051

1.2 Money matters

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 28 - Payments to Carers.

		Age 0–4	Age 5–10	Age 11–15	Age 16-17
Level 1	Skills fee	£34.50	£38.00	£43.25	£50.50
	Weekly payment	£162.50	£178.75	£205.00	£238.75
	Annual Level 1 Total	£8450.00	£9295.00	£10660.00	£12415.00
Level 2	Skills fee	£69.00	£76.00	£86.50	£101.00
	Weekly payment	£195.00	£214.50	£246.00	£286.50
	Annual Level 2 Total	£10140.00	£11154.00	£12792.00	£14898.00
Level 3	Skills fee	£103.50	£114.00	£129.75	£151.50
	Weekly payment	£227.50	£250.25	£287.00	£334.25
	Annual Level 3 Total	£11830.00	£13013.00	£14924.00	£17381.00
Level 4	Skills fee	£193.20	£212.80	£242.20	£282.80
	Weekly payment	£312.00	£343.20	£393.60	£458.40
	Annual Level 4 Total	£16224.00	£17846.40	£20467.20	£23836.80

Once you are approved as a foster carer you will receive Skills Level 1 payment and training will be put in place accordingly. Post completion of Skills to Foster Training, you will receive Fostering Induction Standards Training.

The Child Allowance relates to the age of the child and the Competence Payment relates specifically to the Foster Carers Level within the Progression Scheme.

Payments to you are made one month in arrears, direct to your Bank or Building Society.

If you have any queries about allowances, or if you think you have been under or over paid, please contact our Finance Section in the Fostering Service as soon as possible at fps.finance@leics.gov.uk

Leicestershire Rates and Information

Please see Leicestershire County Council's website at

www.leicestershire.gov.uk

The national minimum allowance rates

The payment you will receive will depend on a number of factors, in particular, the specific needs of the child. You may also get paid in recognition of your skills, commitment or time. Fostering agencies can choose to make one payment to cover both of these, which is what we do at Leicestershire Fostering Service.

Leicestershire rates, allowances

There are a range of allowances to support you in your provision to the Looked After Child in your care. Some of these can be applied for once a year and others as the need arises. Please see the Payments Policy at Leicestershire County Council's website.

Pocket money guidance and information

Foster carers allowance includes an element for pocket money and towards savings. It is expected that all school age children should be given pocket money either as cash or money for their bank account. Setting fixed amounts of pocket money is problematic and consideration must be given to individual circumstances of children in care and foster families. Foster carers have asked for some guidance on acceptable expected rates. The below is merely a suggested guideline as we are aware that circumstances vary from household to household and what a carer already provides for the child by way of treats, leisure activities should be considered in this decision.

Age (years)	Weekly minimum amount	Comments
5	£1.00	'extras' can be given for birthday & Xmas presents from family members and chores within the home and may be at times topped up by a monthly allowance if appropriate
6	£1.50	
7	£2.00	
8	£2.50	
9	£3.00	
10	£3.50	
11	£5.00	
12	£6.00	
13	£7.00	
14	£8.00	
15	£9.00	
16	£10.00	

See additional information in section 4.8 Promoting Financial Responsibility.

Travel Expenses

Expenses are paid by the Fostering Service for such as making trips to hospital, attending reviews, contact arrangements or other exceptional travel expenses. This will be at a set rate per mile at the discretion of the local authority.

Receipts

You should keep a record of how your allowance is being spent to support a child or young person whilst placed with you. You should keep receipts where possible and submit these to your Supervising Social Worker monthly.

Passports and documents

The cost of getting birth certificates (and copies), passports and Life Story books will be met by the Fostering Service.

Income Tax

A tax year runs from 6 April in one year to the 5 April in the next. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) always works retrospectively, so will ask you to submit information to them about the previous tax year.

Since April 2003, ALL foster carers have been treated as self-employed (including foster carers who provide respite care and family and friends foster carers). At this time, HMRC introduced a specific tax scheme for foster carers ('foster care relief'). In April 2010, foster care relief was extended and renamed 'qualifying care relief'. This allows foster carers to receive payments from their fostering service up to a certain level (called your tax threshold), without being liable for tax.

Qualifying care relief covers foster care, shared lives care (formerly called adult placement), staying put care (where a young person who was fostered remains past their 18th birthday), and parent & child care.

Many foster carers have little or no taxable profit from fostering, because the qualifying care relief tax scheme is fairly generous. However, a foster carer needs to do a simple calculation at the end of each tax year to find out what their tax threshold is for the tax year and whether they have any taxable profit or not. We advise foster carers not to compare themselves with other foster carers. The simple calculation will be unique to you and your circumstances and therefore your threshold is also going to be unique to you.

Your tax calculation can be done

- online at: www.gov.uk/log-in-file-self-assessment-tax-return/register-if-youre-self-employed
- by telephone via the Newly Self-employed Helpline on 0300 200 3504
- you can register in writing by filling in a form CWF1 – this form is designed to be filled in on screen. You cannot save the form but once you have completed it you will be able to print a copy and post it.

If you are unclear or concerned about this the Fostering Network Support Line offers information and you can get a Fostering Network explanation sheet from your SSW.

Pensions/DLA

If you foster, you may be eligible for National Insurance Credits which count towards your State Pension.

If you are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, you may find that fostering affects your entitlement.

If you are in this situation you should seek advice from the Benefits Agency or Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Insurance

You must inform your home, building and contents and car insurance company once you have been approved as a foster carer.

Tell them about the numbers of children and age ranges you expect to foster. You should ask your insurance company for written confirmation that they have included your role as a foster carer and your foster children on all of your policies. A copy of confirmation letters should be given to your Supervising Social Worker.

1.3 Supporting your own children

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 21 - Supervision and support of foster carers.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.
- Standard 7 - Develop yourself.

Your children and grandchildren will play an important part in the success of fostering. They are often the ones who welcome a new foster child into the home and help them to settle in; developing important relationships over time.

However, we recognise that sharing their parents and their home with a foster child or young person can be hard and foster carers' own children need support to deal with the daily challenges of growing up in a fostering family. Discussions will need to take place about behaviour, what is acceptable and what is not.

Your children, depending on their age and ability, should be part of developing the Safer Caring Policy, so that everyone is clear about the boundaries of everyday life to make sure everybody feels safe and is safe.

When foster carers' children don't get the support they need, a placement is more likely to break down, which leads to further instability for fostered children. Your own child may find it difficult to deal with behaviours that they see as unacceptable and they may find it hard if a foster child is disruptive. You may also have to deal with disagreements between your own children and fostered children. However, both biological and fostered children who are or have been part of foster families, equally reflect upon fun times, friendships and important memory making for the whole family.

When you consider taking a child, always think about how this child will fit with your family. You can discuss any questions you may have with your Supervising Social Worker, who will want to get to know your children so that they feel able to have their say and that they have somewhere/someone else to turn to if needed.

Remember it is important for you to spend time with your own children. Think about having a family planner where you agree times, dates and activities where you will spend one to one time with your own children and with your fostered child, together and individually.

Leicestershire County Council fostering service recognises the significance of the role of your children in the success of fostering. We run regular Sons and Daughters Events for foster carers' children. This is a way of saying thank you to them for sharing their homes and families, and creates opportunities for contact with other children whose families foster. Being with other children who are experiencing similar circumstances can help them to express any feelings of anxiety or frustration. Please see the monthly Fostering Newsletter for details.

1.4 Types of placement

Introduction

There are a number of different types of foster placements. Foster carers can be approved for more than one type of placement. In recognition of this, some carers receive different fees and additional allowances for Specialist Placements.

Types of Foster Care

Mainstream care

The majority of foster carers are referred to as 'mainstream carers'. They care for foster children of all ages from 0-18 years. Placements can last for a few days or many months. Mainstream carers receive a fostering allowance to pay for the day-to-day costs of their foster child.

Most mainstream carers choose to do particular types of mainstream care but some carers do a mixture of different types of caring or change their fostering pattern as their families and circumstances change. The Carer's 'best match' is discussed at the assessment stage.

Minor changes to your terms of approval can be agreed at your annual review. Significant changes to your terms of approval category are usually referred to the Fostering Panel following a review.

Care for children and young people subject to care proceedings

Care proceedings last for 26 weeks, although for a variety of reasons, the process can take longer. During this period, children will need stability with one caring family. Most children who are subject to care proceedings are 'twin-tracked'. This means that an assessment to see if the child can return to their parents or relatives is carried out at the same time as plans are made for adoption or other types of permanent care. There will often be quite high levels of contact with the birth family as assessments are carried out to see if the child can safely return home. Occasionally carers are asked to give evidence in Court during the care proceedings. Carers are fully helped and supported with this when it is necessary. At the end of the proceedings, some children will return home. Others will be placed with their extended families.

Some Foster Carers offering time-limited placements decide to offer to adopt themselves. This should be carefully discussed with the Supervising Social Worker, and if appropriate an internal planning meeting will be convened to decide whether it is the right decision for the child to commence an adoption or not.

Long term care

This occurs when foster carers are willing to give a long-term commitment to a child for the rest of their childhood through to 18 years of age and possibly beyond. Both the carers and the child have to be committed to this arrangement. Long term foster care is considered where adoption, a Childcare Arrangement Order or a Special Guardianship Order is not appropriate.

Usually a long term placement is made following careful matching and introductions. Sometimes however, children can be placed in an emergency or for time limited care. The foster family then decides if the child could be offered a permanent home with them. If this is supported by all parties, the Child's Social Worker, the Independent Reviewing Officer, and the Child's Guardian; a referral will be made to the Permanency Team who will carry out an assessment to ensure the placement is a suitable long term match for you, the child and your family. This will then be discussed at a Permanency Panel.

In some cases, though the department may be very grateful for your offer of long term care, there may be other factors which mean that the child should move on to a different placement. If, for instance, there is a possibility the child can be placed for adoption or with a family member, this will generally be preferable to foster care as a best interest decision. If however, your placement is deemed to be a positive long term option for the child, your case will go to the Fostering Panel to request a change to your Terms of Approval.

Long term carers are given additional levels of responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child. There is also a commitment, by both the department and the carers, not to change the child or young person's plans without discussion/agreement and a period of notice.

Out of hours carers (previously known as emergency carers)

The Fostering Team provides a rota to the Out of Hours Team, of carers who are willing to be contacted during evenings and weekends, to take emergency placements; including those young people who have been detained by the police. These carers are experienced in dealing with challenging behaviours and work closely with the police and other partner agencies.

Children who are placed in this way are generally moved to an alternative placement on the next working day. A fee is paid if a placement is made. A weekly retainer is paid whilst the carer is on call. If you would like to offer this type of foster care, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker. A contract will provide clarity regarding your role and commitment and the fee you can expect. This will be a signed document.

Respite care

Some foster families, who do not have a lot of family support and who have a number of other difficulties, need periodic breaks from the care of foster children. This is known as respite care. A regular break with someone known to the child can do a great deal to help foster families stay together.

Equally, some fostering families are better supported if the foster carers can have a break from the care of their foster children, where possible the family members of the foster carers will provide this break. Foster families who live close to each other, also sometimes provide respite care. It is always best if a foster child can go to someone who is known to them. Discuss any respite care needs you have with your Supervising Social Worker.

Day care

Day care is provided in the same way and for the same reasons as respite care. It is sometimes also needed for young people who are not in full time education.

Connected carers (family and friends care)

When social workers are considering removing a child from the care of their parents, they will always try to find out if there is a member of the extended family or friends ' network who is able to care for the child. Carers identified from this network are known as connected carers.

If the child is subject to care proceedings or is already subject to a Care Order, connected carers must be assessed and approved as foster carers. Sometimes this assessment happens when the child is already in their placement.

Connected carers receive the same allowances and support as other non-specialist carers.

Short break carers

This is a specialist placement scheme to provide short break care for disabled children. Many carers who provide this type of care already have experience of working with people with disabilities but some Carers have no previous experience at all and are offered preparation, training and ongoing support.

Children and carers are carefully matched and there is usually a period of introductions before the child starts having overnight stays. Carers remain linked to specific children for a number of years to enable a supportive and positive relationship to develop between the foster family, the child and the birth family. Short breaks from home cannot exceed 80 days per year (Section17 of The Children Act, 1989). Carers receive enhanced payments for this type of care.

Parent and child placements

This type of foster placement is offered to a parent and their child (baby), to ensure that they can remain together whilst the parent is being assessed as to their capacity and ability to parent successfully. The parent and child will both live as part of the foster family. The foster carer will offer help, advice, support and 'role model' good parenting. These types of placements are needed for various reasons. In some situations the parent is also a Looked After Child. At the end of the assessment, the baby may be removed from the parent's care and be placed for adoption, or the parent and child will be helped to settle into their own accommodation. Foster carers are given help and training regarding their role/responsibilities within the assessment process. This is a specialist placement and carers receive enhanced payments. Please refer to the County's parent and child policy at

<http://llrchildcare.proceduresonline.com/leicestershire/index.html>

One to One Carers

'One2One Carers' provide foster care to young people as part of their 'step down' from more intensive provisions such as residential care in a children's home.

The placement is for up to one year. It is a 'single placement' for our most challenging young people who have very complex needs and vulnerabilities; and who can present as challenging, disruptive and at times, can pose a risk to themselves and others.

One2One carers needs to be available 24 hours per day and cannot have another child or young person placed with them. These placements are short to medium term, to prepare a young person for a move into a more traditional, family-based placement or for a return home. The carer is expected to work closely with the new carer or parent, depending on the individual care plan for the child.

Pathway carers

These carers will work specifically with young people aged 15 years plus, who may be newly admitted into care and more difficult to engage in a traditional parent-child relationship; and who may have had a number of placement disruptions and need a higher level of support to promote their education. These carers offer a long term placement to support young people into higher education, training or employment; and to support access to services to meet health and emotional wellbeing needs. Placements will also have a focus on preparing for independence.

Staying put arrangements

'Staying Put' arrangements extend the length of time a young person remains in a foster placement. This is by agreement between the care leaver and the carer, in order to support the young person until such time that they are fully prepared for adulthood. The arrangement ensures that the young adult can experience a transition more similar to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to successfully manage their independence when they do move on. When a young person reaches the age of 18 years of age, they are no longer regarded as being in foster care as all Care Orders cease and parental responsibility ends. The legal basis for this arrangement refers to the young person / adult as an 'excluded licensee' as they are viewed as lodging in the carer's home. Your Supervising Social Worker will discuss this with you when your foster child reaches the 16 years of age, as part of their care planning. There is a National Allowance specified for this arrangement. Please refer to:

www.proceduresonline.com/lr/childcare/leicestershire/p_stay_put.html?zoom_highlight=staying+put+policy

How many children can I foster?

On approval, the Fostering Service will decide how many children you are approved for; also what age, sex, and category (placement type). There are times, however, when the Fostering Service may ask you to take a child or young person outside of your approval range if it is felt this would be the best way to meet the child's needs, particularly in relation to Sibling Groups.

When this happens the Fostering Service will temporarily vary your approval to allow for longer term plans to be made, and / or for a review of your approval category as a foster carer to be carried out in order to accommodate the child(ren) for a longer period in their best interests.

Exemptions

'The fostering limit' means that the maximum number of children foster carers are allowed to have placed with them is three, unless any of the following apply:

- A group of foster children are all siblings (then there is no upper limit).
- The Local Authority within whose area the foster carer lives, exempts them from the usual fostering limit in relation to specific placements.

In considering whether to exempt a person from the usual fostering limit, the local authority must consider:

- The number of children whom the carer proposes to foster.
- The arrangements which the person proposes for the care and accommodation of the fostered children.
- The intended and likely relationship between the carer and the fostered children.
- The period of time for which he or she proposes to foster the children.
- Whether the welfare of the fostered child(ren) (and any other children who are or will be living in the accommodation) will be safeguarded and protected.

What if I want to adopt my foster child?

Adopting a child is very different to fostering. This is about making a 'forever commitment' to the child and this level of permanence needs to be considered very carefully. If the child's care plan is for adoption or long term fostering and you would like to find out more about these, then speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

If the decision is to proceed with you to adopt, an assessment will be completed, focusing on the potential of you as a prospective adopter and whether this will be in the long term best interests of the child, you and your family. You will receive the same assessment, preparation and training as other prospective adopters.

What if I want to become a special guardian?

A 'Special Guardian' addresses the needs of a significant group of children who need a sense of stability and security but who do not wish to make the absolute legal break with their birth family that is associated with adoption. It also provides an alternative for achieving permanence in families where adoption, for cultural, religious or other reasons, is not an option. You can apply for a 'Special Guardianship Order' once the child has lived with you for one year immediately preceding the application.

Special Guardians have 'parental responsibility' for the child and although this is shared with the child's parents, the Special Guardian will have the clear responsibility for day-to-day matters without consultation with others. The parents still have to be consulted and their consent is required to change the child's name, for adoption, placement abroad and any other such fundamental issues. A Special Guardianship Order made in relation to a Looked After Child replaces the Care Order and means that the local authority no longer has parental responsibility. In these circumstances, the Care Order is revived if the Special Guardianship Order is revoked.

Special Guardians may be supported financially or otherwise by the Local Authority and, as with adoptive parents, they have the right to request an assessment for support services at any time after the Order is made.

Some advantages of Special Guardianship as a permanence plan:

- The carer has parental responsibility and clear authority to make decisions on day-to-day issues about the child's care.
- There is added legal security to the Order in that leave is required for parents to apply to discharge the Order and will only be granted if a change of circumstances can be established since the Order was made.
- It maintains legal links to the birth family.
- Social Worker involvement is not required unless this is identified as being necessary, in which case, an assessment of the need for support must be made by the local authority.

Some Disadvantages of Special Guardianship as a Permanence Plan

- The Order only lasts until the child is 18 years of age and does not necessarily provide the same sense of belonging within the Special Guardian Family as an Adoption Order does.
- As the child is not a legal member of the family, if difficulties arise, there may be less willingness to persevere and seek resolution.
- Although there are restrictions on applications to discharge the Order, an application is possible and may be perceived as a threat to the child's stability.

Long term fostering has proved to be useful for older children who retain strong links with their birth families and do not need the formality of adoption and where carers may value the continued involvement and support of the local authority.

Some advantages of long term fostering

- The Local Authority retains a role in negotiating between you and the birth family over issues such as contact.
- There is continuing social work support to the child and your family in a placement that is regularly reviewed to ensure that the child's needs are being met.
- It maintains legal links to the birth family that can still play a part in decision making for the child.

Some disadvantages of long term fostering

- Lack of parental responsibility for you.
- Continuing social work involvement.
- Regular Review of Arrangement meetings, which may be seen as unhelpful to the placement.
- Stigma attached to the child due to being 'looked after'/being in care.
- The child is not a legal member of the family. If difficulties arise there may be less willingness to persevere and seek resolution.

1.5 Understanding placement plans and review of arrangements

Standards and Regulations

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 1 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

Introduction

You will need as much information as possible about a child or young person before they move into their new home with you. Wherever possible, a planning meeting and required documents should be provided prior to a placement starting.

There should also be an opportunity for the foster child to have a foster home profile and planned introductory visits prior to the placement starting. However, where this is not possible, there should still be a planning meeting and a Placement Plan within 5 days and care plan within 10 days of the placement starting / them entering care. No information should be withheld from you without a Service Manager's approval and this will only be in rare cases.

The child's care plan

A Care Plan must be completed before the child's first placement or within 10 working days of them entering care.

This is a document that must be drawn up where a child/family is receiving a service from a local authority. It should provide information relating to the child and their family, and what work must be done to meet the needs of the child or young person in relation to improving their outcomes and making future plans for them.

One of the main jobs of the care plan is to ensure that each child has a Permanence Plan by the time of their second Review of Arrangements (Statutory Looked After Children's Review).

The child's overarching care plan should include:

- A placement plan (identifying why the placement was matched and how the placement will contribute to meeting the assessed needs of the child).
- A permanence plan (identifying the long term plans for the child's upbringing including agreed actions and timescales).
- A pathway plan (identifying the plans for a young person post 16 yrs).
- A health plan – identifying how the child's health needs will be met.
- A Personal Education Plan - identifying how the child's educational needs will be met.

The placement plan

When a child is placed in your care, you should be given the Placement Information Record within 5 days of the placement being made with you. There should be a placement planning meeting to discuss the placement plan. This plan is drawn up by the child or young person's social worker, with you and your Supervising Social Worker and family members. The plan details the expectations and routines of the child, as well as how their assessed needs will be met in the foster placement.

The placement plan covers the following areas:

- The objectives and purpose of the placement.
- Arrangements for the child's education and training, including the name and address of the child's school or other educational institution/provider; and the Designated Teacher and the local authority maintaining any Education, Health and Care Plans.
- The child's personal and cultural history/background.
- The child or young persons likes and dislikes, wishes and feelings.
- Arrangements for the child's health (physical, emotional and mental) and dental care, including the name and address of registered medical and dental practitioners.
- Arrangements for giving or withholding consent to medical and dental examination or treatment.
- The expectations of the placement, including how the child should behave.
- Agreements for contact between the child and their family.
- Frequency of social work visits to the child and yourself, and any review meetings.
- If an Independent visitor is appointed, the arrangements for them to visit the child and their contact details.

Delegated authority

The placement plan must show who can make decisions about situations such as:

- Medical and dental treatment.
- Education and school trips.
- Overnight stays.
- Leisure and home life.
- Faith and religious observance.
- Use of the internet and social media.
- Any other matters which the local authority and/or the person with parental responsibility consider appropriate.

The placement plan must also identify any matters about which the local authority/person with parental responsibility considers that the child may make a decision about.

See http://l1rchildcare.proceduresonline.com/leicestershire/p_del-auth_fc_reside.html

Review of Arrangements (Looked After Children Reviews)

A Review of Arrangements (Looked After Children Review) is a Statutory (Legally Required) Review. This is a meeting that covers the arrangements for making sure that the plans put in place for a child in care actually happen.

Review of Arrangements meetings are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). They will discuss with all those involved with the child's life, including the child or young person, how they are progressing and how their needs will continue to be met. The Independent Reviewing Officer has an overarching monitoring role for the child and so is a good source of support if needed.

Review of Arrangements happen at the following intervals:

- Within 28 working days of the child becoming Looked After.
- Then within 3 months of an initial Review of Arrangements.
- Then within 6 months of the initial Review of Arrangements.
- Annually thereafter.

Review of Arrangements should be brought forward in the following circumstances:

- Where the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the placement.
- Where, as a result of a visit, the social worker's assessment is that the child's welfare is not being adequately safeguarded and promoted.
- Where the child so requests, unless the Independent Reviewing Officer considers that the review is not justified.
- As soon as practicable where a child is moved from one placement to another on an unplanned basis or any other significant change in the circumstances of a child suggests that his or her placement is no longer appropriate.
- Where a significant change to the child's Care Plan is required.

Reviews must take place sooner if the Independent Reviewing Officer requests this or if the child's social worker's assessment is that their welfare is not being adequately safeguarded and promoted. You should attend the reviews of the child or young person you are caring for.

The child or young person will be invited to their review or someone may advocate on their behalf. Other people who may attend include the child's teacher, their family, social worker and any other key professionals working with the child and their family.

You will be asked to share your opinion at these meetings. If you are worried about this, please discuss your concerns with your Supervising Social Worker.

Refer to www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/p_look_aft_rev.html?zoom_highlight=review+of+arrangements

1.6 Your role as a foster carer

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 10 - Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child.
- Standard 11 - Preparation for placement.
- Standard 15 - Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs.
- Standard 16 - Children's guide.

Your Role

- Providing a safe and caring environment for the child.
- Supporting and meeting the health needs of the child.
- Ensuring a child's attendance at educational settings including nursery, school, college and any related placement; encouraging them to learn and helping them with their homework.
- Contributing to life story work while a child is in placement with you by keeping memories and recording their everyday experiences and special occasions.
- Supporting and, if appropriate, facilitating contact with a child's birth family and significant others in their lives.
- Establishing routine, clear boundaries and having an understanding of issues that impact upon the child or young person.
- Supporting and promoting the child's development so that they can thrive, achieve their full potential and have the best life chances.

What information do I need when a child is placed?

A social worker from the Fostering Service will contact you when looking for a placement for a child or young person that is within your approval category. When they do, you need to be sure that the child will be best placed with you.

It will be useful to prepare a list of questions that you want to ask when they call. If you are unsure about the suitability of any placement, you must discuss this with family and your Supervising Social Worker. You may want to check some of the following details:

- The name of the social worker for the child.
- The child's name, age, sex, ethnic origin, religion.
- Whether the child has any special dietary, cultural or linguistic needs/requirements.
- The child's legal status.
- A general picture of the family context/situation.

- What the contact arrangements are.
- How the child's health is, whether they have any allergies or medical problems or if they currently taking any medication.
- Whether they are at school, nursery or in a placement.
- If there are any issues in their education setting.
- If the child has any communication issues.
- Whether there are any behavioural problems.
- About known risks related to the child, for example, aggressive or sexualised behaviour.
- Who will transport the child, their clothes and other belongings to you.
- When you will have full information about the child or young person.

You need as much information as possible about a child or young person before they move into your home.

You should receive the Placement Information Record before the placement starts, from the child's social worker. Occasionally, for example, in emergencies, there can be a delay in receiving information but this should be no longer than 5 days. No information can be withheld from you without a Service Manager's approval and this will only be necessary in rare cases.

Meeting the child/young person

Wherever possible there should be a period of introductions between you, your family and the child. This should involve:

- The child or young person being shown the foster carer's profile so that they have some information about you, your home and members of your household and family network
- The child having at least one overnight visit before a placement is confirmed where possible.

Throughout the introduction process, you should talk to the child about general information such as bedtimes, meals, visitors, pocket money, school, privacy and your general expectations about behaviour.

The child should be encouraged to talk to their social worker about any concerns before the placement is finalised/starts.

The child's Care Plan

The child's Care Plan provides information relating to the work that must be done to meet their needs. It is the social worker of the child(ren) who holds responsibility for specific advice and support in relation to the them and their Care Plan and Placement Plan.

The child's Placement Plan

The Supervising Social Worker, you, the child, family members and the child's social worker will put together the Placement Plan. This is completed either on the day or within 5 days of a placement being made. The Placement Plan should cover:

- Information about the purpose of the placement.
- Any agreements about health or education needs.
- The child's personal history.
- The child's likes and dislikes.
- The rules of the placement, including how the child should behave.
- Agreements for contact between the child and their family.
- When social work visits to the child and yourself will happen and any review meetings.

The Children's Guide

The child or young person should receive this when they move in /start their placement. This Children's Guide will help children and young people to understand foster care and provide information that may be important to them. It will tell them about their rights and how they can contact people such as their Independent Reviewing Officer, The Children's Commissioner or Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern. You should go through the Guide with the child in terms that they understand.

If the child needs the Children's Guide in another format, such as in another language or in Makaton, the Fostering Service should provide it.

1.7 The foster care agreement

Standards and Regulations

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

- Schedule 5 - Matters and obligations in foster care agreements.

Training, support and development standards for foster care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.

This is the written agreement made between you and the fostering agency when you are approved as a foster carer.

It sets out the Fostering Service's expectations of you, what you are able to offer and the support and training you can expect.

You need to:

- Read and sign the Foster Care Agreement, keep one copy for yourself and return one signed copy to the Fostering Service.
- Following any change to your terms of approval, you will receive an amended copy of the Foster Care Agreement which you will need to sign/keep/return again as above.

The agreement will contain information about:

- Terms of approval.
- Support and training.
- The Review process.
- Making a complaint.

It will also cover your responsibilities:

- To care for the child with at least the same care and concern as you would if they were your own; and keep them safe and promote their welfare.
- To keep the Fostering Service updated on the child's progress and of any significant events that affect them.
- Not to carry out any physical/corporal punishment.
- To keep all information about any child placed with you confidential unless the Fostering Service says you can share it.
- To carry out your duties as detailed in the child's Placement Plan.
- To work within the Fostering Service's policies and procedures and guidance.
- To allow inspectors of the fostering agency to visit your home.

You should inform the Fostering Service of:

- Any change of address or people living in the household.
- Any changes in your personal situation or events which affect your ability to care for the child placed with you.
- Any criminal convictions or cautions or criminal charges pending at any time following your approval as a foster carer, involving you or someone in your household.
- Any application by you or any member of your household, to foster or adopt children.
- Any application to become a registered child minder or day care provider by someone living in your household.





PART 2: THE CHILD'S JOURNEY THROUGH PLACEMENT

2

2.1 The beginning of the placement

If you have a vacancy for a child, our Commissioning Team will contact you with information about possible suitable placements. The Commissioning Team will have information regarding your skills level, household, location and your terms of approval (including your best match).

When you are contacted, it is good to ask questions to help you consider whether this is a suitable placement for you or not. Your Supervising Social Worker will give you a checklist in your 'welcome pack' to help you and will discuss this with you.

The Placement Information Record and Delegated Authority should be handed to you at the point of placing the child in your care. This will include any important medical information and contact details.

An individual safe caring assessment will be completed regarding any worrying behaviours exhibited by the child.

Check equipment (especially in the child's bedroom) and ensure it is appropriate and safe in relation to the age of the child to be placed.

It is important that you take part in discussions about potential placements and in planning meetings.

Ensure that the child's social worker gives you full information about them. This should include any history of abuse or suspected abuse and the reason for the placement being made.

Discuss expected contact arrangements with the TAC Duty worker and your SSW.

Also discuss the following issues about the child as a minimum:

- How health needs are promoted.
- How they should be encouraged to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle.
- Financial issues such as allowances, pocket money, leisure activities, toiletries and travelling.
- The importance of your insurance policies.
- Holiday plans you have made, and whether the child is going with you? If not the child's social worker must be informed so alternative arrangements can be made.

You should exchange contact numbers with all relevant members of the family, and with Out of Hours support.

Ensure that arrangements are made for the provision of specialist equipment for disabled children.

A date is set for the child's social worker's first visit after a child is placed with you. A date is set for your Supervising Social Worker's first visit to see you.

Check and follow up on all issues raised during the Placement Planning Meeting and discuss any concerns with your Supervising Social Worker to ensure appropriate support is provided straight away rather than waiting for reviews to take place.

2.2 What decisions can I make?

Standards and Regulations

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.

Many foster carers and children who are looked after by them face obstacles to everyday activities, like going for haircuts, school trips and sleepovers, which can make children's lives more difficult and stressful.

Delegated authority is the term used when the responsibility for making day-to-day decisions about a child or young person is given to you.

An officer of the local authority such as a social worker can pass delegated authority on to you if the child placed with you has an Emergency Protection Order or a Care Order. If they don't have any of these Orders in place, the only person that can give you delegated authority to make decisions, is the person with parental responsibility which is usually the parent.

It is the social worker's responsibility to work with parents sensitively to make sure you are well prepared and clear about what decisions you can make.

The Placement Planning Meeting which is held when a child is placed with you should clearly state what decisions about everyday life have been delegated to you. You should make these decisions in the same way as any 'good parent' would, taking safety and appropriateness into consideration in doing so.

If the young person is 16 years of age or above, there are some things that they can give consent to in their own right. For example, they may have strong views about issues that can become contentious, such as haircuts. If the child is of sufficient age and understanding, it may be decided that they should be allowed to make these decisions themselves.

When deciding whether a particular child, on a particular occasion, has sufficient understanding to make a decision, the following questions should be considered:

- Can they understand the question being asked of them?
- Do they appreciate the options open to them?
- Can they weigh up the pros and cons of each option?
- Can they express a clear personal view on the matter, as distinct from repeating what someone else thinks they should do?
- Can they be reasonably consistent in their view on the matter, or are they constantly changing their mind?

Regardless of a child's competence, some decisions cannot be made until they reach a certain age, for example, tattoos are not permitted for a person under age 18 years of age and certain piercings are not permitted until a young person reaches the age 16.

Delegated authority should be consistently monitored in case there is a need for change and discussed at the child's review and/or with the child's social worker if the decision needs to be taken quickly. See

www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/p_del_fc_resid.html?zoom_highlight+delegated+authority

2.3 Contact between the child and their family

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them;
- Standard 9 - Promoting and supporting contact.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer;
- Standard 4 - Contact between the child and their family.

Research says that maintaining links between a child and their family increases the possibility of them returning to their family home. Where this is not possible, research also says that contact enhances a child's sense of identity whilst also avoiding breakdowns in foster placements.

Contact with family and friends will be set out in the placement plan. This will detail where, when and how it will take place, including whether it will be supervised contact.

Occasionally contact may take place in the foster home if safe and appropriate, with your agreement. More frequently it will be in a neutral venue.

The child may be allowed to visit their birth parents at home. These visits, which may include staying overnight, must be planned in advance, with the child's social worker.

Sometimes the child may appear anxious and upset prior to or following contact. This may be because this:

- Reminds them of feelings of loss and separation.
- Reminds them of feelings about past experiences.
- Highlights feelings of divided loyalties.

If you have any concerns about contact having a negative impact on the child, you must speak to the child's social worker about this.

The child's social worker will provide you with the necessary information including any risk assessment of those involved. The needs, wishes and feelings of the child are also important when planning contact and should be sought and considered. This may involve you advocating on the child's behalf. Contact arrangements should always be focused on and shaped around the child or young person's needs. The child's welfare must be the paramount consideration at all times.

Your Supervising Social Worker will give you practical advice and support if you are unsure whether contact is appropriate and safe.

Contact is not always face to face. It can be via a phone call, letters, photographs, postcards from holidays or cards for special occasions.

It is not unusual for children to ask to have contact with relatives or friends they may have lost touch with before entering care. If this happens, speak to the child's social worker about it.

You should record the behaviour and reaction of the child before and after contact. This may identify patterns which can contribute positively to future decision making.

You should discuss contact in your supervision meeting with your Supervising Social Worker so that problems can be identified and resolved.

Contact can increase a child's sense of security when the people who are important to them are comfortable with each other. This can also help parents and other family members to feel less awkward and threatened.

Problems with contact

Contact can cause distress and upset for a child and you are often the person who has to deal with this when they feel confused, angry or disappointed. You may experience mixed emotions when this happens.

You may feel that the family is letting the child down but it is important to recognise that there could be many reasons for this:

- The family may feel guilty or angry that their child is in foster care.
- A child may have been placed in an emergency when the family was experiencing problems.
- Parents may feel angry that their child(ren) are living with you if this is against their wishes and may resent having to comply with plans they don't agree with.
- Parents can also worry that you will take their place in the child's life and that you might want to adopt them in the future.
- Parents may also feel they have let their child down which can impact on their motivation and reliability.

These reasons and feelings can lead to parents behaving in ways which are inappropriate during contact. They may be very emotional, give the child unrealistic messages or make false promises.

Understanding the parents' experience can help to make sense of the situation for the child as well as the foster family.

Any restrictions on communication by the child with their parents should be agreed by the child's social worker and reviewed alongside the child's wishes and feelings.

If the child returns from contact and you are concerned in any way about something that has been said or done, particularly if you think it has harmed the child, you must report this to the child's social worker or a duty worker in the locality office immediately or within a maximum of 24 hours.

Confidentiality

Working with birth parents is an important part of fostering. A vital element of this is trust and confidentiality.

In sharing the care of a child, you will receive a lot of confidential information which you may wish to share with those closest to you. You must discuss this with the child's social worker in the first instance.

You may also talk to other carers about children you are caring for, perhaps in general or to seek support. You should remember to treat any discussions in confidence. Children should never be specifically identified or named.

2.4 Recording and keeping memories

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 1 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

Introduction

Keeping a daily record /log of events about all children and young people placed with you is an important aspect of your role as a foster carer.

This will help you to contribute to the child's life story work, memory boxes and support decisions that ensure that the right plans are made about the child's future. These may also be helpful for the child in later life when they want to understand more about their childhood and decisions made about their life.

Records also help to make sure that situations are clearly understood and can help if allegations are made against you. They may also be used to contribute towards any court hearing or to make other important decisions about the child.

Remember to write down things as soon as possible after they happen, including the date, time, who was present and what exactly was said/done. Notes should be brief and to the point. You should record things in a manner that is sensitive and appropriate. Record logs should be factual and not opinion laden. If you think that something is so private that the young person should not see what you are going to write, you should contact your Supervising Social Worker to talk about this to decide whether and how it should be recorded and how the information should be kept private.

Your Supervising Social Worker will provide you with recording log template which you will complete for each child or young person you care for. Your Supervising Social Worker will look at these records during each supervision meeting and will take them away; then upload them onto your file and the child's file. All record logs are the property of the child and social care and as such you should not keep a separate version for your own use. If an allegation is made and you wished to see your file, you can request access through 'Subject Access Request' by contacting Leicestershire County Council at SAR@leics.gov.uk

You should use daily recording logs to record appointments, meetings and contact.

At the Placement Planning Meeting, it should be made clear to parents and young people (depending on their age), that you will be keeping this written record of events. This helps to develop an open and honest relationship.

The child/young person's records

When a child or young person is placed with you, the child's social worker will give you a copy of the Placement Plan, Delegated Authority, the Care Plan and the Personal Education Plan if applicable. If there are any further review meetings about the child's progress, you should attend the review and ensure that you receive copies of the minutes. Copies of all these documents should be kept as part of the child's records.

You should ask the child for their views, wishes and feelings and make sure their voice is heard when planning care and support. They should also be told when their views do or do not change their Care Plan and why.

What to record

- Contact with the child's family including how the child was, how the family was and when they did not attend with the reason given.
- Details of social worker visits and meetings with social workers or other professionals, including the child's reaction if any.
- School/nursery/educational setting details including any important conversations you have with school, information about open evenings, concerns and good things.
- Dates of medical or dental appointments and treatment given. Include dates of cancelled and rearranged appointments.
- Dates and types of immunisation.
- Date, type and length of any illnesses.
- Medication prescribed including type/dosage and management of giving medication to the child.
- Details of any accidents or injuries, however slight. Name any witnesses and action taken. Record the time, date and name of the social worker to whom the incident was reported.
- Comments the child makes that give you cause for concern, recorded using their own words.
- Details of the child's behaviour that causes concern. Record their actual behaviour, what happened before and after the behaviour and how you dealt with it.
- Any positive improvements, achievements and happy events for the child.
- Dates when the child is away from the foster home with family, friends, school trips and for introductions to new carer's.
- If the child or young person goes missing.
- Details of times when the child is with other carer's such as respite carers or babysitters and who they were.
- Any involvement with the Police.
- Details of any theft or damage caused by the child or in respect of their belongings.
- Details of any specific incidents, events or changes of circumstances of your household. Include any complaints or disagreements with the child or their family.
- Any significant milestones in the child's development such as their first word or first steps.
- Any other significant event or information.

Keeping memories

It is difficult to know where you are going if you don't know where you came from!

For most children and young people, the birth family is the place where they have all the knowledge and memories about themselves. Children separated from their families do not have easy access to this information about their background.

It is therefore more difficult for children and young people affected in this way to develop a strong sense of themselves linked to their past; and for them to understand how the past may influence present thinking, feelings and behaviours. Without this insight and awareness, it will be more difficult for them to make conscious choices and to take responsibility for their own behaviours.

It is important that children and young people have a good understanding of their background and you will be expected to help this process from the day the child is placed with you.

You should record the story of the child's time with you as fully as possible, including:

- Special memories for the child.
- Birthdays, Christmas (or other religious celebrations) and other family celebrations, outings, holidays, photographs, videos, favourite places etc.
- Details and photos of your foster family (including extended family) including home, pets etc.
- School including photos, certificates, reports, stories from teachers and friends.
- Contact visits.
- Significant illnesses.
- Funny stories.
- Photos and video clips of the child's birth family with your family.
- Crafts/pictures/work completed in your home/school/playgroup.

The above work contributes to children and young people's Life Story. Making a Life Story book is about putting together an account of a child's life in words, pictures and documents and involves helping a child to make sense of their past. This process will be co-ordinated by the child's social worker and involve you, the child, parents, relatives and any significant others. This is particularly helpful when the child becomes an adult, in helping them make sense of their lived experience.

The child, by their second Review of Arrangements, may have a Permanence Plan which will start to look at how a permanent alternative family can be found, including considering adoption. Gathering memories will be a vital part of this process.

You should keep all memories in a memory box or memory book specifically for each individual child or young person. You should also upload photos, certificates, videos onto memory box on the on line portal.

Confidential information

It is important to avoid keeping written confidential information about the child. Please wherever possible keep all confidential information on the on line portal. However if this is necessary please keep all information in a lockable cupboard. At the end of the placement, please return any such information to the child's social worker. If you keep records on a computer, you must ensure access is confidential. Please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker. You should delete all information from your computer when that information has been handed into the Supervising Social Worker or uploaded onto the On line portal, and when the child leaves placement.

You may need to share limited information with close family members and your own children depending on their age and understanding. If you are unsure about how much to share, you should ask the child's social worker.

You can share basic information with doctors; health visitors etc. but if they need further information that you are unsure whether you can share, give them the social worker's contact details. If professionals visit the child at home you should ask to see their identification card.

2.5 Working with professionals

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 9 - Promoting and supporting contact.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 1 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

Introduction

The Fostering Team is called Team Around the Child. As a foster carer you will play an important role as part of the Team Around the Child, working with other professionals to ensure that the assessed needs of the children are met.

Egress Foster Carer Online Portal

The Foster Carer Online portal has been designed to help carers record and log important data electronically, and confidentially. The service uses Egress which allows you to capture information in a safe and secure manner. The portal was introduced to Leicestershire County Council carers in March 2019.

Carers will be expected to use the Admin & Memory Box to capture key moments in the life of a child in care. The portal is predominantly used to allow carers to record and review the following:

- **Child logs** – Daily records of the child are essential to ensure our Social Workers and Managers are fully updated on the progress of our children.
- **Training Records** – All certified copies are recorded electronically.
- **Memory Box** – Records of Photos, Videos, Artwork, School Reports, Certificates & Letters are electronically stored until the age of 16 years old.
- **Carer & Household Profile** – A personal profile of the carer(s) records is stored and updated regularly.
- **Supervision & Reviews** – Approvals and one to one sessions with your Social Worker will be stored confidentially.

A carer is also notified directly via email (Egress) of all Foster Carer Service communication such as Newsletters, forthcoming Training programmes, Payments & policies and more.

Carers report the ease and simplicity of using the portal. In addition, the positive aspects of recording magic moments of the child in care is stored for them to view in coming years. You will be provided hands on support with the Online Portal Team who can be contacted on:

Email - OnlinePortalSupport@leics.gov.uk Telephone – 0116 305 3051

The child/young person's Social Worker

Each child or young person placed in foster care will have a social worker allocated to them whose role is to:

- Assess the needs of the child.
- Develop a relationship with the child.
- Plan for the child and regularly review that plan.
- Work with you, the child and the child's family.
- Share information with you about the child.
- Identify and obtain resources so that the child's needs are met.

The child's social worker has a statutory responsibility to visit the child in the foster home within one week of the placement starting and then at least every six weeks subsequently or otherwise visit in line with the care plan.

Designated teacher

Each school has a designated Teacher who will liaise with the Virtual School for all Looked After Children. As the foster carer you will work with the education settings such as school, to make sure the child is attending and achieving in line with their age, maturity and ability and that they have aspirations and goals for their future. You will work with the designated teacher and child's social worker to ensure that the child has appropriate support in school. You will need to keep them informed of the child's situation and any changes.

Some children and young people will attend different education settings to a mainstream school setting and may need different types of help and support. (Please refer to PART 4.6 for further details.)

The Independent Reviewing Officer

Each child or young person placed in foster care will have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Wherever it is possible the IRO will meet the child before the Review of Arrangements meeting.

Sibling groups, whether or not placed together, will usually have the same IRO who will be allocated for the duration that the child is looked after.

The IRO has two roles:

- Chairing a child's Review of Arrangements meeting.
- Monitoring a child's case and care plan.

They can be a good source of support to you if needed when plans for a child are not going how they should or as expected; after you have discussed matters with the child's social worker and the Supervising Social Worker.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service have a Looked After Children's team. Some Looked After Children, due to their experiences, may have higher levels of behavioural, emotional and mental health problems. Your role will be to highlight any issues of concern about a child young person that may result in the need to refer them to CAMHS.

The referral will be made by the child's social worker. If its agreed that the service is needed/ available, you should make sure appointments are kept and 'work together ' with professionals from the service. You may be asked to participate in some of the sessions with the CAMHS worker to support the child and to gain insight into how to understand and meet the child's emotional needs in the home setting.

(Please refer to PART 4.1 for further details.)

The Looked After Children (LAC) nurse

You will work alongside the LAC nurse and other health professionals to make sure the health needs of Looked After Children are met. Each child will be assigned a LAC nurse. The school nurse or health visitor may be a suitable source of health information and support but more specialist intervention should be sought through the LAC nurse.

(Please refer to PART 4.1 for further details.)

More information on health can be found at

http://llrchildcare.proceduresonline.com/leicestershire/local_resources.html#lac

Permanence Team

The Permanence Team is responsible for finding adoptive families for children who cannot remain with their birth families. They will look at the child's background, health and any special needs to find the right adoptive family for them. When the adoptive family is linked with a child, they have a period of introductions before the child goes to live with them. Foster carers play an important role in supporting the child through these introductions. It is important that the child sees you working alongside the adoptive parents. You can also give valuable advice and support to the adoptive parents who will be feeling anxious about getting it right.

Where other alternatives for permanency may be considered such as connected care or long term foster care, you will be integral in working closely with these carers and professionals.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. As part of your role as a foster carer, you will work with other agencies and individuals to ensure the child receives the support and advice they need and you need to support them. Your Supervising Social Worker will discuss the role and input of other professionals and other forms of intervention.

Look out for early signs of problems arising and talk to your own child(ren) and your fostered child(ren) about this. Also speak to your Supervising Social Worker during your supervision meetings, or before that if it can't wait. You may also look for general advice from other foster carers.

If you feel an issue is getting worse and you need some support, don't leave it. Don't doubt that you need to take action. Always record all relevant information.

2.6 Stability meetings

Standards and Regulations

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

Placements can go through difficult and challenging times. Dealing with ongoing unwanted behaviour from a child can be draining and you may feel you are struggling to keep the placement going positively. It is important that you let your Supervising Social Worker know how you feel as well as looking to your support networks. Support may come from your friends and family and/or may come from within the Fostering Service.

Your Supervising Social Worker can request professionals coming together to discuss and agree a support plan to help you and your family through such difficult times.

A support plan may include:

- Specialist training to help you understand why a child is behaving in a particular manner and this may offer strategies to help you cope.
- A referral to CAMHS to support the child to understand and manage their emotions more successfully.
- A referral to the Designated Support Team who are a highly skilled and have extensive experience in dealing with difficult behaviours presented by children and young people. They can offer intensive support and help with the practicalities of managing children with challenging behaviours and complex needs. The team are able to offer intensive practical and emotional support to foster carers dealing with young people who are exhibiting challenging /difficult behaviour. Some of the team are trained in play therapy. The child's social worker can request their involvement.
- Occasionally, respite care will form part of a support plan, identifying times where you and the child can have some planned/structured time apart. This will offer you a short period to enable you to relax and regain energy and direction to resolve mounting issues. It will also provide space for the child in a positive way.

2.7 Placement endings

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 11 - Preparation for a placement.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.

The child's placement with you may come to an end for a number of reasons:

- The child returns to their family.
- The placement breaks down.
- The child is moved to an alternative placement based on their best interest.
- The young person is old enough to live independently.
- The child or young person is adopted.

Wherever possible when a placement is coming to an end, a transition plan should be developed to move the child or young person sensitively and positively. It is important to recognise that the child might be feeling worried about what is going to happen to them even if the move is one that they feel positive about.

You may feel anxious about the child's move too...this is natural. That's why it's important for everyone that there is a clear plan about what will happen and who will do what. It is really important that you talk to your Supervising Social Worker, especially if you think that the move is not in the child's best interests.

It is important to consider:

- Planning positive 'goodbyes' for friends and family members, or important animals that the child is close to.
- Putting together information about the child's daily routine, likes/dislikes and any other important information that will help the new carer. Let the child's social worker know if you are happy to talk to the new carer to help the transition for the child.
- If the child or young person has photographs, a life story book, a memory box/book and other information/memorabilia relating to the time that they have spent with you, you should make sure that they go with them to their new placement. Make sure you pack all important documents such as their passport and birth certificate. You should also provide clear instructions about any medication or appointments the child has.
- **Please ensure that the child's belongings are packed suitably in such as a suitcase or holdall...never in black bin liners.**

Let the child know what contact they may have with you in the future. Ongoing contact will be agreed by the child's social worker if appropriate.

Unplanned endings and disruption meetings

Not all foster care placements work out. Sometimes, despite support and intervention, the placement cannot continue. Placements ending in an unplanned way nearly always leave all those concerned feeling unhappy. Your Supervising Social Worker will want to work with you to make sure that everything is done to support you, the children and young people living with you and to manage the move on successfully.

Disruption is the word used to describe a placement which ends before it was planned for for whatever reason. A disruption can occur when Children's Social Care feel the placement is no longer meeting the child's needs or if you decide that you are no longer able to care for a child or keep them safe, or if the child decides they do not want to stay in the placement.

It is vital that for whatever reason the placement is ending, that you make the move for the child as positive as possible. Once the child has left the placement, a disruption meeting will be arranged to discuss events and make a record.

The following people may be asked to attend:

- The foster carer.
- The child (if appropriate).
- The Supervising Social Worker.
- The child's social worker and their manager.
- The new carer.
- The Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Any other relevant people.

The meeting will be chaired by the Team Around The Child's Team Manager or a Senior Practitioner. The chair of the meeting should ensure that the circumstances leading to the disruption are reviewed and that everyone present has the opportunity to express their views in order to:

- Determine how and why the disruption happened.
- Learn from what happened and avoid the same thing happening again in the future.
- Contribute positively to future planning for the child.
- To identify any work to be done, who will do it and timeframes for completion.

A report from the disruption meeting will be presented at the next foster carers review.

See www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/p_place_disrup_meet.html?zoom_highlight=disruption+meeting#disruptmeet

2.8 Moving towards independence

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 12 - Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.

See also: The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers.

Developing skills for independence should start at a very early age and gradually build towards the skills and abilities needed for young people to live independently when they are ready to do so. You will receive training and support to help you provide effective guidance to the young person placed with you.

Preparing for independence

You should build into the general routine of young people, a chance to practice developing living skills such as cooking and cleaning. This may start with simple and easy tasks, leading to more complex and difficult tasks. Although this does not mean you cannot do things for your foster child, it is important that you balance this with helping and supporting them towards independence whilst they are living with you.

As the child gets older, this should include such as them being given responsibility for paying for things from their pocket money or savings, for example, magazines, activities, toiletries or mobile phone credit. You should support all children in long term placements to open a bank or building society account in their own name.

In helping and supporting young people in preparing for increasing independence, you should consider the following:

- Budgeting, managing money, current accounts and savings.
- What food to buy, how to cook it and store it.
- How to use a washing machine and do ironing.
- Housework and cleaning.
- DIY such as putting wardrobes up, putting plugs on appliances and decorating.
- Thinking about their futures; goals and aspirations, education, training, employment, and how can they achieve these.
- How to make appointments.
- Accessing advice and support from service providers.
- Leisure activities and other interests.

These are some of the things young people need to learn how to do and need to be thinking about. It is important that you support them to develop their self-esteem and resilience in order to live independently, be successful and happy.

The Pathway Plan

Every young person should have a Pathway Plan which is a special assessment that should take place soon after their 16th birthday. It identifies their needs as they move towards the next stage of their lives which might be independence and/or moving when they are ready to do so. You will be asked to contribute to developing and implementing this Plan and to help the young person to gain the skills they will need in adulthood. The development of these skills and other elements will be part of their Pathway Plan. This Pathway Plan replaces the Care Plan.

This Pathway Plan will include the following key development areas:

- Health and emotional well-being.
- A plan for education, training and/or employment.
- Support to develop and keep appropriate family, social and sexual relationships.
- A programme to develop practical skills to live independently.
- Budgeting and money management.
- Accommodation needs including adaptations for young people with a disability.
- What is needed to provide help and support.

‘Staying Put’ when a young person reaches 18 years

Where there is a ‘Staying Put’ arrangement, the young person does not have to leave their placement with you. You will likely be an important part of their lives and their journey towards full independence where, for example, they have a disability or if they are planning attending University.

Local authorities must provide information about the possibility of extending a young person’s foster care living arrangements when they are 18 years old. Where they remain living in the same household, this is what is referred to as ‘Staying Put’.

See

http://lrcchildcare.proceduresonline.com/leicestershire/p_stay_put.html

If you feel it is an option for the young person you are caring for to remain with you, you should discuss a Staying Put arrangement for them with your Supervising Social Worker. The social worker will assess whether this is feasible for the young person, you and your family.

Following the young person’s 18th birthday, the legal basis on which they live in the foster home changes. Although Fostering Regulations do not apply in these situations, there may be certain checks carried out over time and a member of the Staying Put team will visit you every 6 months to ensure the Staying Put arrangement remains appropriate. The young person will be allocated a Personal Advisor.

**“ I would like to be treated
as part of the family,
not just as someone new ”**

This is what a Child in Care said
they wanted from a foster carer



PART 3: SAFEGUARDING THE HOUSEHOLD

3

3.1 Health and safety in the foster home

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 10 - Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.

As part of your preparation to foster, you will have been provided with training on health and safety and be clear on what your responsibilities are as a carer. This will be continually reviewed by your Supervising Social Worker.

Foster homes should provide a warm and welcoming environment where children are safe from harm or abuse as well as bullying. The home should be clean and well maintained including decor.

Equipment

As part of the assessment you will have discussed all safety equipment required to ensure your home is safe. Your Supervising Social Worker will talk to you about any safety equipment the Fostering Service may be able to offer. Any equipment provided by the Fostering Service is on loan and must be returned at the end of the placement. These discussions will include your arrangements for transport including car seats etc.

Fire Safety

The whole family should decide on a fire exit plan which identifies which exits you might use.

The foster home should have smoke alarms, one on each floor of the house. You should make sure batteries are changed as needed.

You should avoid multi-way adapters as these are a fire hazard.

When doors and windows are locked e.g at night, all members of the house including the foster child should know where to find the keys in the case of an emergency.

You should store matches and flammable liquids safely out of the reach of any child.

Indoor

You should make sure that all appliances are safe and in good working order.

There should be no leads from kettles or irons hanging where a child could pull it.

When you are cooking turn pan handles towards the back of the cooker so they cannot be pulled and use a stair gate particularly if you have small children to keep them out of the kitchen.

Cat litter trays should not be kept in the kitchen and kept out of reach of children.

Toxic / hazardous substances, such as bleach, cleaning materials, medicines, glue and aerosols should be stored safely and securely out of the reach of any child.

Outdoor Areas

If you have a swimming pool or a pond it should be covered, fenced off or drained.

Any chemicals should be kept in a locked, safe place which children cannot get them.

Any out buildings such as garages and sheds should be locked.

If you have slides and swings, they should be secure with a soft surrounding area.

A greenhouse/shed should be in good repair and any glass should be away from the play area or made of toughened glass.

Barbecues should be closely supervised and children should never be left unattended near them. Barbecues can remain hot for a long period of time after use and they should be damped down once finished with. Children should not be allowed to light barbecues. Never leave barbecues unattended.

If children play unsupervised in the garden, then gates and fences should be secure.

Some fairly common garden plants are poisonous and some are fatal. Children may eat berries and think they are ok. Poisonous plants should not be in the garden. If they already are, you should remove them.

Pets

You should not keep a dog defined under the Dangerous Dogs Act; this is likely to affect your continued approval. It would not be appropriate to place a child in a household where such a classified dog is being kept.

As part of the annual review, consideration may also be given to the breeding of animals and or working animals in relation to the impact of the welfare of the child/young person in your care. A pet assessment will be completed as part of your assessment and will be reviewed at your Annual Carers review.

Where children have allergies to pets (for example in relation to asthma or eczema) you should talk to your Supervising Social Worker about how best to minimize the effects.

Health and hygiene is essential to consider when you have pets in the household. All litter trays should not be kept in the kitchen and kept out of reach of children. You should keep areas used by pets, including the garden clean and regularly clean

Gas Appliances

You should make sure that any appliances are in good working order and regularly serviced by a Gas Safe engineer. You may be asked to produce the certificate at the time of your foster carer review.

Health and Safety checklist

Your health and safety checklist will have been completed as part of the assessment and this will be updated at every review. If there are concerns about any aspects of your home, then your Supervising Social Worker will discuss this with you and a period of time will be given to resolve the issue. If the issue remains a significant concern and are not resolved, then a report will go to the fostering panel to consider your approval.

Your Supervising Social Worker will support and guide you to creating and maintain a safe and caring environment.

Use of CCTV within the Foster Home

External CCTV

Installing Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems is becoming increasingly popular as a way of protecting property. Domestic CCTV is subject to a range of rules and regulations which govern the appropriate use of this technology. The main ones are the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (2018). In summary, if your CCTV system (including video doorbells) ONLY captures images of people within the boundary of your private property, including your garden, then the above legislation does not apply. If the CCTV system captures images of people on public footpaths or roads, in communal areas, or of neighbours' driveway or garden, then the Law and Regulations do apply.

Further information is available on the following website www.gov.uk

Any images recorded should be saved only for as long as they are needed and should be deleted on a regular basis. Even if the cameras only capture images of people on your property you are strongly advised to disable any sound recording facility as this may record conversations from a public space or a neighbour's property and thereby bring you under the remit of GDPR and DPA.

Internal CCTV

It is not appropriate to install CCTV systems inside the home in order to monitor the whereabouts or behaviour of foster children.

If there are serious concerns about the safety of foster children or other members of the household (e.g. sleepwalking) the risks and ways of managing them will be assessed in a detailed risk assessment carried out by the child's social worker, the SSW and with input from other members of the Team Around the Child.

In exceptional cases there may be agreement to install equipment (such as motion sensors) to alert adults to any unusual movement in the household so that they can ensure the safety of everyone in the home.

This will form part of the Placement Plan and will be reviewed on a regular basis

3.2 Developing a safer carer policy

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 3 - Promoting positive behaviour and relationships.
- Standard 4 - Safeguarding children.
- Standard 6 - Promoting good health and wellbeing.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 6 - Keep children and young people safe from harm.
- Standard 7 - Develop yourself.

Introduction

Working out a Safer Caring Plan for your family, including your foster child is not about changing everything that you do. It is about thinking about what parts of your family's behaviour involves risk and working out what you can all do to minimise and manage risk in a way that means safer care becomes part of everyday life. You will have covered this on the Skills to Foster training and will have developed your Safe Caring Plan as part of your assessment. Your Safe Caring Policy will be annually updated as part of your foster care review or when circumstances change.

Your safe caring policy will help you to know how to deal with situations that might seem okay in your own family but are not appropriate in a foster family. It is important that everybody that is in the house/home is aware of the policy and is 'signed up' to it. Regular visitors to the home will also need to know about the safer caring policy and be 'signed up'.

Working out your safer caring plan

The whole family should be involved in agreeing your plan and in reviewing it. Your Supervising Social Worker can support you with this. The aim is for all those involved to understand what might/could happen and to avoid the foster child feeling worried or anxious.

The following are some of the issues which you need to consider. This is not intended to be an exhaustive or prescriptive list.

The names you use

Children should call you by your first name. Discourage them from calling you 'mummy' or 'daddy' because this causes confusion about their own family member relationships.

Physical contact and showing affection

You must provide a level of care which demonstrates warmth, friendliness and a positive regard for the child. Physical contact should be given in a manner that fits with 'good parenting', is safe and protective, and avoids the arousal of sexual expectations or feelings, or in any way reinforces sexual stereotypes.

Showing affection is a very important part of your caring role and should never be avoided because of the fear of allegations. Children should always be asked first if they would like a kiss, hug or a cuddle. They need to learn from a caring adult to say 'no' if they do not want to be touched and what kind of touch is appropriate touch.

Families will all have different ways of showing affection and you need to be careful not to impose your way on others. If touch has meant something other than affection to a child in the past, they may misunderstand some gestures.

Playing

Listen out when children are playing and check when they become quiet. Encourage children where possible, to play in shared parts of the home.

You may feel that the child should play with friends at your home, particularly during the early days of a placement. This may be more difficult when they are older children. If an older child asks to go to a friend's house, we recommend that you take into account where they are, who will be there and when/how they will return home. If you are not sure about managing this, talk to your Supervising Social Worker about it.

Intimate care

If possible, children should be supported and encouraged to undertake bathing, showers and other intimate care themselves and have privacy in the bathroom. If children are too young or are unable to bathe, use the toilet or undertake other self care tasks, arrangements should be made for carers to assist them. Unless otherwise agreed, children should be given intimate care by adults of the same sex where possible.

Arrangements for the intimate care of younger and/or disabled children should be set out in detail within their placement plan.

There may be a greater need for Carers to undertake the intimate personal care of a child, where they have a disability or complex health needs. You should speak to the child's social worker for advice.

Whilst all children are vulnerable to abuse, those with a disability may be particularly vulnerable to abuse. (This does not solely relate to intimate care.)

Foster carers will need to make sure that a child or young person with communication difficulties are able to express their views, wishes and feelings about personal care (and other matters), and this should also be recorded.

Travelling by car

One to one travel in a car can be a good way of providing the opportunity for the child to share their thoughts and feeling as it can be easier to talk without eye contact. However, a child who has, or may have been abused might feel unsafe alone in a car with an adult. In the initial days after placement, it might be better to avoid travelling alone with a foster child. If this cannot be avoided, the child should travel in the back of the car. If there are two carers with a child, it will be safer for the child to be in the front of the car rather than in the back seat with one adult. Once you know the child well you may want to review how you travel together.

Photos and videos

It should be clear in the Placement Plan, who can sign to agree for the child's photo or videos of them being taken in settings such as school. If photos, videos or the internet have been part of any abuse for the child or young person, you should explore the best way to manage this with the child's social worker.

It is always helpful when you do take photos or videos, to ask the child's permission first, and make sure that they get personal copies, that they know who else will see them and why.

You will need to be sensitive to how children react to having their photo taken. Do not take photos of children bathing or in a state of undress.

Using the internet

All children in care, of secondary school age are entitled to free access to a computer and use of the internet. A lot of school work now requires the use of a computer and without this facility a child may be at a disadvantage.

Children and young people rely on access to social media to maintain contact with friends. We want Looked After Children to have the same experience as their peers.

The Placement Plan should indicate specific boundaries around internet use such as times of use, where laptops and mobile phones should be kept. E-safety measures should be put in place. (Please refer to Part 3.3 for further details.)

The way you dress

It is important for people to dress appropriately when in the house. Make sure that you, your family and foster children are suitably dressed at all times, including wearing nightclothes.

Bedrooms

Some parents like to let young children get into their bed to talk, and listen to stories or to be comforted when they are not well. This can be one of the dilemmas you face when, within your own family, you are trying to give your own children a normal upbringing whilst wanting to provide a safe environment for the children you Foster.

Sharing your bed can trigger memories of abuse for some children and give the wrong messages about what might happen and what is acceptable. It will be safer to provide all children with a time of affection outside of your bedroom, for example, telling stories and having supper together before going to bed. Carers should leave the door open when putting children to bed.

You should consider what is appropriate safe behaviour regarding the privacy of bedroom space. Children should not share beds. It may be decided that you should knock on bedroom doors before going in.

Some children who have been abused will need their own space so that they learn that they have the right to be safe and private. Each child should have somewhere to keep their belongings safe.

3.3 Who needs a DBS?

Regulation 26 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 requires an Enhanced DBS Disclosure Certificate for anyone applying to become a foster carer and for any member of the household over 18 years of age (Schedule 3 Part 1)

Certain offences are termed 'specified offences' and automatically preclude the applicant from being approved if he/she has been convicted or cautioned.

There is some flexibility if the offence was committed under 18 years of age or if the applicant is applying to foster a particular child (which may arise in Connected Person assessments). There is no formal requirement in the Fostering Services Regulations for regular visitors to the foster home to have a DBS check, however LCC prefer to complete a DBS check for any adult who is a regular visitor and who stays overnight in case you may require them to care for the foster child at any point.

People who may have care of foster children (such as babysitter or back-up carers in the support network) are eligible for Enhanced Disclosure plus checking of Childrens Barred list.

Delegated Authority

Placement Plans should specify what routine decisions are delegated to the foster carer and in what circumstances the carer must seek prior approval from the Responsible Authority.

The guidance states that foster children should be able to take part in 'normal and acceptable age appropriate activities as would reasonably be granted by the parents of their peers.'

Foster children should be able to go on 'sleepovers and holidays with friends or relatives of their foster carers'. There is no statutory duty for DBS checks, and these 'should not normally be sought as a precondition'. Foster carers should act as responsible parents and if their foster children wish to go on sleepovers or stay with friends the carer should be satisfied that this is safe and appropriate. The carer should make contact with the parents who are 'hosting' the event, exchange contact details and phone numbers and be available to bring the foster child home if necessary.

3.4 E-safety, the internet, photographs and mobile phones

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 4 - Safeguarding children.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 4 – Know how to communicate effectively.
- Standard 6 – Keep children and young people safe from harm.

Different ways of communicating with friends are important to a child and the internet is a significant way of life now from an early age. When a child is placed with you, find out their background and whether the internet, photographs and mobile phones contributed towards any abuse they experienced so that you can plan the safe use of these devices for all children but particularly those where it has been an issue. You should ask the child's social worker for advice and information regarding this and it should be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting.

Foster carers' knowledge of different types of media will vary but it is important that you develop your understanding of different electronic devices, the internet and social media and that you learn how to safeguard children when using these. It may be important to support children in responding to others (possibly peers) appropriately on the internet. Foster Carers should also be aware of and alert to the signs of grooming behaviours. Grooming is when an adult builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse and/or sexual exploitation. If you are concerned that a child or young person you are caring for is being bullied or are bullying someone via the internet or mobile phone, you should talk to them about it, record what is happening in their daily record and speak to their social worker at the very earliest opportunity.

Web enabled internet technology/social networking

You should aim to be present in a child's web browsing, particularly a new child in placement. Explain the web's positive and negative sides and tell them that if they are not sure about the safety or security of a site, they should talk to you about it. Children should not be permitted to use sites that are also used by adults unless a risk assessment has been carried out and agrees this as appropriate to the individual child, in consultation with their social worker. These arrangements must be outlined in the child's Placement Plan and must be reviewed regularly.

Some useful guidelines are:

- Time limits on computers should be agreed with the child or young person.
- Appropriate internet security/firewalls should be used on home computers to avoid access to inappropriate material.
- You should set clear ground rules on the use of the internet.
- Computers should be in communal areas of the house where adults can see what is being looked at, rather than in a bedroom.
- If a young person has a laptop, decide with them where and when they can use it if they are accessing the internet.
- You should show an interest in the internet and encourage young people to be open about any concerns or problems.
- Never allow a child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they 'meet' on the internet without first speaking to and agreeing this with the child's social worker.
- The child should never respond to messages that are rude or threatening, or that makes them feel uncomfortable. Encourage the child to talk to you about messages like this. If they receive a message or see something online that you are concerned about, keep a copy, make a record and share it with their social worker.
- Ensure the child's profile and postings on appropriate social media sites do not contain anything that discloses their identity or whereabouts.
- Remember that people online may not be who they say they are and help children and young people to understand this.

Teaching a child to be cautious is important and can help when they start to use social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter.

Social networking sites are websites where you can create a profile all about yourself and contact other people. You can also upload photos, music and videos to share with other people, and on some sites, chat to other people on forums. Popular social networking websites include MySpace, Facebook, Habbo Hotel, Piczo and Bebo, but there are lots of others.

Foster carers who have their own accounts on Facebook or similar sites should ensure that Privacy Settings are set to allow access only to known and trusted members of family and friends.

You must not upload photos of your foster children or other information which may identify them onto your social media account.

Sexting

Sending, receiving and storing sexual images of young people under the age of 18 is a criminal offence. This includes young people sending images of themselves (Sexual Offences Act 2003). This may have legal consequences for both the sender and receiver of such images, although the focus should always be on safeguarding the young people involved, especially those who are vulnerable to being exploited. Talk to your SSW if you suspect this may be an issue for the YP or any of their friends

Social networking sites are often used by predators/perpetrators/paedophiles as an easy way to access children and young people for the purpose of sexually abusing and/or sexually exploiting them. The Serious Crime Act (2015) has introduced an offence referred to as 'sexual communication with a child'. This applies to an adult who communicates with a child and the communication is sexual, or if it is intended to elicit from the child, a communication which is sexual and the adult reasonably believes the child to be under 16 years of age. The Act also amended The Sex Offences Act 2003 so that it is now an offence for an adult to arrange to meet with someone under 16 years of age, having communicated with them on just one occasion (previously it was on at least two occasions).

Photographs

It should be clear in the Placement Plan who can sign to agree for the child's photo or video footage of them being taken in settings such as school.

If photos, videos or the internet have been part of any abuse of a child or young person, you should discuss how this is best managed with the child's social worker.

It is always helpful when you do take photos or videos, to ask the child's permission first. Make sure that child is given copies and that they know who else will see them and why.

Be sensitive to how children react to having their photo taken. Do not take photos of children bathing or naked.

Photographs taken by children and young people

The widespread use of mobile phones, smartphones and tablets with cameras, means that children and young people will most likely take photos of themselves and others in their foster home. Whilst it is not realistic to place definitive restrictions on the taking of photos by children and young people, they should be encouraged to consider the following:

- You should ask the person's consent/agreement before taking a photo.
- Photos should not be shared on social media without the agreement of other people in them.
- The use of photos for cyber/online bullying is not acceptable and may lead to restrictions being placed on your use of mobile phones in the future.
- If photos are shared via social media, they should not identify the location of your home.
- When an explicit or sexual image is shared (referred to 'sexting'), you have absolutely no control over who it is then shared with. The sharing of such images can have far reaching consequences.

Mobile phones

When children reach 10 years of age consideration could be given to provide them with a mobile phone depending on individual circumstances. However the start of secondary school maybe a more appropriate time. A child's safety should be considered in decisions about providing a mobile phone.

Mobile phones offer text messaging, taking photos, sending and receiving photos, taking, sending and receiving video clips and sound tracks, as well as access to the internet which means pictures and videos can be 'downloaded' to the phone.

Mobile phones allow the sending of pictures of yourself, friends and where you live, which can have serious safeguarding and security implications for Looked After Children.

Mobile phone network providers operate a barring and filtering mechanism to prevent those under 18 years of age accessing '18' rated content. The service can be provided for both contract and pay as you go phones. You are advised to explore this with the network provider and find out what other services they offer. As with computer and laptop use, it may be advisable to consider keeping the mobile downstairs overnight after a specified time, dependent on risk. Discuss appropriate boundaries with your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker.

The internet

Internet availability / usage has risks attached and should be suitably monitored. You should find out about 'software' that 'filters' inappropriate material for children. The resources below will offer some help and guidance.

- **CEOP** - This is the web site of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), which delivers a multi-agency service dedicated to tackling the sexual exploitation of children and young people. It provides advice to parents, carers and children on internet safety and has an online reporting facility. See www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/
- **Thinkuknow** - These resources help young people, parents and carers and teachers to learn about the risks that young people may encounter whilst using the internet. Developed by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) the Thinkuknow web site also includes a facility for young people to report online abuse at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/
- **ChildNet International** - This website provides a range of resources to help children and young people to use the internet constructively and to protect them from being exploited in the online environments provided by new technologies. See www.childnet.com/
- **Child Safety Online** - A practical guide for parents and carers at gov.uk. The guide includes practical tips about the use of safety and privacy features on apps and other platforms, as well as conversation prompts to help families begin talking about online safety. It also contains pointers to further advise and support. See

www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents

www.carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers-whose-children-are-using-social-media

3.5 My foster child is missing

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 5 - Missing from care.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

When a child is placed with you, their social worker should make you aware of any previous occasions when they have had missing episodes or if this is something they have good reason to think they will do.

The care you provide should minimise the risk of a child going missing, however, children and young people should be aware that they need to take some responsibility for their own safety, dependent upon their age and understanding.

You should talk to the child about the risks of running away and let them know where they can get help to talk about this with someone other than you.

The degree of risk that a child or young person might be taking by going missing will vary, dependent on their age, understanding and awareness.

There may be a variety of reasons for a young person running away /going missing and it is through communication that you are most likely to understand and deal with the issues that make them go. This could include peer group pressure, family contact or one of many other possible reasons. It is important to recognise that young people might not be used to adults being concerned about their whereabouts and that they might not understand that you are trying to keep them safe and look after them.

If a young person has gone missing whilst with you or in their previous placement(s), you should look out for signs, triggers or patterns of behaviour that usually happen before they go missing. This may help you talk to them in a way that could prevent them from going.

Definitions

Various terms are used in relation to missing children. www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care uses the following definitions:

- **Missing child**

'A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.'

- **Missing from care**

'A Looked After Child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (for example, school) and their whereabouts are not known.'

- **Away from placement without authorisation**

'A Looked After Child whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be, and the carer has concerns, or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.'

The Police (Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013)) categorise children as either Missing or Absent as follows:

- **Missing**

'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.'

- **Absent**

'A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.'

The police classification of a person as 'Missing' or 'Absent' will be based on on-going risk assessment during the relevant period of time. Note that 'Absent' within the Police definition does not include those defined as 'Away from placement without authorisation' as above.

The police will not send an officer to cases where the child or young person are defined as being 'Absent'. Instead the onus will be on the carers to take steps to locate the child with monitoring by the police, and escalation to being deemed as 'Missing' if there is a significant change to the circumstances or an increase in the assessed level of risk. It is expected that all reasonable steps should be taken by foster carers to locate the child or young person prior to making a report to the police.

Police will attend reports of 'Missing' children and young people.

Leaving without authorisation/consent

If a child indicates that they propose to leave the home without consent, the carer should in the first instance, speak to them about his and try to dissuade them.

It is crucial that you always show care and concern, even if you are sure that a child is still going to leave. Carers should take all reasonable steps to prevent children from leaving, especially if it will result in the child or others being placed at risk. You should be aware of what measures you can take to prevent a child from leaving without your permission. The use of persuasion and your relationship is the most powerful tool that you have to prevent them going and you will find you can also use these to get them to want to come back if they do go.

As a last resort, the use of appropriate and safe physical restrictions such as the locking the door to restrict the child's movement, or physical intervention may be used if immediately necessary to prevent significant harm to individuals or serious damage to property. If this is necessary you should report this immediately to the child's social worker and your Supervising Social Worker or the Out of Hours service if the incident happens outside of working hours.

Children are less likely to go missing or be absent if they feel secure and safe, have a sense of belonging, are able to express their feelings and make appropriate choices, and develop positive relationships with the carers and their peers, and are free from bullying.

Children should have a clear understanding of expectations of them, the routines of the home and house rules. To this end, they should know whether it's acceptable, or not, to leave the home without permission or consent. The potential risks if they go missing or are absent should be explained. Children should be provided with contact details for the Children's Commissioner, Ofsted, Childline and Advocacy Services.

What you should do if a child goes missing

In the absence of any agreed strategy in the Placement Plan, the following should apply if it is apparent or suspected that a child is absent or missing. In such circumstances, carers should take whatever actions are immediately necessary to recover the child, bearing in mind any risks posed to the them or others.

When the child is missing or absent without your permission but you know where they are, you will need to treat the situation differently to when you don't know where they have gone.

If the young person doesn't return at the expected time, carers should undertake measures to ascertain where the young person is. This could include contacting them on their mobile phone, if they have one, searching places/addresses they are known to visit/frequent if possible, and contacting family and friends.

If a child is missing and you do not know where they are, and they are not found within a reasonable time frame (1 hour for children under 12 years and 2 hours for children over 12 years, unless stated otherwise in their Placement Plan), you must contact the child's social worker, the police, your Supervising Social Worker or the Out of Hours service when appropriate.

When you report a young person missing you will be asked a series of questions. This list isn't exhaustive but will indicate the sort of information you will be asked to provide:

- Brief details of the circumstances in which the child became missing or absent.
- Where and when they were last seen and by whom.
- What has been done so far to trace the child, and what hasn't been done and why.
- A physical description of the child including their clothing.
- The specific concerns related to this episode being missing or absent, for example, vulnerability due to age, infirmity, mental health issues or physical ill health.
- Any last known intentions or preparations made prior to becoming absent or missing.

- Personal items taken with them, for example, mobile phone, clothing, passport or money.
- Last known home address.
- Any specific health needs that require medication and the effect on the child if this is not available to them and associated time related to this.
- Any risk of or actual sexual exploitation and all relevant information.
- Details of messaging and social media used including usernames and passwords if known.
- Access to money.

You must also inform your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker at the very earliest opportunity.

You should record all related actions including the circumstances in which the child returns, why they say they became missing or absent, what they experienced and what safeguarding actions you will put in place to reduce/prevent further occurrences.

When the child returns, their social worker will arrange for a 'Return Interview' to be completed which will inform future interventions and gain an understanding of the risks. See

http://lrs.cb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_miss_home_care.html?zoom_highlight+Missing+from+care

3.6 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 6 - Promoting health and wellbeing.
- Standard 21 - Supervision and support of foster carers.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.

Relevant Information and Guidance found on the Intranet

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

'Any child or young person may be at risk of sexual exploitation, regardless of their family background or other circumstances. This includes boys and young men as well as girls and young women. However, some groups are particularly vulnerable. These include children and young people who have a history of running away or of going missing from home, those with special needs, those in and leaving Residential and Foster Care, migrant children, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, children who have disengaged from education and children who are abusing drugs and alcohol, and those involved in gangs.' (Safeguarding Children and Young people from Sexual Exploitation, 2009)

Child Sexual Exploitation takes different forms, from a seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention, affection, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking. Child Sexual Exploitation involves differing degrees of abusive activities, including coercion, intimidation or enticement, violence and aggression, unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying (including cyber bullying), and grooming for sexual activity.

There is increasing concern about the role of technology in sexual abuse, including via mobile phones, social networking and other internet sites. The key issue in relation to child sexual exploitation is the imbalance of power within the 'relationship'. The perpetrator always has power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops.

Many children and young people are groomed into sexually exploitative relationships but other forms of exploitation also exist. Some young people are engaged in informal economies that incorporate the exchange of sex for rewards such as drugs, alcohol, money or gifts. Others exchange sex for accommodation or money as a result of homelessness and experiences of poverty. Some young people have been bullied and threatened into sexual activities by peers or gangs, which is then used against them as a form of extortion and to keep them compliant.

Children and young people may have already been sexually exploited before they became looked after; others may become targets of perpetrators during their care placement. Looked after children and young persons are often the focus of perpetrators of sexual abuse due to their vulnerability.

You should therefore create an environment which educates children and young people about child sexual exploitation and where possible, encourage them to discuss any concerns they might have.

Indicators of possible sexual exploitation

You should be aware of the key indicators of child sexual exploitation. They include:

Health

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault).
- Chronic fatigue.
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion.
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or other substance misuse.
- Sexually risky behaviour.

Education

- Truancy/disengagement with education and/or considerable change in performance at school.

Emotional and behavioural issues

- Volatile behaviour and exhibiting an extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language.
- Involvement in petty crime such as shoplifting and stealing.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults.
- Reports of being seen in places known to be used to perpetrate Sexual exploitation, including public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues such as pubs and clubs.

Identity

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, for example, cutting, overdosing, eating disorder and promiscuity.

Relationships

- Hostility in relationships with staff, family members and significant others.
- Physical aggression.
- Placement breakdown.
- Reports from reliable sources , for example, family, friends or other professionals), providing information about the risk of or actual involvement in sexual exploitation.
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities.
- Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited.
- Known to be sexually active.
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person, or younger person who is suspected of being abusive.
- Unexplained relationships with older adults.
- Inappropriate use of the internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the internet.
- Phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults.
- Adults or older youths loitering outside the home.
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation.
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known safe accommodation and care.
- Missing for long periods with no known safe accommodation and care.
- Going missing and being found in areas where they have no known links.

Please note that whilst the focus is often on older men as perpetrators, younger men and women can also be perpetrators.

Social presentation

- Noticeable change in appearance.
- Leaving the foster home in clothing unusual for them, for example, inappropriate for their age and borrowing clothing from older young people.

Family and environmental factors

- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or parental difficulties.

Housing

- Pattern of previous street homelessness.
- Having keys to premises other than those known about.

Income

- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation.
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation.
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding.

(Please note that this list is not exhaustive.)

You should be aware that many children and young people who are sexually exploited do not see themselves as victims. In such situations, discussions with them about your concerns should be handled with extreme sensitivity. You should contact the child's social worker and talk to your Supervising Social Worker if you have any concerns, prior to and/or after talking to the child or young person.

In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of sexual exploitation, or at risk of this, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that:

- A child under the age of 13 years of age is not legally capable of consenting to sex (sex is therefore deemed to be 'statutory rape') or any other type of sexual touching/contact.
- Sexual activity with a child under 16 years of age is an offence.
- It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 year old or a 17 year old if the perpetrator holds a position of trust or authority in relation to the young person.
- Where sexual activity with a 16 year old or 17 year old does not result in an offence being committed, it may still result in harm, or the likelihood of harm being suffered.
- Non-consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim.
- If the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they cannot be considered to have given true consent; therefore an offence may still have been committed.
- Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the 18 years of age.

You should record any concerns you have and seek advice as soon as possible from your Supervising Social Worker. See

http://llrscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_sg_ch_yp_sex_exploit.html?zoom_highlight+Child+sexual+exploitation#intro

3.7 Bullying

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 4 - Safeguarding children.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 – Know how to communicate effectively.

The Children's Guide should contain information and advice on dealing with bullying. Foster carers should look out for signs of bullying and should take steps to prevent/cease it.

Your Safer Caring Policy should address bullying and cover:

- Putting in place clear rules within the house that bullying is not acceptable and what actions will be taken if you suspect bullying or are told of bullying taking place.
- Making it clear to children what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- Providing opportunities for children to think about the issue of bullying, for example, writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying.
- Having discussions about bullying and why it is important not to bully.
- Being good role models as foster carers.

Many Looked After Children experience bullying at school, in the local area and sometimes from other children in the foster home.

Bullying can include:

- Name calling and teasing.
- Threats and theft.
- Physical violence.
- Damage to belongings.
- Deliberately leaving individuals out of activities.
- Spreading rumours.
- Bullying by mobile phone, text message, e-mail or social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Some signs of bullying are:

- Not wanting to go to school.
- Unexplained bruises.
- Torn clothing.
- Need for extra money.
- Continually losing belongings.
- Problems sleeping.
- Sudden loss of appetite.
- Problems at nursery, school, college or at home.
- Withdrawn behaviour and/or temper tantrums.
- Unusually hungry at the end of the school day (lunch money being taken).
- Rushing to the bathroom after school (fear of going to the school toilets).
- Self-harming.
- Extreme emotions.

A child or young person may be experiencing being bullied because:

- They feel and/or appear different. School life can highlight differences such as arriving to school by taxi, not being able to take part in after school clubs, and being withdrawn from some lessons to attend meetings.
- Not achieving as well as others in their class.
- Having had lots of moves/changes of carer or school.
- Not having a friendship group.
- Not wanting others to know that they are looked after.
- Feeling isolated and thinking that they have no-one to talk to at school.
- Difficult and distressing life experiences that have left them traumatised, with poor self-esteem and a lack of 'coping mechanisms'.

If you have any concerns that incidents of bullying have happened between any of the children within the foster home or that a child may be a victim of bullying or is being a bully; you must discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker; who will advise you on what actions are necessary to reduce or prevent it. They will inform the child's social worker.

When bullying occurs within the foster home, it may be appropriate to call a planning meeting, preferably with the child or children present, to discuss ways to prevent, reduce or cease the bullying.

The outcomes of the meeting may include the following:

- The bully (or bullies) are asked to apologise.
- Some form of sanction or consequence will be considered/agreed.
- Where possible, children are encouraged to make friends.

After the incident has been dealt with, you should monitor the situation/relationships and endeavour to make sure that bullying does not happen again.

If the bullying continues or escalates in terms of seriousness, the child's social worker should be consulted at the earliest opportunity. It may be necessary to conduct a Placement Planning Meeting or make a referral under the Child Protection Referrals Procedure and arrange a Strategy Meeting.

You must record all incidents of bullying in relation to a child or young person who is the alleged victim and in relation to the child who is the alleged bully.

What to do if you think your foster child is bullying or being bullied:

- Continue to act on the advice from the child's social worker and other professionals, on ways to help build the child's self-esteem and confidence.
- Help the child to think about what to say to help explain to others why they are living with foster carers.
- Encourage friendships and invite school friends home. There is strength in numbers. Bullies may target a child who is alone.
- Help the child to develop coping skills. Problem solve difficult situations and practice with the child what they might do in situations where they are likely to or are being bullied.
- Do not reject a child who is bullying others but reject the behaviour. Explain how the behaviour makes other children unhappy and help them develop other ways to feel better about themselves and to express how they feel.
- Give the child praise each time they help you or are kind to someone.
- Speak to the child's social worker and make an arrangement for both of you to see the designated teacher, the child's class teacher or year head.
- Make sure that you and the other people in your network are good role models.

Children can be reluctant to report bullying for fear of reprisal or because they think they will not be listened to. You must make a point of talking with and listening to children about bullying and take them seriously in order to help them report and deal with it.

3.8 Extremism and radicalisation

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 4 – Safeguarding children.
- Standard 6 - Promoting good health and wellbeing.
- Standard 21 - Supervision and support of foster carers.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.

Children and young people can be drawn into violence or they can be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by many means.

This can involve the influence of family members or friends and/or direct contact with extremist groups and organisations, or, increasingly, contact via the internet. This can put a young person at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to cause significant harm.

There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism. The process of radicalisation is different for every individual and can take place over an extended period or within a very short time frame.

Radicalisation is the process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, take part in terrorist groups and activities.

The risk of radicalisation is the product of a number of factors and identifying this risk requires you to exercise professional judgement and seeking further advice as necessary. Indicators of involvement in extremism may include:

- Use of inappropriate language.
- Possession of violent extremist literature.
- Behavioural changes, for example, being increasingly centred around an extremist ideology.
- The expression of extremist views.
- Advocating violent actions and means.
- Association with known extremists.
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology.
- A change of style of dress or personal appearance to accord with an extremist group.
- Loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology.

The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other indicators that a child or young person is at risk of violent extremism and radicalisation.

If you are concerned about a child in anyway relating to this , you must report these concerns to your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker or the Out of Hours service if support needed cannot wait. It will be their responsibility to take the concerns forward through the appropriate channels.

Online content, in particular social media, may pose a specific risk in normalising radical views and promoting content that is shocking and extreme. Children and young people can be trusting and may not necessarily appreciate bias, which can lead to being drawn into such groups and into adopting their extremist views.

Consideration should also be given to the need for an emergency response. This will be extremely rare, for example, where there is information that a violent act is imminent or where weapons or other materials may be in the possession of a young person or member of his or her family. In this situation you should call 999 immediately. See

http://lrs.cb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_viol_extrem.html?zoom_highlight+radicalisation

3.9 Monitoring and notifications

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 29 - Notifications of significant events.

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

- Schedule 7 - Events and notifications and Schedule 4 Review of the Quality of Care.

This information tells you which agencies must be notified where certain situations that are either critical incidents or notifiable events happen.

Wherever a significant event happens (see below), your main priority is to make sure the child is as safe as possible. You must then contact your Supervising Social Worker at the earliest opportunity so that they can inform the Team Around the Child Team Manager, the Designated Manager, and the Fostering Service Manager who is responsible for sending the notifications to the agencies listed as soon as possible after an event has occurred.

The manager may notify the agencies initially by telephone, but this must be followed up in writing using the appropriate form.

A copy of the form will be:

- Sent directly to the relevant Statutory Authority/Authorities within 24 hours, including at weekends, as per Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations (2011).
- Placed on the relevant child's file and on the foster carers file.

Critical incidents

Critical incidents are not always as clearly evident as notifiable events, however if you have any doubts or are uncertain about definition, you should always seek advice from your Supervising Social Worker.

Examples are:

- Assault by a foster child on you or a member of your household.
- Serious accident or injury to you whilst carrying out your duties.
- Any event which may result in media interest.
- Conduct of any foster carer that is not directly connected with their role and responsibilities, which may raise questions/concerns about their suitability to continue being a foster carer.

All foster carers have a responsibility to report critical incidents to their Supervising Social Worker who will inform the Team Around the Child Manager of the incidents. There should be no delay in reporting the incident.

Notifiable Events

EVENT	WHO TO NOTIFY
Death of a foster child	<p>Ofsted 0300 123 1231</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted</p> <p>The local authority in whose area the child's foster home is located (if that local authority is not the placing authority).</p>
Involvement or suspected involvement of a foster child in sexual exploitation.	<p>Ofsted Telephone: 0300 123 1231)</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted</p> <p>The police.</p>
Any incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a foster child which the foster carer considers to be serious.	<p>Ofsted Telephone: 0300 123 1231</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted</p>
Any allegation of abuse against the foster carer or someone else in the household or extended friend and family network.	<p>Ofsted: 0300 123 1231</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted</p>
Instigation and outcome of any Child Protection Enquiry involving a foster child.	<p>Ofsted: 0300 123 1231</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted</p>

One Young Person shared their experience

“ Coming in to care is definitely a massive change in your life, to what you're normally used to as just a normal kid just experiencing childhood and something like this just happens. ”

EVENT	WHO TO NOTIFY
Serious illness or serious accident sustained by a child or foster carer. This includes serious or persistent self- harming or attempted suicide.	Ofsted 0300 123-1231 https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted
Outbreak of any infectious disease which in the opinion of a registered medical practitioner is sufficiently serious to be so Notified.	The Health and Safety Executive.
A foster child is absent or missing from the foster home.	The placing authority (where relevant). The police (in accordance with the local Missing Children Protocol)





**WE
ARE
FAMILY**

PART 4: PROMOTING AND ACHIEVING GOOD OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

4

4.1 Health

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 6 - Promoting good health and wellbeing.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.

You should be provided with a child's basic medical history when they are placed with you. If it is an emergency placement, this should happen as soon as possible. As much information as possible needs to be understood about the child's health especially where they have health needs or behavioural issues that potentially pose a risk to themselves, you and others. Any issues should be fully shared with you, together with information about the support you will receive.

A child or young person will have an Initial Health Care Assessment which forms their Health Care Plan. This will be regularly reviewed by you and relevant professionals.

The child's social worker should arrange an assessment so that a plan can be drawn up and available for the child's first Review of Arrangements meeting, which will take place within 20 working days of placement with you.

The Health Care Assessment

This happens at particular times:

- The first assessment must be done before the child's first placement or, if not this is not possible, before their first Review of Arrangements (unless one has been done within the previous 3 months).
- For children under 5 years of age, further Health Care Assessments should occur at least once every six months.
- For children aged over 5 years, further Health Care Assessments should occur at least annually. See

www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/p_healthcare_assmt.html?zoom_highlight+health+care+assessment#healthass

You play an important role in looking after and promoting the health needs of children in your care. This means talking to them and providing them with information about doing the things that keep them healthy and well.

You should encourage children and young people to follow their interests, hobbies and leisure activities.

You should help the child to identify where they can access activities they are interested in, which they enjoy and make them feel good about themselves, and support them to attend. These may be linked to their education setting.

The information you hold about a child, including their daily routine, likes and dislikes, health issues etc., may need to be shared with other professionals.

You should immediately register a child with the local General Practitioner (GP) as a permanent patient even if you are unsure how long they will be in your care. If this is not done the medical records for the child will not be sent to the GP. If there are issues with this please speak to your Supervising Social Worker about them.

You should register the child with your dentist and optician as soon as possible. See

www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/p_healthcare_assmt.html?zoom_highlight+health+and+wellbeing

Medical records

You are expected to complete medical records when you administer any medication or when there has been regular appointments to the child's GP, dentist or optician, or if there has been a medical incident, for example, hospital admission, and consultant/specialist appointments.

It is important that you keep a medical record of the child's health and that you take them for their health assessment. Details of all health appointments should be recorded.

Each time a child is prescribed medication, you must always record when, how often and how much was given to them. All medicines should be stored securely and be accessible only to those who appropriately need access to it.

You should help children and young people to make informed decisions about their health and their views should be taken into account when making decisions.

In the event of an accident or incident, you must record the details of what happened and inform your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker as soon as possible.

If advice is sought from a GP, the National Health Service (NHS), from the '111' phone service or a pharmacist, you should always record details of the discussions and advice received.

If an accident occurs, which results in a visit to GP, walk in centre or hospital, it should be recorded clearly and accurately at the earliest opportunity.

You will receive appropriate training including health promotion, communicable diseases, hygiene and first aid. Social Workers and health practitioners should ensure that you have specific contact details and information on how to access relevant services, including CAMHS.

There are a number websites you may find useful:

www.healthforteens.co.uk

www.healthforkids.co.uk

<https://healthforunder5s.co.uk>

Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ)

Each year you will be asked to complete a SDQ. You will be asked to score a series of questions based on your knowledge of the child placed with you. This will inform future services provided.

If you are worried about a child's mental health, you should talk to their social worker and/or the school nurse to request a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

CAMHS have a specialist team who work with Looked After Children. Even if they do not determine that their services are required, they are able to offer consultations and training to support your understanding regarding how to manage presenting behaviours.

All prescribed and administered medication, from whatever source, including medication from hospital, should be recorded. Your medical record should show the:

- Name, strength and dosage of medication.
- Quantity received.
- Expiry date.
- Name of the child for whom the medication is prescribed/purchased.
- Your signature for receiving the medicine.
- Child's refusal to take the medication or any other reason it was not given/taken.

The following steps must be followed:

- Follow directions for taking the medicine as detailed on the packaging.
- Check the medicine to make sure it is prescribed for your foster child, that it has not been tampered with and that it has not expired.
- Make sure that the child's name, the name of the medication, and the dosage is correct.

If you accept responsibility to give medication by injection, by administering rectally or tube feeding etc., the following criteria should be met:

- The child's parent has given written consent.
- You are instructed in the technique by a qualified nurse or doctor who is satisfied that you are competent to do it.

You should read any information provided with medication and ensure that you are aware of any possible reactions or side effects to the medication and the necessary steps to take to correct them.

Any health related issues should always be discussed in your supervision meetings and be recorded.

You must understand how to manage and administer prescribed drugs for children. You will receive training and guidance in relation to this.

First aid

You should have a fully stocked first aid box in your home and in each vehicle used to carry children. Your Supervising Social Worker will make sure arrangements are in place to keep first aid boxes fully stocked when they carry out the health and safety check. You should also make sure that you take up the opportunity to attend health and safety training opportunities when they arise.

First aid boxes should be kept in a safe, accessible place, where the people who need to access them can do so. They must always be kept out of the reach of small children.

Your first aid box may be looked at during an unannounced visit.

If a child requires first aid, you should only administer it if it is safe to do so. Contact your Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible to inform them. You must never delay getting medical help when it is needed.

You should always assess the situation and in a medical emergency, send for medical help, an ambulance or the police if this is needed.

Whilst you are waiting for help to arrive:

- Do not move the child.
- Try to find out what has happened.
- Collect any drugs or spillages, for example, vomit, for analysis.
- Do not try and make the child them sick.

Observe the child or young person, try to keep them calm, warm and quiet. If they are unconscious:

- Ensure that they can breathe and place them in the recovery position.
- Do not move them if they are likely to have spinal or other serious injury which may not be obvious.
- Do not give anything by mouth.
- Do not attempt to make them sit or stand.
- Do not leave them on their own.

When medical help arrives, pass on any information available, including any samples or drugs.

4.2 Relationships and sexual health

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 6 - Promoting health and wellbeing.
- Standard 8 - Promoting educational attainment.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.

Sex and relationships can often feel like a difficult subject to discuss. As a foster carer, you have the opportunity to sensitively engage young people in conversations about friendships, the body, puberty and sexuality. Often it is just being available and willing to listen to a child's questions and concerns that helps.

The child's Placement Plan should highlight any family values or religious beliefs that underpin this subject. A parent may express wishes about their child's sex education, which should be taken into account, however, your over-riding aim must always be to safeguard a young person's health and well-being.

Talking about relationships and sex

Age-appropriate conversations about relationships should begin early in a child's life and continue as they grow up. But if a young person is placed with you as an older teenager, it's never too late to talk about sex and relationships. All children need communication, guidance, and information about these issues, even if they sometimes don't appear to be interested in what you have to say or seem embarrassed. Children and young people may come across inappropriate information on the television, radio or internet, so will need to be able to check out what is right and what is wrong.

Remember to talk to both girls and boys and don't assume if there are two carers in the home, that the other is doing it. Both carers should be involved in these conversations and talk to each other about how they will approach it.

You must adopt the same approach to discussing sex and relationships with children who are confused about their sexual identity or who have decided to follow a particular lifestyle. You may need to support a young person who is seeking to understand their feelings with regard to identity and sexuality.

Discussing relationships and sex can be more complex if the child or young person has been sexually abused. They may blame themselves and have confused feelings about the purpose of sex. You may need to work closely with other professionals including the child's social worker and specialists, to ensure the child understands what safe and appropriate relationships and sexual behaviour is, and to help them rebuild self-esteem and develop meaningful, trusting and loving relationships.

You should try to not to project how you feel about this subject onto the child, for example, if you respond negatively when asked a related question, the child will likely shut down the conversation.

Research tells us that if parents and carers talk to children openly and honestly about sex and relationships, they are more likely to delay having sex and to use contraception when they do.

If you are worried about how to support a child through these conversations, talk to your Supervising Social Worker. You may also find that the looked after children's nurse and/or the school nurse can be helpful. See

www.fpa.org.uk/factsheets/teenage-pregnancy

www.fpa.org.uk/factsheets/teenagers-sexual-health-behaviour

Also see

Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland Children and Young People's Service Procedures.

Some useful tips:

- Start early but don't feel you need to know it all. If a child asks you a question and you don't know the answer, tell them find out and get back to them...and make sure you do! Answer questions simply, for example, if asked 'what is a condom?' you could reply by saying 'it stops ladies from having babies.'
- It is always best to check out what a child or young person actually does know, so for example, if they ask you a question, you could ask them what they think the answer is.
- You don't have to wait for a young person to raise the subject. You could raise it, for example, by talking to them about something that has been on the television or in the news to gauge their understanding and get their views/opinions. This should also cover topics such as friendships, respect and trust.
- Provide resources such as books, leaflets or appropriate websites, dependent on age for the child, for them to look at, or look at them together, and discuss.
- Find out where local services are that can help. Contact local youth services or look on-line for more information.
- Try to be truthful as stories about storks can be confusing and will need to be changed later.

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, and Transgender (LGBT)

There are many aspects of children's identity which foster carers have a key role in promoting.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are key issues which young people explore as they grow older and approach adulthood. This is a normal part of growing up and it is normal for young people to be uncertain and at times confused about their gender and sexual identity.

'Am I girl or boy?' 'Straight or gay?' These are questions which everyone must face and the answers are no longer based on a 'binary' position of being one or the other. It is now recognised that most people are on a continuum and one's position on the continuum is not fixed, but may change over time. It is important that young people feel able to share their thoughts and feelings without being criticised or dismissed. If they have no one to talk to they may become withdrawn, depressed and at risk of self harm.

Supporting our young people as they navigate these complex issues requires great sensitivity and understanding on the part of carers, social workers and the range of professionals in the team around the child.

Training is available to support carers and specialist services are also available. As always, your supervising social worker and the child's social worker are available to provide advice and guidance.

We want all our young people to feel supported, listened to and valued as they deal with these issues and to enter adulthood feeling confident in their identity.

The following websites provide guidance for carers:

Mermaids UK (mermaidsuk.org.uk)

Gender Identity Development Service (gids.nhs.uk)

The 'Stonewall Project' have handy tips to support carers and can also dispel myths. www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/coming-out-advice-and-guidance-for-parents-

There are also local LGBT youth groups within Leicestershire area who run age appropriate groups

My foster child says they want a baby

Some young people may have a strong desire to have a baby. They may think by doing this they can create their own family which could offer love and stability. Seek support from their social worker or your Supervising Social Worker, about how to deal with this. They can help you identify possible agencies that may be able to advise you. They may look at exercises such as how the young person:

- Plans to support a baby emotionally, practically and financially.
- Will afford the day-to-day costs of caring for a baby.
- Can experience what it is actually like to care for a baby.
- Will provide the things they want for a child of their own?

Contraception and pregnancy

Whilst not encouraging it, it is understood that young people may engage in sexual activity; some before they reach the age of consent which is 16 years of age. You should speak to your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker to agree what steps to take to reduce the risk of pregnancy or infection, including accessing sexual health services.

As a foster carer you should not give advice on contraceptive choices. Sexual health services are trained to do this and you should rely on them to do so. Any child under the age of 16 years can ask for contraceptive advice without the consent of a parent, carer or guardian.

If a young person is suspected or known to be pregnant, or to have a sexually transmitted infection, you should speak to your Supervising Social Worker. They will consult with the child's social worker to decide on the actions that should be taken at the earliest opportunity.

Children under 13 years of age are deemed unable to give consent to any sexual activity. If you are concerned that a child placed with you has engaged or is planning to engage in sexual activity, this must be referred to the Local Authority's Children's Social Care Services under the Local Safeguarding Children Board's Inter Agency Safeguarding Procedures (as a Child Protection Referral).

Issues of confidentiality are vital in promoting positive relationships and sex education. The main principle regarding confidentiality is that you should not tell anybody someone's personal information, unless failure to do so would put them at risk or suspected risk. Young people have a right to expect that those who work with or care for them respect their right to privacy.

If you are concerned that a young person is being abused, exploited or at risk of significant harm, you should encourage them to agree for you to do something that will protect them. You will need to share this information with the child's social worker and your Supervising Social Worker if there are concerns regarding risks.

4.3 Alcohol, drugs and smoking

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 5 - Promoting educational attainment.
- Standard 6 - Promoting good health and wellbeing.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety and healthcare.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.

There are a number of misconceptions about young people. They will not all be smoking, or drinking and taking drugs. However, if you do have any worries you about any of these types of behaviour, you should speak to the young person's social worker and/or your Supervising Social Worker. This is really important if you think that drinking alcohol or the use of drugs has become a habit, or if a young person has consumed an excessive amount.

Alcohol

Foster carers should ensure that young people are educated about alcohol. It is accepted that the more that young people know/understand, the more likely they are to make good decisions/choices about how to deal with smoking, drinking and the inappropriate use of drugs. It is good to talk about this subject so that you can share the right messages and information with them.

Changing the way that people behave with alcohol and drugs is partly dependent on persuasion, so it is really important that channels of communication are kept open. This does not mean that you approve of what the young person might be doing.

What to do if a child is drunk

Where you suspect that a child or young person has had alcohol, depending on how much they think they have drunk, you may need to:

- Offer fluids such as water or squash.
- Monitor and check them at appropriate interval, for example, every 10 minutes, every 30 minutes, then hourly, especially if they go to sleep.
- Contact a health professional for advice, for example, their GP or NHS Choices.
- Consider hospital treatment.

You should never ignore a child or young person who appears drunk or under the influence of any other substance. Make sure that you:

- Record the incident/episode.
- Are clear about a young person's religious or cultural beliefs in respect of the consumption of alcohol.
- Make the young person aware of the possible conflict when taking prescribed medication and consuming drinking alcohol at the same time.
- You are aware of the amount of alcohol in your home to ensure that you know when it is being drunk and by whom.
- You understand that young people may have had bad experiences of people getting drunk and so may become anxious if you drink.

The legal position in relation to alcohol

Alcohol consumption in the UK is governed by strict laws.

It is against the law:

- To sell alcohol to someone under 18 years of age anywhere.
- For an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under 18 years of age. (Retailers can reserve the right to refuse the sale of alcohol to an adult if they're accompanied by a child and think the alcohol is being bought for that child).
- For someone under 18 years of age to buy alcohol, attempt to buy alcohol or to be sold alcohol.
- For someone under 18 years of age to drink alcohol in licensed premises, except where the child is 16 years or 17 years old and accompanied by an adult. In this case it is legal for them to drink (but not buy) beer, wine and cider with a table meal.
- For an adult to buy alcohol for someone under 18 years of age for consumption on licensed premises, except as above.
- To give children alcohol if they are under 5 years of age.

It is not illegal:

- For someone over 18 years of age to buy a child over 16 years of age, beer, wine or cider if they are eating a table meal together in licensed premises.
- For a child aged 5 years to 16 years of age to drink alcohol at home or on other private premises.

Drugs and substance misuse

Foster carers do not need to know everything about drugs and substances to respond appropriately and competently to young people that they are caring for.

All young people can be tempted to experiment with drugs, no matter where they come from or their background. Some children and young people will be in foster care because of substance misuse within their family and this may inform how they feel about drugs and their knowledge and understanding of the impacts.

'Substances' means any substances, whether restricted or prohibited, which may have a harmful effect upon a child, such as:

Aerosols, gas, glue, magic mushrooms (amanita), petrol, solvents and all controlled substances such as amphetamines, barbiturates, cannabis, cocaine, hallucinogens, hashish and heroin. This can also include alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco. It also includes 'legal highs' which are substances that have the same or similar effects as illegal drugs.

It is often difficult to tell if a young person is using drugs, particularly when they first takes drugs or only takes them occasionally.

Some possible indications of drug abuse are:

- Sudden changes of mood.
- Irritability.
- Loss of appetite.
- Increased appetite.
- Desire to eat sweet things.
- Drowsiness or sleepiness.
- Evidence of telling lies.
- Unexplained loss of money or belongings.
- Unusual smells, stains or marks on the body, clothes or around the house.

Many of these signs are easily confused with normal growing up. It is vital that you do not make it a taboo subject but perhaps use opportunities such as stories in the media and on television to start conversations about drug use.

It is important not to jump to the wrong conclusion. You should speak to the child's social worker or your Supervising Social Worker if you are concerned. Specialist training is available on drug and alcohol misuse.

There are also professional s who specialise in working with young people about this. Accessing these services should be done in conjunction with the child's social worker. You could be held responsible for any illegal drugs that are kept in your home so having clear boundaries about drug use is highly important.

Young people often have access to a range of domestic products that are harmful and potentially fatal to them when inhaled. You need to be vigilant with young people around aerosol products, nail varnish, corrective fluid and glues etc.

Training is also provided by the Fostering Service. You can speak to your Supervising Social Worker about doing this.

Smoking (including e-cigarettes)

Not all young people will smoke and some may have a period of just trying it but they can quite quickly become addicted to cigarettes. This guidance applies to the use of tobacco and e-cigarettes.

Some children and young people placed with you may already have a smoking habit. You should support and encourage them to stop smoking as soon as possible, or to reduce how many they smoke if they cannot stop altogether straight away. You can get support (Local Stop Smoking service and from the looked after children's nurse or the young person's GP.

Remember:

Smoking and the law

It is against the law:

- For young people under 18 years of age to buy cigarettes, cigarette papers and tobacco. The law is about being sold tobacco so not the young person who is breaking the law but the person who sells it to them.
- To purchase cigarettes, cigarette papers and tobacco on behalf of anyone under the age of 18 years. (Proxy Purchasing legislation introduced in 2015 -The Proxy Purchasing of Tobacco, Nicotine Products etc. (Fixed Penalty Amount) Regulations 2015 (legislation.gov.uk)
- Smoke in the car with anyone under the age of 18 years. Smoking in vehicles - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Rules about when, where and by who is allowed to smoke must be clear. In this decision making you should consider the comfort and safety of everyone who lives in the home. For anyone who is trying not to smoke or has quit, having people smoking around them can often be a trigger for relapse.
- To be a positive role model for children and young people. You don't need to see someone smoke to know that they are a smoker!
- To raise awareness of the negative effects of cigarettes and tobacco use, explaining how quickly people can become addicted and encourage the YP in how to live a healthy lifestyle by re-enforcing the positives of not smoking.

Your role is to:

- Consider your own health, your family and fostered children. If you smoke and are offered smoking cessation support, you have a duty to consider taking up the service. This service is free and confidential. You will receive expert advice, and medication to help you quit, or cut down to quit, and lots of practical hints and tips to help you change your routine and break the habit.
- Be mindful that your behaviour provides role modelling for the children in your care and consider the effect of smoking on children. The influence of role models plays a huge part in influencing the uptake of smoking among young people. Children who have one or more parents or older siblings who smoke are 3 times more likely to start smoking themselves.
- Never buy cigarettes or materials used for smoking for children or young people in your care as it is illegal.
- Cigarettes must never be used as a bribe or reward for good behaviour or to calm a situation.
- Put in place household rules about smoking, making these clear to young people placed with you in an age appropriate way.

4.4 Safer Sleeping for Babies

Although rare, sudden infant death syndrome (sids) is a concern for foster carers of babies. There are several measures to take in order to minimise the risk, as advised by nhs:

- Use a new cot mattress for each new baby – some research has indicated that there is a greater risk of dying with sids when babies had slept on previously used cot mattresses.
- Babies should be placed to sleep in a cot or Moses basket,
- Babies should never co-sleep with an adult
- Babies should be placed to sleep on their back
- Babies should be placed with their feet at the foot of the cot (feet to foot)
- Babies should not be allowed to get too hot, a room temperature of 18c is ideal, their head should be uncovered and sheets should be tucked in so they can't wriggle under bedclothes. Cots should not be placed close to radiators.

If foster carers have concerns about a baby's sleeping their health visitor is available for advice and guidance.

There are several websites which have advice and information concerning the care of babies, including

www.nhs.uk

www.wesleepwell.co.uk

www.babysleepsite.com

www.mumsnet.com

4.5 School and education

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 8 - Promoting educational attainment.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.
- Standard 6 - Keep children and young people safe from harm.

Under Section 22 (3A) of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a duty to promote the 'Educational Achievement of Looked After Children'. Section 99 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to appoint an officer as the 'Virtual School Head' ('VSH'). The VSH should ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the needs of all Looked After Children in their education setting.

Often Looked After Children have experienced disrupted education due to difficulties at home or changes in their placements. This will have an impact on how well they do attend and achieve at school and how they feel about themselves in relation to learning.

It is vital the child's educational needs are met within their education setting and that services and support are fully accessed. You can discuss this with the child's social worker and your Supervising Social Worker before the placement with you starts.

You play an important role in promoting education (including pre-school) and providing a learning environment outside of educational settings for the child or young person. Your attitude towards education will have an impact upon the child you are caring for.

Your role

- Keep nursery, school (or alternative education) or college, informed of any significant changes, issues or concerns.
- Help the young person to express their own issues or concerns, their goals and aspirations, and advocate on their behalf.
- Attend parent's evenings and any school meetings and encourage where appropriate, parent's involvement.
- Support your foster child in completing their homework or revision, ensuring time is set aside for this, as appropriate to their age and ability.
- Contribute to the on-going assessment of the child's educational needs and progress, including attending Personal Educational Planning meetings with school and child's social worker.

- Provide your foster child with a school uniform, equipment (including a computer) and appropriate financial support for school trips and after school clubs etc. If a child has changed school, there is financial support available for you to purchase a new school uniform. (Leicestershire County Council offers support with providing computers to Looked After Children to help with their homework, as part of their commitment to being good 'Corporate Parents'.)
- Support the child's school attendance, punctuality, appropriate uniform, and completion of homework.
- Liaise with the school and other agencies, including the child's social worker, if non-attendance of school is an issue for your foster child.
- Support the child to achieve their education or training goals.
- Encourage the child or young person to look at alternative education, placements and further or higher education or training.
- Have up to date information about your foster child's education progress, attendance and achievement, for their Review of Arrangements meeting.
- Record any relevant information with regards to the child/young person.
- Speak to the child's social worker if you have any concerns.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All Looked After Children of compulsory school age must have a PEP, even if they are not currently in education. It provides important information to make sure that the right support is in place so that they can achieve their targets. It should also be a record of the child's educational achievements and leisure interests/activities.

The child's social worker should arrange a meeting to put together the first PEP meeting within the first 10 days of a child becoming Looked After.

Who should be invited?

- The foster carer.
- The Supervising Social Worker (if required).
- The child and their parents (if appropriate).
- The designated teacher at the school and/or the virtual school representative.
- Any other relevant professionals.

Please note that the PEP meeting cannot go ahead unless either the child's social worker or the virtual school representative is present.

If the child is excluded from school, the Head Teacher, an education officer and the SEN adviser should be invited when required.

The first PEP should:

- Identify what may have caused or may cause a negative effect on the child's education.
- Identify the child's assessed needs and targets, for example, to maintain their current school place, make transport arrangements, find a new school or obtain short-term interim education.
- Include any Individual Education Plan or other school-based plan.
- Identify a named person for the day-to-day management of the PEP and establish how the school will keep in contact with you and the child's social worker.
- Be clear about who needs to know about the PEP in school.
- Agree a date for PEP review meeting and when the next full PEP meeting is due.

The completed PEP should be given to you, the child, their parents, and all others invited to the meeting. A copy should also be sent to the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

The PEP covers the following:

- History of education and training, including information about educational settings attended and the reasons for leaving, the attendance and behaviour record, academic and other achievements and any Special Educational Needs.
- How much the child's education has been disrupted before becoming Looked After.
- What arrangements are currently in place for education and training, including details of any special educational provision.
- How the child's Pupil Premium Plus will be spent to support their progress in school.
- Any planned changes to arrangements for education and training.
- The child's leisure interests.
- Your role and the role of any other person who is involved in promoting the child's educational achievements and leisure interests.

The child's social worker must ensure that PEP review meetings take place on time.

PEP decisions and recommendations must be shared with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer at the Looked After Review.

If there are changes in arrangements such as a change of school or the child needing private tuition, these recommendations should be put on the agenda for discussion at their Looked After Review.

The Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

Looked After Children are eligible for additional funding to raise their educational attainment and support them to reach their full potential. The Looked After Child PPP must be managed by the designated Virtual School Head (VSH) within the local authority that Looks After the Child, and used without delay, for the benefit of the Looked After Child's educational needs, as described in their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

The child in care's voice and their specific needs are of central importance in considering the use and impact of this money. Schools and other educational settings are accountable for ensuring that the PPP is used appropriately and effectively and are asked to review and detail its impact at PEP meetings.

The PPP must be used to improve educational outcomes, and priority should be given in the following areas:

- Readiness to access learning (including addressing social and emotional needs).
- Academic achievement and progress.
- Wider achievement, for example, in an area in which the child is gifted and talented.
- Transition into the next key stage and/or to a new learning provider.

Leicestershire County Council and the Virtual School Head are 'Corporate Parents', so the question 'would this be good enough for my child?' is central to making decisions about, and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of PPP.

Some of the PPP funding is held centrally to address identified needs of targeted individual, or groups of children and young people.

When a child changes school

Changes of school should be avoided as this will disrupt a child's education. When unavoidable, it should not take place in the middle of a school year or in years 10 and 11.

If a change of provision takes place, the new provision should be provided with a copy of the child's current PEP.

A change of school at any time needs the agreement of the relevant local education service.

When a child is absent from school

You must notify the school and the child's social worker immediately if they do not attend school for any reason.

If the child has been absent from school for more than 10 days, their social worker should talk to you, the school and them, and any other relevant person to understand:

- The reason(s) for the absence.
- How to ensure the child returns to school or education at the very earliest opportunity.
- Whether and how the child can be helped to catch up on what they have missed.

It is important that you do not plan a holiday during term time. A child must not miss school unless this is absolutely unavoidable, such as for urgent health appointments. The Child in Care Senior Manager must approve any unauthorised absence from school.

School exclusions

Exclusion from school should be a last resort for children who are Looked After, so it is vital that you work with the school as soon as a child's behaviour becomes a cause for concern.

The school should tell you and the child's social worker the reasons for the exclusion. The social worker should inform the parents, if appropriate. The virtual school must be informed immediately in order for them to liaise with the school on behalf of you and the child and attempt to identify a plan for the child to return to school expediently.

If the child is in primary school and receives a fixed term exclusion or is in secondary school and is excluded for more than 5 days, their social worker should make sure a meeting is held within the next 5 days to discuss the child's return and how best this can be supported.

The child's social worker must also inform the child's Independent Reviewing Officer of this.

If a child is excluded from school for a fixed period, the school must provide work for them to complete. You will need to discuss suitable arrangements with the child and their social worker for making sure the child does schoolwork during the day and ensuring that they do not go out during school hours, in the short term. The school is responsible for providing a different means for the child to be educated.

In the case of **permanent exclusion**, a meeting of school governors will be held within 15 days to review the decision. If the meeting decides to uphold the decision to permanently exclude, an appeal can be made within 15 school days of the meeting. The appeals form can be completed by anyone who has parental responsibility for the child. The child's social worker, after talking to the child and their parents, must consider with the virtual school, whether to appeal against the decision to exclude the child.

Beacon website provides lots of information and advice for children, carers and schools at

<http://thebeaconleics.com/virtualschool.html>

4.6 Caring for a disabled child

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 6 - Promoting health and wellbeing.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.

This section talks about children who have disabilities and those who have complex health needs. There are too many types of disability and complex health needs to list here but you must remember that if you are caring for a child with these types of needs, there will likely be at least one professional who has a clear picture about what the disability is and what it means for the child in functioning on a day-to-day basis.

Sometimes a child or young person may have been diagnosed, for example as 'autistic'. Regardless of a diagnosis or 'label', you need to work directly with the other people who have been or are involved with the child, to understand better what their disability means and what they are really like.

Disabled people often find that their disabilities are the first and only thing that people notice about them and you must remember that a child or young person should be thought of first, before the special need(s) that they have.

Caring for a child

The sort of help that disabled children may need are:

- Help with physical disabilities like mobility issues.
- Help with learning difficulties and social disorders such as those on the autistic spectrum.
- Sensory impairments such as partial sightedness.

The sort of help that children with complex health may need are:

- Special medication and dealing with conditions such as epilepsy.
- Help with breathing, eating and other daily functions like using the toilet and bathing.

Of course, some children need help in a number of these categories.

Some children have entitlements to benefits that are not affected by being in a foster home such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The way that Disability Living Allowance money is spent should be recorded as part of the Review of Arrangements for the child. You should discuss any variations with your Supervising Social Worker. Any significant payments should be discussed with the child's social worker also. You are required to record how the Disability Living Allowance is spent on a separate Disability Living Allowance recording form and receipts should be kept where possible.

Where a disabled child needs special help, you should be in a position to provide this. This means that these things should be completed or in place before they move in:

- Special training from a suitably qualified medical professional. This could include the child's specific needs and , for example , giving special medication or treatment.
- You should be provided with suitable equipment required such as a hoist or a special car seat or wheelchair.
- Where there are risks around manual handling, risk assessments should be completed.

It should be clarified what equipment a child may bring with them and what they may need in addition to this.

When considering caring for a child with a disability, you need to be given full information in order to be clear whether you can meet their needs or not. You must be approved to care for these children before they can be placed with you. Once you have decided to take the child, the Placement Planning Meeting should detail all the support required, including medical needs the child has. It should be clear what decisions you can make regarding the child's day-to-day life including medical decisions.

Disabled children may need Special Educational Needs support and there should be a special representative in each school assigned to identify what help the child needs to get the best out of going to school, pre-school and college.

Many children with disabilities need continuing services throughout their lives.

Assessment should take a long-term perspective. This will help you, the birth family and professionals to make decisions about the kind of help needed at different points in the child's life, for example, with education, respite care or other services.

Your Supervising Social Worker or the child's social worker should help you to identify appropriate support and advice from relevant agencies, including following the child's interests and taking part in activities they are interested in.

You should make sure children and young people with disabilities have all they need to reach their full potential and lead as full a life as possible.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

DLA is a benefit payable to some children who have disabilities which impact on their ability to carry out the sort of activities which can be expected of a child of a similar age. It is meant to cover the additional expenses arising from the disability, eg extra wear and tear on clothing, extra household expenses, additional travel costs or certain equipment.

As such DLA should not be saved for the future. It is meant to be spent on an ongoing basis to support and enhance the child's quality of life.

Foster carers should have regular discussions with their SSW and the child's social worker to agree best use of the DLA and should keep regular records of how the DLA is spent.

Local offer

Local authorities in England have a duty to develop and publish a Local Offer, setting out the support they expect to be available for local children and young people aged 0-25 years of age who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disabilities, whether or not they have plans for education, health or a Care Plan.

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/...and.../about-the-local-offer>

The Local Offer must include information about:

- Special educational, health and social care provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities. This should include online and blended learning.
- Arrangements for identifying and assessing children and young people's SEN. This should include arrangements for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments.
- Education provision and post-16 education and training provision.
- Information about provision to assist in preparing young people for adulthood.
- Arrangements for travel to and from education sites.
- Childcare, including suitable provision for disabled children and those with SEN.
- Support available to young people in further/higher education, particularly the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and the process and timescales for making an application for this.
- Arrangements for resolving disagreements, including mediation, and details about making complaints.

The Local Offer must include provision within and local authority's area and outside of the area when the authority expects that these services are likely to be used by children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, for whom they are responsible. Such services may include school or further education, college or support services for children and young people with particular types of SEN, that are provided jointly by more than one local authority.

The local education service where the child lives (unless in residential accommodation), is responsible for the placement and provision of education to a pupil who has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This will be considered alongside the PEP.

As a young person who has a disability approaches adulthood, the Transitions Team should become involved in planning their ongoing care, to discuss their assessed needs options for meeting these. There should be clear transition planning, working closely with the young person, their parents, carers and key agencies. All disabled young people are entitled to a multi-agency transition plan so that their needs as adults are understood and appropriate services are provided to meet these.

4.7 Promoting positive identity

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
- Standard 2 - Promotes all aspects of their individual identity, in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.
- Standard 6 - Promoting health and wellbeing.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.
- Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.

Where possible children will be placed with carers who share the same race, ethnicity and language as their birth family, however until there are sufficient numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) carers, to enable most black and minority Looked After Children to be placed appropriately, some of our available carers, including white British carers, will find themselves caring for children from different racial and cultural backgrounds where they are assessed as being able to meet their needs.

A child's history, identity, experiences and 'sense of self' is intrinsically linked with identity, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, family and social culture. The needs of a child cannot be understood and met without full consideration of these factors. Supervising Social Workers must, therefore, ensure when matching children with foster carers, that they give comprehensive consideration to these dimensions. It is the Fostering Service's policy to ensure that Looked After Children are placed in an environment where all aspects of their identity can be positively understood and promoted.

Race and culture are closely related but are not necessarily the same, therefore, where different cultures are present within the same racial group, consideration must be given to those dynamics also.

It is important to remember that a child's heritage may not always be obvious from their physical appearance. Yet their life experiences may be closely linked to a particular culture, ethnicity or religion. These factors must be taken into account when identifying a suitable placement.

Religion and culture are often intrinsically linked, particularly where religious observance is a fundamental part of social development and being part of a community. Matching therefore, should take account of ethnicity and religion and try to avoid making a choice between these two potentially important aspects of a child's identity.

When considering placement options, the views of the family and the child (if age appropriate), will be taken into account and if possible an element of placement choice will be offered.

Promoting choice and respecting the wishes of the child and their family may be constrained by the need to protect the child or by resource limitations.

The child's social worker and the Supervising Social Worker will explore with the carer, how the family will deal with issues of racial challenge, identity issues and/or rejection by the young person of their black identity, ethnic heritage or religious affiliation.

Living in a racially diverse area is not a sufficient reason to justify or support a trans-racial placement. Black and Minority Ethnic children can be exposed to racial challenges in racially mixed areas, particularly when the dynamics of peer group pressure or adolescent culture are considered. The carer's awareness of the issues should be part of the matching process.

Birth parents have the right to state the religion in which they would like their child to be raised and this must be taken into account. Placement decisions however have to be determined by the assessed needs of a child and resources available.

Social Workers should be aware of religion and cultures within Black and Minority Ethnic communities. It should not be assumed that a same continent or nationality placement will adequately address a particular child's ethnic, cultural and/or religious needs.

Every placement should attempt to meet all or most of a child's needs that are related to difference and diversity. When considering a trans-racial placement it must be acknowledged that the dynamics of placing a Black and Minority Ethnic child in a white family are very different to placing a white child in a black family. This is because a white child will continue to have the cultural reinforcement of the dominant culture and is less removed from their heritage than a black child would be if placed in a white family.

All foster carers who have a child trans-racially placed with them should have support from the child's social worker about how to best meet the needs of the child in their care. Find suitable resources such as age appropriate books for children about living in a family with a different racial origin to their birth family, and sourcing other materials, such as culturally diverse dolls/toys. Further action could include additional support or training for the carer.

4.8 Promoting financial responsibility

It is widely accepted that giving children pocket money on a regular basis is an important means of introducing them to using and managing money. By encouraging a proportion of this to be used as savings then can instil the habit of saving from an early age.

Foster carers allowance includes an element for pocket money and towards savings. It is expected that all school age children should be given pocket money either as cash or money for their bank account. Setting fixed amounts of pocket money is problematic and consideration must be given to individual circumstances of children in care and foster families. Foster carers have asked for some guidance on acceptable expected rates. The below is merely a suggested guideline as we are aware that circumstances vary from household to household and what a carer already provides for the child by way of treats, leisure activities should be considered in this decision.

See suggested amounts in Money Matters section

There needs to be a considerable degree of flexibility and lack of rigidity whilst maintaining a sense of fairness and consistency, both between foster children and between foster children and the carers' birth or adopted children.

The following principles should guide the payment of pocket money

- Having pocket money is good for the child/young person. It gives a sense of independence and a measure of choice in making decisions about how the money is spent
- Receiving pocket money helps children understand the value of money and is the start of developing budgeting skills
- The amount of pocket money should form part of the Child's Placement Planning plan and the rate of pocket money paid should be kept under review by all concerned. Setting the appropriate level is dependent on close communication between the carer, child/young person and their social worker and supervising social worker.
- Disputes over pocket money should be dealt with by informal discussion within the foster home in the first instance. If a child/young person is not happy with amount given, it should be clear how they can raise their dissatisfaction.
- In principle children in care and the foster carer's birth children of the same age should get the same weekly pocket money and it would be unfair if foster children received either more or less than the foster carer's own children
- Carers and Social workers may consider an increase in pocket money by a fixed amount at each birthday. It is also suggested that pocket money is given out on a regular day each week.
- In many families an understanding may be reached that once a child is old enough to help out with basic household chores, 'top-ups' to pocket money can be arranged in exchange for jobs done. In some foster placements this could be appropriate, especially in long term placements where such an understanding and trust could be built up over time.
- Achieving the right level of pocket money/monthly allowance is dependent on carers knowing the child/young person well and having a trusting relationship, with the child/young person developing a good understanding of the foster family's culture regarding use of money

- The rate of pocket money paid to young people should be realistic. It is the responsibility of carers and social workers to help ensure the smooth transition to independent living after foster care. It would be unhelpful to this process if a young person's pocket money enabled her/him to enter in to a lifestyle which was not possible if s/he later had to live independently.
- Pocket money should rarely be withheld as a form of 'punishment' but as a last resort but it should be saved or carried over until the next week.
- Fostering Network recommend that within the basic weekly allowance there is a 'personal allowances' element for older children. This is intended to cover both pocket money and other personal expenses for children and young people which could cover such items as cosmetics, deodorants, sanitary protection, shaving equipment, landline and mobile telephone calls. It is important, particularly with older children, to be clear from the start about who pays for what! Some households will continue to supply many items as part of the weekly 'shop' or from the general housekeeping. There needs to be discussion at the outset of the placement about how much of the personal allowances element should be paid to the young person, as pocket money and savings.

Savings Accounts

It is generally agreed that helping young people to develop the habit of saving is a good thing. Foster carers play a vital role in helping their foster children develop those good habits which lay the foundation for successful transition to adulthood. The ability to manage money and budget is an important skill. It is important that our children are helped to develop this skill as they grow up and prepare for eventual independence.

Having a bank account for savings is one part of this. It is expected that all of our children and young people who have been looked after for more than one year will have some savings and have a bank account. That sounds simple enough, but like so many 'simple' things, the 'devil is in the detail'.

Easy Access Savings

When children have been looked after for more than one year, it is expected that their foster carer opens a savings account on their behalf. Most of the high street banks and building societies have special children's savings accounts which often pay a higher rate of interest. Money can be withdrawn when needed and, in most cases, needs a responsible adult to authorise withdrawals.

Child Trust Fund (CTF)

If your foster child was born between 01.09.2002 and 02.01.2011 they may have a Child Trust Fund. This was a savings/investment account offered to all children and started with a lump sum contribution by the Government by way of a voucher. It was up to the parent to use the voucher. Some children who were in care during this time may have had a CTF set up on their behalf by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Anyone can add money to the CTF by up to £9000 per year. The money can't be withdrawn until the young person reaches 18 years of age. It can be closed and transferred to a Junior ISA.

Junior Individual Savings Account (Junior ISA)

Since January 2011 it has been possible for children to have a Junior ISA. This is a savings or investment account which anyone can add money to up to £9000 per year. The money can't be withdrawn until the young person is 18. You can't have a Child Trust Fund and a Junior ISA.

When young people are looked after continuously for more than 12 months, the Government will set up a Junior ISA on their behalf with a start-up contribution of £200, unless they already have a Child Trust Fund or Junior ISA in their name. Leicestershire County Council update the Share Foundation with details of all children who have been in Care for more than 12 months, on a regular basis.

The Share Foundation

The Share Foundation (www.sharefound.org) is a charity that has been set up to manage Child Trust Funds and Junior ISA's on behalf of children who are looked after.

What should I do?

Discuss with your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker what arrangements to put in place regarding savings for your foster child.

Which type of account and how much to save will depend on the age of the child and a host of individual circumstances. Agreements can form part of the Placement Plan and be regularly reviewed as part of Review of Arrangements Meetings.

If your child was born between 01.09.02 and 02.01.2011 check if they have a Child Trust Fund. You can fill in a form online via the gov.uk website. If you're having difficulty with this contact the Share Foundation.

If your child has been looked after for more than 12 months contact the Share Foundation to make sure that contact details for their Junior ISA are up to date. They will want to have the contact details of the responsible adult for each account, and you'll be able to top up the savings either on a regular basis or with occasional lump sums.

If your foster child leaves your care before they are 18, either to go to another foster placement, back to parents or other family members don't forget to pass on details of any savings so that they stay with the child and records can be kept up to date.

When your foster child is 18 and either leaves your care or is 'Staying Put' they will hopefully have a 'nest egg' to help them with the first steps to independence.

Useful information

As always your supervising social worker and the child's social worker will be your first port of call. Further information is available on the following websites.

www.gov.uk

www.sharefound.org

www.moneyadvice.service.org

4.9 Leicestershire corporate parenting team

'As a Local Authority we take our role as Corporate Parents for Looked After Children seriously. We want to ensure that children have the very best care, support and inspiring opportunities to achieve their full potential' (Adrian Clifford).

Leicestershire's Corporate Parenting Team comprises of three Children's Rights Officers, providing advocacy for children and young people where there are child protection concerns and for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This ensures their views are listened to and properly informs the decisions made about their day-to-day lives. Children's Rights Officers are able to meet with young people, support them at their Review of Arrangement meetings and help them to address any worries or concerns they may have. The Children's Rights Officers can also access independent legal advice for the young people they are supporting where appropriate.

The team also includes a Participation Officer, who has responsibility for development of Leicestershire's Children in Care Council. Meetings take place on a monthly basis, with separate Junior (7–13 years of age) and Senior (14 – 18 years of age) councils that represent the voice and views of their peers. Members meet to discuss and consider the issues faced by Children in Care and things that are important to them. This includes looking at ways of making a difference for Children in Care and how they can influence this locally in Leicestershire, as well as nationally through such forums as the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Throughout the year, Corporate Parenting colleagues are also committed to regularly providing a broad range of positive participation and engagement activities. This includes Leicestershire's Children in Care Choir, called 'Beacon Voices' and a Summer Scheme based at Beaumanor Hall for younger children of 5-11 years of age.

If you or the child or young person you are caring for would like to know any further information regarding Leicestershire's Corporate Parenting Team and the services they provide, discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker.

Contact: Corporate.Parenting@leics.gov.uk

“ They need to be kind definitely and understanding of what that child has been through and comforting towards them, because they might be in distress and just want somebody to talk to. ”

Quote from a Child in Care 2018





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PART 5: COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

5

5.1 What happens if an allegation is made about me or my family

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 4 - Safeguarding children.
- Standard 5 - Promoting educational attainment.
- Standard 22 - Handling allegations and suspicions of harm.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 6 - Keep children and young people safe from harm.

Occasionally allegations and complaints are made against foster carers and/or those in their family. All foster carers will receive training and guidance regarding what happens if an allegation is made about you or another member of your family.

The role of your Supervising Social Worker is to ensure you have sufficient information and support throughout the time it takes to deal with this. Allegations highlight the importance of keeping up to date accurate records of any significant incidents, events or complaints. These can provide important evidence when an allegation is being dealt with.

Allegations can place you in a difficult and sometimes distressing position. If an allegation against you or someone in your household is made directly to a social worker they have a responsibility to make you aware of it.

How you can reduce risks

- Think about who in the household may be vulnerable to allegations.
- Keep up to date records and hand these in to your Supervising Social Worker who will read these and upload them onto your file and the child's file. These will then be referred to if an allegation is made.
- Be clear on what behaviour is expected within the household.

- Adhere to your Safe Caring Policy in order to keep everyone who lives in and visits the home safe.
- Make use of allegations training and support from your Supervising Social Worker.
- Work closely with professionals and talk to them about any concerns you have.

What happens if an allegation is made?

If an allegation is made it will be investigated fairly and confidentially. Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures will be followed. See <http://lrsb.org.uk/>

Following an allegation the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed. A strategy meeting/discussion will be held within 2 working days of the allegation to decide whether an investigation is necessary. If so, this will be led by the LADO and may involve the police in a Child Protection Investigation (S47 Children Act 1989).

If an allegation is made against you, you will be notified verbally and in writing. You will be given, where appropriate, the chance to respond to the allegation before a final decision is made about what action to take.

The minutes of the strategy meeting/discussion and any relevant information will be held on your record. In some situations the local authority may look for a new placement for the child placed with you and a decision may be made not to place any other children during the investigation and/ or until there is an outcome to the investigation. If the child is moved to a new placement, you will continue to receive your skills level payment for up to 12 weeks .

Your Supervising Social Worker may not be able to discuss the specifics of the allegation with you during the investigation but they will be able to offer you support during this period.

The Fostering Service will inform you of:

- How you will be supported and paid whilst you are under investigation.
- Contact details of an independent agency who will also provide you with support during the investigation. Leicestershire Foster Carers Association (LFCA) will offer support and advocacy.
- Fostering Network can offer legal advice and will provide you with support during the investigation. See www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk
- If you require further advice and support, the Team Around the Child Team Manager can refer to Foster Talk, if you would like them to do so.

Why a foster child might make a false allegation of abuse?

It is often confusing and upsetting for foster carers when an allegation is made, who feel they have a good rapport with the child they have been looking after and have built a relationship of mutual trust. Children may do this for a variety of reasons:

- It is the truth.
- Misinterpreting an innocent action.
- To bring attention to previous abuse for the first time because you or someone in the household is trusted.

- As a way to have some control over their life which may seem out of control.
- To bring an end to a foster placement.

Following an investigation

Following the investigation a Position of Trust meeting will be held. It will be co-ordinated and chaired by LADO. The investigation outcome will be discussed and it will be determined whether or not there are any remaining safeguarding concerns regarding you holding a position of trust for the local authority. You will be advised of the outcome.

Following the Position of Trust meeting, there will be a Carers Review carried out by the Fostering Reviewing Officer. This will be held at the first available opportunity and will precede a return to Foster Panel. This is not presuming you are at fault but will ensure the matter is dealt with and resolved and that outcomes are formally identified and recorded. The Foster Panel may recommend any of the following outcomes.

- Appropriate training to support you to meet the child's needs and your professional development.
- The need to reconsider your approval category.
- Decide that you are no longer suitable to foster.

If an allegation is made directly to you about another person's behaviour towards a child, you should inform your Supervising Social Worker and/or the child's social worker as soon as possible within 24 hours after the allegation is made.

www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/p_alleg_foster.html?zoom_highlight+allegation+foster+carer#policy

5.2 Whistleblowing (blowing the whistle)

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 4 - Safeguarding children.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 6 - Keep children and young people safe from harm.

You should inform your Supervising Social Worker if you have any serious concerns or come across any wrong doings whilst being a foster carer for Leicestershire County Council.

If the concern is about your Supervising Social Worker, you should speak to a more senior manager within the Fostering Service.

You should raise concerns confidentially without fear of any comeback.

You should record your concerns, detailing names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are concerned. If you do not feel able to do this, your Supervising Social Worker or the manager you speak to can make a written record of your conversation. Concerns you have should be expressed as soon as possible.

Certain information will be classed as a 'protected disclosure'. A protected disclosure must relate to a specific matter and be made in a certain way.

Specific matters include:

- A criminal offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed.
- A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation.
- A miscarriage of justice has happened, is happening or is likely to happen.
- The health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be damaged.
- Damage to the environment has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- Information showing any of the above has been or is being or is likely to be deliberately hidden.

All concerns and complaints will be investigated and addressed through our complaints procedure. See

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/complaints-and-appeals/complain-about-childrens-social-care/how-to-make-a-complaint>

If you raise concerns which are found to be malicious, a review of your approval may happen.

5.3 Complaints by and for children

Standards and Regulations

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 1 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.
- Standard 6 - Keep children and young people safe from harm.

What a complaint may be about

- The foster placement.
- The fostering service.
- The local authority, including the child's social worker or the Supervising Social Worker.
- The child's school or alternative educational setting.

Your role is to:

- Listen to the child or young person, take them seriously and try not to be defensive about what they are saying.
- Tell others, including the child's social worker and/or your Supervising Social Worker. They might see something in the complaint that you don't.
- Try to help the child sort out the problem.
- Advocate (speak on behalf of) for the child where appropriate, depending on their age, stage of development and understanding.
- Where needed and after seeking advice, help the child to access the formal complaints procedure of the Fostering Service/Local Authority.
- Ensure that children and young people get feedback about what happens in response to a complaint they have made.
- Contact the Children's Rights Officer. Most issues can be sorted out informally through discussion with either the child, their social worker or your Supervising Social Worker, depending on what the problem is. Sometimes, the Fostering Service Manager may be the most appropriate person to speak to about the concerns.

5.4 How can I make a complaint about the fostering service

Standards and Regulations

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the Fostering Service, you should discuss it with your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance. They will try and resolve the problem with the person concerned. If your Supervising Social Worker is the person you want to complain about, then you should speak to a manager within the Fostering Service. If your complaint is about the Fostering Service as a whole, then you should contact the Complaints Manager in the first instance. Formal complaints should be made in writing to;

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/complaints-and-appeals/complain-about-childrens-social-care/how-to-make-a-complaint>

The Fostering Service will always try to deal with this informally initially. This does not mean that you are not being taken seriously but because a complaint is more likely to be able to be dealt with quickly and to your satisfaction when it is dealt with in this way. This is known as a Stage 1 complaint and all complaints are recorded by the Complaints Team.

If you are not satisfied with this, your complaint will be dealt with in line with the Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure. This is known as a Stage 2 Complaint and an Independent Investigation will take place.

If the complaint has still not been resolved then an Independent Review Panel will consider the complaint and the way it has been dealt with. This is Stage 3 of the complaint process.

In the unlikely event that your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you will be able to contact the Local Government Ombudsman, however, they will refer you back to the local authority if you have not used all three stages of the Local Authority's Complaints Procedure first.

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/complaints-and-appeals/complain-about-childrens-social-care/how-to-make-a-complaint>

Ofsted

You are entitled to get in touch with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted inspect and regulate services for children and young people, including Fostering Services. If you have a serious concern or complaint about the Fostering Service, you can also contact them directly:

Ofsted Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

5.5 Reviewing my approval and appeals

Standards and Regulations

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 1 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
- Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

Once you have been approved, your Supervising Social Worker will work with you to support you in caring for children placed with you. Their role is also to monitor and help you in your professional development as a carer.

Your approval will be reviewed as follows:

- Your first review will take place after you have been a foster carer for a year and will be presented to the Fostering Panel.
- Subsequently, your annual review will be conducted by your Supervising Social Worker and will not be presented to the Fostering Panel.
- Further reviews may be undertaken by your Supervising Social Worker if there is a significant change to your family circumstances, following an allegation or you or the Fostering Service want to change the Terms of your Approval for another reason.

Terminating your approval in response to your resignation

You may at any point give notice in to the Fostering Service in writing if you wish to resign from your role as foster carer for Leicestershire County Council. Your approval will be terminated automatically within 28 calendar days from the date when your resignation is received, even if you decide to withdraw it . Should you wish to foster again subsequently, you will need to be re-assessed under the County's Procedure for the Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers.

The annual review process

Your Supervising Social Worker is responsible for your approval, which is reviewed at least once a year. The purpose of the review is to decide whether you should continue to be a foster carer and if so whether your terms of approval should change or stay the same. If it is proposed to revise your terms of approval, the Agency Decision Maker will identify whether as a result of this, you or members of your household (including any children placed with you), may have additional support needs and how those needs will be met. Revision of your terms of approval will be implemented immediately unless you are unhappy with the change.

Changing terms of approval

Changes in the terms of approval should be done through the review process. If it is a significant change, this will go to the Fostering Panel following your review.

Change to terms of approval can be done in an emergency situation. A letter will be sent to you setting out whether as a result of this, you or members of your household (including any children placed with you) may have additional support needs and how those needs will be met.

The carers review

Step 1: The Supervising Social Worker's report

Your Supervising Social Worker will visit you and is responsible for writing the annual review report by putting together all relevant information to provide a recommendation for your suitability to continue to foster and your approval category. Your Supervising Social Worker will:

- Talk to you, your own children, fostered children and other significant members of the household, to find out everyone's views.
- Seek the views of the Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Seek the views of the birth parents where appropriate.
- Talk to your previous and current child(ren's) social worker(s) about the placement(s) you have provided or are providing since the last review.
- Update the chronology.
- Look at information regarding any complaints or allegations made against you or your family.
- Look at the training you have completed, and your future training needs.
- Complete a health and safety checklist.
- Review your family's Safer Caring Plan if necessary.

Your Supervising Social Worker will share the report with you and will ask you to add your views and sign it. If you are not happy with any part of the report, you must speak to your Supervising Social Worker and/or the Team Around the Child Team Manager.

Your Supervising Social Worker will need their manager to approve their report.

A Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check will need to be completed for you and your family every three years.

Step 2: The review visit

This visit will normally take place in your home, unless you are unhappy with that. It will be chaired by the Reviewing Officer and may be attended by the Supervising Social Worker. The meeting offers the opportunity for reflection and development and to consider in-depth, the quality of the foster care that has been undertaken during the previous year.

Differences of perspective, areas of concern or development can be discussed and plans can be made. Foster carers have the opportunity to share their experience of the Fostering Service. The Reviewing Officer will write a report and make a recommendation about you continuing to foster, based on the information shared in the review visit and relevant reports submitted.

Step 3: The Foster Panel

Your Supervising Social Worker will present the Report to the Fostering Panel following the your First Review, Annual Review or a Review regarding either concerns or allegations. The Fostering Panel will consider a change to the Terms of your Approval if this is suggested in the Review Report. You will be encouraged to attend the Panel.

Step 4: The decision making process

The Fostering Panel will make a recommendation to approve you to foster and indicate the best match considerations, to guide your first year of fostering.

The Agency Decision Maker will send you a letter to confirm your terms of approval.

Step 5: Appeals and what you can do if you disagree with the decision

If you are unhappy with the decision of the Agency Decision Maker, you can write to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). See

Email: Irm@org.uk

Website: www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

The IRM is a review process that can be used when a Fostering Service has made a qualifying determination. However it is not an appeal process. If you decide to self refer to the Independent Review Mechanism, they will receive all the appropriate reports within 10 working days of their written request.

They will be able to review recommendations/decisions made by the Fostering Service, however, the Fostering Service's Decision Maker will still make the final decision.

The only circumstance where you cannot ask for a review by an Independent Review Panel is if you are disqualified at stage 1 of the Foster Carers Assessment process or have been convicted of an offence which automatically excludes you from fostering.

Written notice of the final decision and reasons for this must be sent to you within 7 working days of the local authority receiving the Independent Review Mechanism's recommendation.





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PART 6: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

6

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- Standard 20 - Learning and development of foster carers.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- Standard 7 - Develop yourself.

As approved foster carers, you will have completed some basic training and induction on your Skills to Foster course.

It is important for you to continue to build on this training in order to be fully equipped to deal with the many situations you may face as a foster carer. The support and training you will be offered will help you to become more confident, competent and skilled.

This support and development continues throughout your fostering career, making fostering a positive experience for both you and the child or young person placed with you.

All new foster carers must complete a verification workbook, which shows evidence of their ability to meet the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care, (Short Break Carers or for Family and Friends Foster Carers, within 12 months of being approved (or within 18 months for Connected Persons Foster Carers (family and friends).

The TSDS are available online, enabling you to complete this in short sections at a pace suitable for you. You will be sent log in details when you are approved by our Training Officer. The Training Officer and your Supervising Social Worker will support you in completing the standards and gathering evidence of your ability to apply this knowledge in your fostering role.

Foster carers are expected to attend a minimum of 28 hours of training each year (8 hours for short break carers). Training will be geared towards each carer's needs. Your training and professional development is linked to the annual review of your fostering skills level.

The Training Standards cover the main areas of the foster care role and what you should know, understand and be able to do.

Evidence of your learning will begin to be gathered before you are approved, through the Skills to Foster Course and will continue to be gathered after you are approved. All evidence will be recorded in your training and development portfolio.

There will be some standard/core training that you must attend. There will also be further training, which may be identified by you or your Supervising Social Worker through your supervision meetings and through your annual review.

There are some courses that are mandatory for all foster carers and require being renewed every 3 years. These include paediatric first aid, managing allegations and safeguarding children.

Your personal development plan will set out how you will be supported with training and development. Your Supervising Social Worker will also discuss any help or support needed in order for you to attend and be involved in face-to-face training.

Training sessions are held during the day, evenings or sometimes at weekends in convenient places. Childcare may be provided and reasonable expenses may be paid to enable you to attend.

If you have any special needs or you are unable to read or write English, please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker. We intend to support you and ensure you are able to engage in the training on offer. The Fostering Service is committed to providing tailored training and support to all its foster carers, that is based on equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.

Training also comes in many forms. You may attend courses but there may also be some on-line resources/courses, books or workshops that may also be helpful.

Your Supervising Social Worker will provide you with a training programme. If you are interested in any courses, speak to them about this and complete the training form required in order for you to attend.

If you move to another Fostering Service, your training portfolio will be transferred if requested.

Our Training Officer, considers the overarching training needs of the Fostering Service and will adapt the programme accordingly. If you feel you would benefit from a particular course, please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance. Please refer to your Training Programme for details of courses.

PART 7: USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

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Leicestershire Fostering & Adoption

Fostering Service Manager - Joss Longman

Telephone: 0116 305 3288 / 07920 702 266

Email: Joss.Longman@leics.gov.uk

Fostering (Team Around The Child) Team Manager - Heather Hughes

Telephone: 0116 305 9655

Email: Heather.Hughes@leics.gov.uk

Fostering and Adoption Duty Service

Telephone: 0116 305 3051

Family Placement Commissioning Team

Telephone: 0116 305 4521 /

Foster Carers Helpline

Support is provided outside of office hours for any support which cannot wait until the next day. This service is available Monday to Friday, 6pm - 12 midnight and Saturdays and Sundays 12 noon -12 midnight.

Telephone: 0300 456 2600.

Out Of Hours (OOH)/ Emergency Support

The OOH service is open every night from 5pm onwards and at weekends. This is a call service and will respond to you as soon as possible. If no one is available when you ring, please leave a message. You must contact the police first if you feel you, your family or foster child are in immediate danger.

Telephone: 0116 305 0005

Training Officer

Tel: 0116 305 6311

Email: Fostering.training@leics.gov.uk

Fostering Finance Team

Email: Fps.finance@leics.gov.uk

Virtual School

Virtual School Head - Tony Barnard

Email: Virtualschool@leics.gov.uk

Corporate Parenting Team

Tel: 0116 305 7570

Corporate.Parenting@leics.gov.uk

Children's Rights Officer, Elaine Constable

Tel: 0116 305 6302 / 07789 081 528

childrensrights@leics.gov.uk

Complaints department

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/search/site/complaints>

Locality Support Group Coordinators

See monthly newsletter for details

Leicestershire Foster Carers Association (LFCA)

LFCA Chair - Rosemary Arrowsmith

lfca2007@btinternet.com

0116 240 3849 / 07484 846 590

National Contacts**The Fostering Network**

87 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8HA

Tel: 020 7620 6400

Email: info@fostering.net www.fostering.net

British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF)

CoramBAAF, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ

Tel: 020 7520 0300

Email: mail@corambaaf.org.uk.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Supervising Social Worker - Each Foster carers is allocated a Social Worker. This Social Worker will meet the carer regularly for supervision. They will offer support , guidance and oversight of the Foster Carers practice.

Child Social Worker - Each Child in Care will have a social worker allocated to them. They will visit the child every 6 weeks to hear the child's views.

Placement - This is a term used to refer to where the child resides. They have been 'placed' there by the Local Authority. Your home may be referred to as the child's placement.

Looked After Child - This is the term (LAC) is used to refer to children who are in Local Authority Care. The type of care may vary according to their needs and ranges from Residential home to foster care.

Signs of Safety Framework - Leicestershire has adopted an approach to social work known as Signs of safety. This is theoretical approach was developed by Andrew Turnell, initially as a way of working with families within Child Protection. This framework is useful for all areas of social work working with families. Fostering have adapted this approach to their area by looking at signs of wellbeing, signs of stability for the Child in Care.

Terms of Approval - When you are first approved the Assessing Social Worker will discuss with you what the most appropriate age and number of children (Up to 3 children) is appropriated for you to care for.

Care Plan - This is the plan put in place by the Local Authority to identify the work/ services that should be put in place in order to meet the needs of the children whilst they are in Local Authority Care.

Placement Plan - This will be discussed at the first meeting when the child comes to live with you. This plan will include your details, Child's social worker details and contact details and any information which is essential for you to know before the child is left in your care.

Training Support Development Standards - TSDs. There are 7 sections you will be asked to complete which evidences your understanding of the foster carers' role and the needs of children in care. These must be completed within 12 months of approval (18 months for Connected Carers and Short Break carers).

Stability Meeting - If there are concerns about the certainty of the child remaining in your care. The Social Worker will arrange a meeting for professionals and where suitable the foster children other family members. This should identify a Support Plan to support the placement becoming more stable.

Care Proceedings - In order for a child to be cared for by the Local Authority, the Local Authority has to apply to the Court for a Care Order. The process of this application to the point of it being granted is known as Care Proceedings and lasts up to 26 weeks.

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) - If you, as a Foster Carer, are unhappy with the recommendation of foster panel and decision made by The Agency Decision Maker you have the right to request your case is heard by an independent panel. This is known as the IRM. Following this panel the IRM will write to the Local Authority with their recommendations. They may suggest a different outcome.

Delegated Authority - This is the term used when the responsibility for making day-to-day decisions about a Child or young person is given delegated to the foster carer. This is specific regarding which decisions.

Permanency Panel - Some children are in Long term Foster care. In order to settle the child needs to know that they can remain living with foster carers permanently. This panel meets to discuss the needs of the child and the foster carers' ability to meet the child's needs long term. This match is then confirmed and gives everyone a sense of reassurance.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - If an allegation is made about a person placed in a Position of Trust by the Local Authority such a teacher or Foster Carer it will need to be investigated. The person who leads the process is known as LADO and they will coordinate the professionals involved and chair a meeting which will make a decision as to whether the allegation presents a safeguarding concern or not to any child or vulnerable adult.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) - Each Looked After Child is assigned an Independent Reviewing Officer. They are employed by the Safeguarding Unit and they offer independent oversight of the child.

Care Order - If the court has agreed that a child should be cared for by the Local Authority. The child will be made subject to a Care Order. An Interim Care Order (ICO) is what the court grants whilst the case is going through Care Proceedings.

Designated Teacher - Every school has an identified teacher to liaise with Virtual school regarding the educational needs of Looked After Children in their school.

Review of Arrangements - This is sometimes known as Looked After Child Review (LAC Review) This is a meeting chaired by Independent Reviewing Officer who ensures that the Care plan remain appropriate to the needs of the child and plans are in place for the child's permanency.



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& Adoption**



Fostering [Leicestershire.com](https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/fostering)