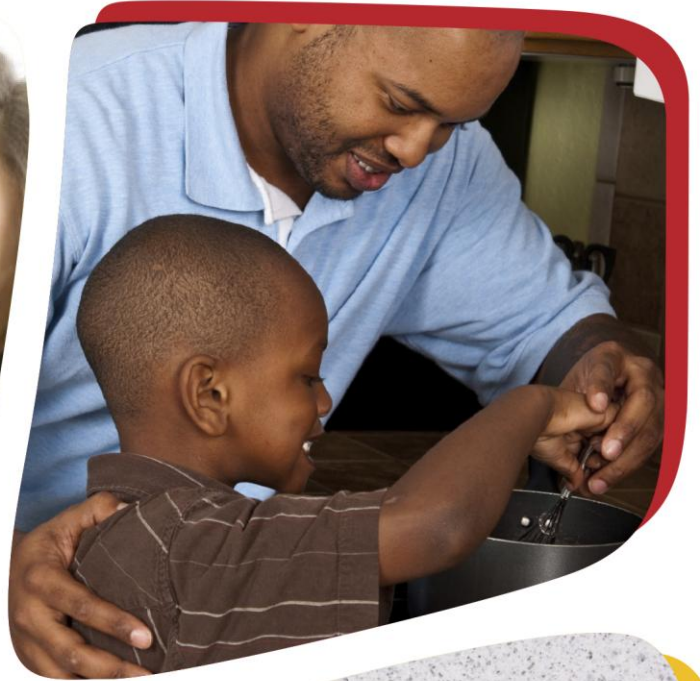


Foster Carer Handbook



Introduction

Welcome to this edition of the UK Fostering Foster Carer Handbook. I am delighted to provide you with this document, as this means you will have attended the Skills to Foster Training Course, successfully completed your assessment and have been approved by the Fostering Panel. This handbook aims to provide you and your family with helpful guidelines and information in relation with your fostering task.

The subjects are listed in alphabetical order for ease of reference. We hope the handbook proves to be useful and informative and, although we acknowledge that not every situation you will encounter is included and covered, we would like to encourage all of our Foster Carers to regularly make use of it.

Your positive and professional working relationship with UK Fostering staff, in particular your Supervising Social Worker, is critical in ensuring that you and your family can feel supported, appreciated and valued. Therefore, this handbook is not intended to be a substitute for a good working partnership with the organisation.

At UK Fostering we believe that fostering children and young people is a challenging, but also immensely rewarding and worthwhile task. There are not many professions, which would allow and ask for the same level of involvement and influence in children's lives as is the case for a Foster Carer.

UK Fostering is fully committed to the five outcomes set out in the 'Every Child Matters' National Government Policy Framework:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Throughout this handbook you will find reference to the five outcomes. If at any stage you have questions or feedback about this handbook, please consult with your Supervising Social Worker.

I wish you and your family a successful and rewarding fostering experience.

May 2012



Urs Biemann
Director

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Accident and Medication Book

You will have been given a UK Fostering Accident and Medication Book for each child / young person placed with you.

In the Accident and Medication Book you should record any matters to do with the child / young person's health. This includes appointments with the doctor, dentist, hospital, optician, mental health service, school nurse, LAC nurse, etc. You should also record details of immunisations, any illnesses, serious injuries and accidents that the child / young person has whilst placed with you.

Brief mention of the incidents must also be noted in your log book.

The Accident and Medication Book should be given to UK Fostering at the end of the placement to be added to the child / young person's file.

Confidentiality - UK Fostering expects that carers should maintain confidentiality and keep this paperwork in a secure place e.g. a locking box file.

(Also see sections 'Health' and 'Confidentiality')

Aims, Objectives and Mission

Aims and Objectives

UK Fostering works in partnership with Local Authorities who commission our services. We believe that every child and young person has a right to experience living within a supportive family where they are valued and respected. We have a firm commitment to providing them with a secure, caring and nurturing home environment. Our overall aim is to provide the highest quality of substitute family care for looked after children.

Our objectives are:

- To develop an overall Fostering Service where there is respect for and recognition of the importance of the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language of children and young people and their families and Foster Carers.
- To promote effective working partnership with other agencies, Local Authorities / Health and Social Services, parents, carers, to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children.
- To ensure that due consideration is given to the gender, religion, ethnicity and disability of young people prior to any placement being made with Foster Carers.
- To promote effective partnerships between all key parties in the childcare team and in particular to ensure that all planning and working is in the best interests of the child who is fostered.
- To provide stability in the lives of children and young people in our care and enabling them to fulfill their potential.
- To commitment and focus on continuous improvement, quality assurance and high quality service provision.
- To value diversity by aiming to recruit and retain a wide range of carers from diverse backgrounds so that UK Fostering can offer appropriate placements for children and young people.
- To respect and promote the racial, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children and young people.

Our Mission

The mission and the commitment of UK Fostering is to promote the growth and development of children and young adults, who are looked after by our Foster Carers, in line with the 5 outcomes described in the 'Every Child Matters' National Government Policy Framework, whilst promoting and strengthening the family unit. The aim is to support every child to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

We actively support the introduction of regulation, inspection and monitoring of standards for all agencies concerned with the care of children and young people.

- UK Fostering will ensure that all carers have access to training, guidance and supported by a fully qualified, designated supervising Social Worker.
- Providing 24 hour support for Foster Carers and children / young people, 7 days a week.

Vision Statement

Fundamentally we change lives. For those children who have experienced sadness, abuse, neglect and loss we find and support foster families that want to make a positive change to others. We seek those that can offer love, care, understanding, resilience and patience.

Alcohol

Alcohol and substance misuse can have a detrimental effect upon your health, and can adversely influence your work performance and your relationships with family, children and colleagues.

UK Fostering has a duty towards and is concerned about the health and welfare of all its Foster Carers. It is therefore our policy to:

- Promote a responsible attitude to the consumption of alcohol.
- Treat alcohol and substance abuse as a health problem and advise carers to seek professional assistance.

Under no circumstances is a carer in charge of a young person or child at any time to be under the influence of Alcohol or be drunk.

No child / young person under 18 years of age may purchase alcohol.

If you think a child / young person you are fostering has a drink problem, you should bring this to the attention of your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the child / young person's Social Worker.

Allegations and Complaints

Allegation

If an allegation is made directly to you about another person's conduct towards a child, you must inform your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker immediately.

If allegations against you are made directly to a Social Worker they have a responsibility to make you aware of the complaint, but the circumstances of the complaint determine which and how much information is shared with you.

Allegations and complaints are occasionally made against Foster Carers. This places Foster Carers in a difficult and sometimes distressing situation. However, it is critical in these situations to work in partnership with all the agencies involved in the process of the complaint.

UK Fostering has an investigation procedure which aims to deal with allegations against carers quickly, fairly, confidentially and impartially.

If a complaint about a Foster Carer is made, the process is as follows:

- The Social Worker of the child / young person will be informed immediately of the complaint.
- If it is a minor complaint, the person making the complaint may be able to resolve the issue/complaint with the help of the Social Worker and UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.
- If the minor complaint can not be resolved, the person will be asked to put the complaint in writing and a UK Fostering Manager will arrange for the matter to be investigated.
- Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing and the investigation completed within 20 working days. The result is provided to the child / young person's Social Worker in writing.
- The manager at UK Fostering will inform all parties of the outcome of the investigation in writing following its completion.
- Complaints in relation to a serious Standard of Care or Child Protection matter will be investigated by UK Fostering and the respective Local Authority. During the investigation and until an outcome has been reached, no further placements will be made with the Foster Carer. The nature of the complaint, details of the investigation and the outcome will have to be recorded by the Supervising Social Worker on the Foster Carer review which is then presented to the Fostering Panel together with the feedback forms of carer, child in placement, parents and the comments of the UK Fostering Manager.
- Senior Management at UK Fostering may decide that no further placements are made with a carer until the case has been presented before the Fostering Panel.

Facts

- One in six Foster Carers have a complaint or allegation made against them during their fostering career.
- Carers who have allegations made against them tend to have been fostering for over five years.
- All the forms of abuse that can occur within children's birth families can occur in foster families.
- All allegations will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Although the following is not an exhaustive list, it describes some of the circumstances around abuse in foster care and allegations against carers.

Why a foster child might be abused

- Some people will be attracted to fostering because they think it provides the opportunity to abuse children (sexual abuse).
- Carers' behaviour discriminates against the child / young person they are fostering (physical/emotional/racial abuse).
- Carers lose their temper (physical/emotional abuse).
- Children who have been abused, behave in ways that appear to 'invite' abuse because they may 'expect' to be abused again. Foster Carers and their family need to make sure that they do not get drawn in and repeat past patterns (sexual/physical/emotional abuse).
- Carers reacting to the impact on their own children of caring for children who have been sexually or physically abused.

Why a foster child might make a false allegation of abuse

- Children can misinterpret an innocent action.
- As a way of drawing attention to previous abuse for the first time because the carer is trusted.
- As a way a young person can exercise some control over their life.
- To try and end a foster placement without 'losing face'.

What can we do to reduce risks?

- Work closely with UK Fostering and the LA Social Worker and keep communication open.
- Discuss Safe Care with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.
- Ensure you attend all UK Fostering training courses, especially Safe Care training.
- Attend UK Fostering support groups.
- Build up a good support network (CRB checked).
- Keep your daily log book of events in the child's life.
- Work out your own family policy for keeping everyone safe.
- Recognise the people in your home who are potential risks or who may be vulnerable to allegations.
- Operate clear home rules for ways of behaving.
- Make use of your Fostering Network membership.

Complaint by a Foster Carer

As a carer you may be confronted with situations which you wish to complain about. UK Fostering recommends that in the first instance any such issue / complaint is directed to the UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker. In a second stage, if the issue has not been resolved, a three way meeting with the UK Fostering Fostering Manager would be arranged to address and resolve the issue.

In the event that the matter has still not been resolved to the carer's satisfaction, they will be requested to put the complaint in writing to the attention of the Senior Management at UK Fostering. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing and an outcome of the investigation expected within 15 working days.

(See sections 'Supervision and Support' and 'Foster Talk')

Allowances

UK Fostering pays Foster Carers a Fostering Allowance to cover the expenses of caring for a child. This is worked out according to the type of fostering you undertake and the age of the child / young person.

The Allowance is made up from two elements - a reward element which could be taxable and is your own 'fee', and the remainder which is to be spent entirely on the child / young person's expenses. Please see the list below, which indicates what the reward element is and what you should be spending per week on a child. Allowances are reviewed annually and information about any changes are sent to you.

UK Fostering does not deduct the tax at source and the Foster Carer should make their own arrangements. UK Fostering recommends carers consult with an accountant who can give expert advice. In any case you will be required to register with the Inland Revenue.)

Carers are also advised to consult the section 'Income Tax' in their Foster Carer Diary for basic details on tax relief for Foster Carers.

Please note: Foster Carers cannot claim tax relief, child benefits, income support or free school meals for children in their care.

UK Fostering acknowledges that there will be differences in how carers spend the allowance on each child. However, it is imperative that at any given time they cater for the needs of the child / young person and cover the following:

Foster Home

- Heating
- Lighting
- General household expenses
- Decorating
- Insurance
- Equipment including furniture

Food

- Basic / standard food requirements
- Special dietary needs
- Celebrations of birthdays and other festivities

Education

- Standard school requirements including books, pens, paint, papers
- Sports clothing and sports equipment

- Toddler group equipment / nursery fees
- Travel (including contact)

Toiletries

- Basic toiletries
- Basic skin and hair products
- Haircuts

Religious needs, covering everything including:

- Prayer books
- Festivities
- Special clothing
- Dietary needs
- Travel to place of worship

Leisure

- Cinema
- Theatre
- Recreational activities and outings (incl. entrance fees)
- Sports clubs fees and equipment

Although this is not an exclusive list it addresses the most prevalent areas.

Composition of Allowances

As stated above, the fostering allowance covers all normal expenditure involved with caring for a child / young person. In addition, the carer is expected to budget and save some money for items such as a bike, annual school uniform, school excursion etc.

Reward Element

From the payment you receive you should deduct the total basic rate (including pocket money, recreation, toiletry money and clothing allowance) for the age group of the child you are fostering.

- *UK Fostering separates children and young people into age groups as follows: - 0 to 11 years and 12 years plus.*

Of the remaining figure, 30% represents the reward element and the remainder is to be spent on the child / young person. It is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to declare this for income tax purposes.

At least once a year you will receive notification from UK Fostering of the minimum recommended weekly allowances for each child (including pocket money, recreational activities, toiletry, clothing and transport). A written record of what you spend must be kept, which will be inspected by your supervising Social Worker.

All foster carers with UK Fostering must save a minimum of £10 per week for every child / young person they have in placement. This amount is included in the weekly allowance payment which is made to the foster carer.

Carers are expected to have a bank account in which to pay the Allowance and it is necessary that Foster Carers complete the Foster Carers bank details form. Allowances are paid weekly direct into the Foster Carers bank / building society accounts.

Although arrangements have been made for the allowance to be paid into your account on a Friday, there may sometimes be circumstances beyond UK Fostering's control, which may mean the payment will not show on your account until Monday. The Agency cannot be responsible for any overdraft fees incurred.

Temporary Absence / Missing

Where a child / young person is away from the foster home as a result of being missing for more than 5 days, a reduced rate in the fostering allowance may be applied. The rate will depend on the responsible local authorities requirements - e.g. if they wish to retain you as carers for the missing child. Normally it is 50% of the fostering allowance.

Over Payment

Overpayments to your fostering allowance occur when the information on a child's movement arrives after the payment cycle has started. It is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to inform the Supervising Social Worker so that the payment can be adjusted. Failure to inform and return overpayment could result in interest being charged.

Additional Allowances

While a child is in your care they are entitled to a number of specific additional allowances:

- **Festive Allowance (included in the weekly foster carer allowance):** £2 per week has been added to the foster carer's allowance and is paid to the carer every week, totalling in £104 per year per child in placement. The £2 are included in the foster carer's overall allowance and are not listed separately in their payment slip. This element of the allowance is to contribute towards a Christmas present or a present for Eid or any other festivities the child / young person may celebrate as part of their cultural and/or religious background.
- **Birthday Grant (included in the weekly foster carer allowance):** £2 per week has been added to the foster carer's allowance. The carer is to save this money on behalf of the child for a birthday present. The total amount per year adds up to £104. The £2 are included in the foster carer's overall allowance and are not listed separately in their payment slip.
- **Child Holiday Allowance (in addition to the weekly foster carer allowance):** An amount of approximately £200 for every child is paid to the foster carer during the summer holidays. This money is to be spent entirely towards a holiday of the child / young person. In circumstances where a young person was not spending this money during their holidays, or money is leftover, the foster carer is to transfer the money to the child's savings account.
- **Foster Carer Respite Allowance (in addition to the weekly foster carer allowance):** £15 per fostering household, for every week where one or more children are in placement. This is paid weekly to all carers with a child in placement. Maximum payment for 52 weeks is £780. Foster carers use this money to prepare/pay for a respite / holiday.

Important: It is the responsibility of the foster carer to plan ahead and budget with the fostering allowance. A child or young person might require a bicycle, computer, new school

uniform, go on a holiday abroad etc. Carers must incorporate these events in their budgeting of the allowance which is provided for the child.

If you have any queries about any allowances or grants, or if you think you have been under or over paid, contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible.

Back-up Carers

UK Fostering recognises that, at times, Foster Carers will need someone to provide child-minding / baby-sitting support for the child placed in their care. This may be for the Foster Carer to enjoy outside interests, to attend Foster Carer training, appointments etc.

To prepare for these events, UK Fostering asks Foster Carers to identify back-up carers who can provide this type of support for the Foster Carer. These individuals will be visited by the assessing Social Worker and will have a CRB disclosure check completed. On receipt of a satisfactory CRB disclosure, and completion of a brief assessment by a Social Worker, the individual will be able to resume responsibilities as a backup carer.

Foster Carers must never leave any looked after child with someone who does not have a valid CRB check, is not known to UK Fostering or has not been assessed and logged as a back up carer by UK Fostering.

If, during the course of your fostering career, new back-up carers are identified (e.g. your original back-up carers may have moved away or have other commitments) please contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker for the necessary checks to take place.

Prior to a child / young person being in the care of a back-up carer, the Foster Carer must communicate the proposed arrangement to their Supervising Social Worker, who will seek approval from the Local Authority Social Worker. In addition, the proposed care arrangements are presented to the UK Fostering Fostering Panel.

If you don't have a back-up carer please ensure that you identify someone as you may require them in an emergency.

By attending UK Fostering Support Groups and training you will meet other UK Fostering carers in your area. This is a useful way of networking and arranging back-up care for daily needs.

(See also 'Supervision and Support' section)

Behaviour

Some of the children and young people who come to be in your care may have suffered from emotional or physical abuse or forms of neglect. As a result they may present emotional, behavioural or developmental difficulties.

Children who have been abused might display some of the following behaviours or difficulties:

- Poor self esteem and self image
- Inability to trust others
- Aggressive and disruptive behaviour

- Display anger and rage
- Self destructive behaviour
- Passive or withdrawn behaviour
- Anxiety and fears
- Feelings of sadness or other symptoms such as depression
- Nightmares

Your training and on-going support will provide you with the skills and knowledge to care for children and young people who might display such behaviours. You will also be able to access and receive support and guidance from UK Fostering staff, and they may guide you to contacts with other professionals involved in promoting the child / young person's welfare such as a Looked After Children psychology service.

Setting realistic goals for a child / young person to achieve and being consistent with your approach should provide some positive results. However, do not ignore violent or criminal behaviours and more importantly do not think you are on your own - ask for help from UK Fostering, and report any child protection concerns immediately.

Discuss any difficulties with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible, as they will be able to assist you with support and guidance. They may be able to identify training sessions that might assist you in addressing or dealing with presenting difficulties (e.g. behaviour management) or alternatively put you in touch with another carer who has experienced similar issues.

Please remember that **every child and young person is different** and therefore the approach you adopt to care for him or her might be different too. Some might need to be alone or want to talk about their situation; others might be verbally abusive or aggressive in their manner, others might be withdrawn or choose not to eat. Be alert to any prolonged behaviour patterns or extreme changes.

Managing Difficult Behaviour

Managing difficult behaviour is a skilled task and UK Fostering provides their Foster Carers with training on alternative strategies. UK Fostering recommends that you make use of these training courses as well as the visits by your SSW to discuss behaviour patterns and behaviour management strategies.

It is imperative that you strive to encourage positive behaviour and strike a balance to sanctioning and disciplining negative behaviour.

The Children Act 1989 clearly sets out the prohibition of the following forms of discipline:

- The use of corporal or physical punishments
- Withholding of food or drinks
- Prevention of visits with family or friends
- Forcing a child to wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes
- Unauthorised use of medication (this includes alternative medicines)
- Withholding of prescribed medication
- Preventing a child or young person from sleeping
- The imposition of fines (money)
- Any intimate physical examination

(See 'Care and Control' and 'Corporal Punishment' Sections)

Belongings

When a child / young person joins your family they are likely to bring items of clothing, toys and other possessions with them. Please ensure you treat these belongings with respect and courtesy, even if they may be old, dirty or broken.

These might not seem very valuable to you but they will be precious to that child / young person and therefore should be taken with them when the placement ends.

During the time that the child / young person stays with you, you may have purchased clothing or toys or they may have received presents. These too must go with the child / young person when the placement ends.

UK Fostering would expect that its Foster Carers show respect to a child / young person's belongings when they leave your care (for whatever reason they may be leaving). Please ensure you use appropriate bags, suitcases or boxes to pack and move belongings.

Under no circumstances are bin liners to be used to move a child's belongings. Your fostering allowance covers the provision of suitcases, bags or boxes necessary for the move.

Bullying

UK Fostering recognises that bullying is a universal problem – it occurs in all settings across all races and cultures. It also exists in most schools. It is often invisible and not always easy to identify. Looked after children can be vulnerable to bullying and this can affect attendance and performance at school, which in turn can have an impact on foster placements, putting an additional strain on carers.

What is Bullying?

Bullying may be said to be long-standing violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or group and directed against someone who is unable to defend himself/herself in the situation.

Bullying may be:

- Name calling
- Physical violence including pushing, poking, pulling hair, punching
- Gestures
- Extortion - handing over money, food or homework
- Exclusion from friendship

Anyone can be a bully:

- Children of the same age
- Older children

- Dinner ladies
- Caretakers
- Swimming pool attendants
- Teachers
- Carers
- Policemen
- Parents
- Sometimes younger children will bully older children who are disabled, or children who are quiet, nervous or shy.

Anyone can be bullied but it seems that quiet, solitary and less aggressive children tend to get bullied more, as do children who are smaller than their peers. It can occur at any age.

Children with special needs and children from ethnic minority groups are twice as likely to be called names as other children.

Bullying is defined as the deliberate intention to subject another to emotional, psychological or physical pain and distress. The effects can be dramatic and range from temporary pain to suicide.

Bullying – What to Look Out For

There are many signs that may indicate that a pupil is feeling anxious. These signals can be emotional or physical and need to be taken seriously. It does not always mean that the pupil is being bullied, but research has shown that the following are a good measure of whether the pupil is being bullied.

- The pupil is reluctant to travel home alone and insists on being collected by carers. Pupils who are bullied often look for alternative routes to and from school.
- The pupil's possessions are lost and their work is either destroyed or defaced. Sometimes school clothing may go missing or possessions are broken.
- The pupil is continually asking for money and tells adults that the money has been lost or used for unlikely purposes. It may have been stolen or used to buy sweets to placate the bully.
- The pupil does not want to go out at break and lunch times. If persuaded the pupil will stick close to the adult.
- There are not always overt signs and teachers and other adults need to be aware of the less obvious clues, for example a pupil may ask to sit next to someone else in class or carefully avoid contact with certain pupils.

Anti-Bullying Strategies

The school that your child / young person attends should have a policy on bullying which you can ask to see. Teachers and school staff are provided with specific anti-bullying guidance and should consult you if concerned about a child you are caring for.

Foster Carers' concerns about possible or actual bullying

If you have concerns that the child placed with you is being bullied or has been bullied you should discuss them directly with the school and inform your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker.

The Foster Carer together with the Social Worker and the school should draw up a plan to gather information over a couple of weeks so as to get a picture of evidence. Questions the carers can ask the child / young person include:

- Activities at school? What did you do today?
- What things did you like / dislike?
- Do you enjoy the games you played at school?
- Would you liked to have played a different game?
- Activities, e.g. during breaks or lunch?
- Are there any lessons at school you don't like? Which one's do you like?
- Is there anyone at school you don't like?
- Are you looking forward to going to school tomorrow?

Actions

You need to share your concerns with the Social Worker and the school. Please remember that when raising concerns with the school about bullying, you should explain your worries in a non-confrontational way. Schools have a duty of care and allowing a child to be continually bullied may be seen as a breach of this duty.

There are other sources of help and advice including selected internet sites. Resources on the internet are subject to rapid alteration, however the following websites and addresses offer a good level of general and more specific information around bullying and related issues.

- **www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying**
This site is regularly updated and has information from recent publications that can help schools and carers combat bullying.
- **www.bullying.co.uk**
A broad site with comprehensive resources for children and adults. Very informative, easy to use and up-to-date.
- **Lawson, S**
Helping children cope with Bullying, Sheldon Press (1994)
- **Advisory Centre for Education**
1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London, N5 2DQ
Tel Helpline: 0207 354 8321 (Mon – Fri 2-5pm)
- **Anti Bullying Campaign**
185 Tower Bridge Road, London, SE1 2UF
Tel: 0207 378 1446 (9:30am-5pm)
- **Kidscape**
2 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0DH
Tel: 0207 730 3300 Web: **www.kidscape.org.uk**

Care and Control

Care and Control in Foster Care (Behaviour)

This section outlines the principles of good practice and effective methods of care and control techniques. UK Fostering aims to equip carers with the skills and awareness they

need in order to provide children in their care with a safe, nurturing and encouraging environment that will enable them to reach their full potential and grow into responsible adults.

The Principles of Care and Control

- Carers should seek to achieve a balance between care and control. The child should be offered a nurturing environment with firm boundaries. This should enable the child to develop a sense of care, security and personal responsibility that will allow them to become mature, sensible adults.
- Through the use of effective care and control policies children are able to make choices and take responsibility for their behaviour in the context of a caring and trusting relationship. Methods of care and control are applicable at all times when children are being looked after but there are certain methods that are particularly useful in dealing with challenging behaviour.
- As all children are unique and have different life experiences, there is a need for Foster Carers to have maximum flexibility in the care they provide. Many children who are fostered have been victims of various forms of abuse and carers must have regard for these experiences at all times when caring for them and managing their behaviour.
- Every child who is looked after has a right to have their needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability, sexuality and respected. This must be taken into account when exercising care and control.
- Carers looking after disabled children face specific issues regarding care and control. Children's impairments affect behaviour in different ways, for example, the difficulty adults may have in communicating non-verbally can cause frustration – which may lead to conflict and challenging behaviour.

Challenging Behaviour

Foster care is a difficult and demanding task. UK Fostering aims to ensure that carers are equipped with the skills and techniques they need to manage difficult situations safely. As a result, carers should adopt a proposed method of care and control that does not allow for the use of restraint.

Wherever possible, carers should try and manage behaviour before children / young people come to resort to violent and/or abusive behaviour. For every child / young person whose behaviour is known to present a challenge, there should be an individual strategy for responding to the behaviour, which will form part of the child's care plan. It should be agreed by carers, parents and professionals what the appropriate strategies will be. This should be discussed at the introductory stage of the placement and will be included as a written part of the placement agreement.

In certain circumstances, (where the child's safety or the safety of another child or person may be in question if the child leaves the room or premises), good practice involves communication to try and persuade the child on a different course of action. However where this is ineffective, the carer may reinforce dialogue with such actions as standing in the way of a child wishing to leave, or may place a hand on the child's arm, or hold the child if they are highly distressed or in danger, for example if a child is trying to run out of the house onto the road in a distressed state. These methods should only be used for the **minimum** time needed and with the **minimum** force necessary to ensure the child's safety.

These approaches are used in the context of engaging the child / young person in discussion about their behaviour, listening to them and showing empathy to their distress.

'Holding' discourages the child from harming themselves or others, whereas physical restraint uses an element of force which is not appropriate for Foster Carers working in isolation with the child.

Suggested Guidance for Carers on Care and Control

Setting Realistic Boundaries

In the setting of boundaries and limits to behaviour, the following guidance points for carers will improve the chances of them being effective.

- Restrict limits to important matters. Too many limits may confuse or overwhelm children. Pick what is most important.
- Set reasonable and fair limits that are enforceable. You have to be able to enforce the limits you set. Make sure that your expectations are reasonable and fair.
- Be consistent with limits you set. Consistency help children feel secure and cuts down on confusion.
- Change limits to adapt to changes in the child's age. Pay attention to the child's developmental needs.
- Involve children in setting some of their limits. Children are more likely to comply with limits that they have helped established. This also teaches them decision-making skills.
- Help children understand the reasons for limits. Explain the rationale. This helps children understand the need for rules and limits in our lives.

Positive Control and the Use of Sanctions

At times, emergency action will be required to prevent the risk of immediate danger to the child / young person or others, or to prevent the risk of serious damage to property. The intention behind any action must be to care for and safeguard the child and their welfare as the carer's paramount consideration.

Whilst there is an expectation that carers will provide a warm and nurturing environment at all times whilst setting appropriate boundaries around behaviour, it is acknowledged that there will be times when some form of sanction and control will be necessary because of unacceptable behaviour.

Any sanction or control used in the foster home must be:

- Compatible with what is recognised as good practice in the care of children
- Related to the individual's care plan, age and circumstances
- Realistic and sensitive
- Enforceable
- Consistent

Sanctions which may be considered are as follows (*although there is no implication that carers should be using sanctions nor is this list exhaustive*):

- Reparation (the act or process of making amends)
- Restitution (the act of giving back something that has been stolen)

- Time out (giving space and privacy when it is safe to give the young person time to calm down and think things through) or a cooling off period.
- Early to bed
- Grounding
- Delaying treats
- Increased supervision
- Extra tasks

Acceptable sanctions should be relevant, used sparingly and follow the unacceptable behaviour as quickly as possible.

Sanctions Which are Unacceptable

UK Fostering expects all its Foster Carers to comply with the Children Act 1989 which sets out the prohibition of the following forms of discipline:

- Those that intentionally or unintentionally humiliate a child / young person, or that causes them to be ridiculed
- Use of accommodation to physically restrict the liberty of any child – except in situations when the child is in danger
- The use of corporal or physical punishments
- Withholding of food or drinks
- Prevention of visits with family or friends
- Forcing a child to wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes
- Unauthorised use of medication (this includes alternative medicines)
- Withholding of prescribed medication
- Preventing a child or young person from sleeping
- The imposition of fines (money)
- Any intimate physical examination

Other Forms of Unacceptable Sanctions

- The use of a high chair, buggy, playpen, cot or safety gate as a punishment. Some disabled children are strapped in to equipment for their own safety and this is not the same as a punishment.
- Intentional deprivation of sleep
- Curtailment of savings
- Withholding pocket money without the permission of the child's Social Worker
- No child must be kept in any form of isolation in consequence of his/her behaviour. If it is necessary for isolation to be used for other reasons, then it must only be with close adult supervision i.e. time out.

Recording the Use of Sanctions

Foster Carers should record in their UK Fostering log books significant sanctions that have been used, why they were used, and the child / young person's reaction.

Where, due to unforeseen circumstances, carers have used sanctions which were not previously agreed it is particularly important that they should record the events and the sanctions used for discussion later with the child's Social Worker, their Supervising Social Worker, the child / young person, and where appropriate, their parent. Any incident where there has been physical contact i.e. holding, release from grabs etc need to be recorded.

The Supervising Social Worker needs to give direction to Foster Carers on the recording and reporting of incidents, and support carers who have behaved in the interests of the child's welfare when complaints are received from parents about the sanctions used.

All sanctions should be monitored as to their usefulness and effectiveness.

If it is thought that an inappropriate sanction has been used then the Supervising Social Worker should talk this through with the carer and look at alternative strategies that might have been used in the circumstances. Continued use of inappropriate sanction(s) would need to be addressed through a review of the carer(s) but where the use of inappropriate sanctions places a child at harm or risk of harm it may be deemed to be a child protection issue and referred under Child Protection Procedures.

Restraint

It is our policy not to place children who we feel will be difficult to manage without carers resorting to physical restraint. This is considered carefully as part of the matching process. We believe that it is not appropriate or desirable for carers to need to resort to restraint on a regular basis.

As an agency we feel that physical restraint should never be advocated as a standard method of managing behaviour.

Restraint may only be used if absolutely necessary to:

- Prevent children hurting themselves
- Prevent children harming other people
- Prevent children causing significant damage to property
- Restraint should usually only be a 'firm cuddle' until the child quietsens and is able to talk to you about what's happened

A child should never be pinned to the floor or held down other than round the body. Any other action should only be taken as justifiable self-defence or to protect another vulnerable child or person. It is usually best to evacuate the area and call for professional help as you could find yourself facing criminal charges, even if no one is injured.

Following any incident involving restraint you should inform UK Fostering immediately, using the 'Out of Hours' number if outside working hours.

If you have to restrain a child you must make a report. It can help to write this report with the child – use your own judgement. At some point, in any case, the child needs to know that you have told others and how, although this will depend on the child's age and understanding.

It is recommended to time everything that happened, even if only approximately. If possible write your notes before contacting UK Fostering, as this will enable you to have a clear picture of events in your mind. However, don't delay contacting us if things are complicated and urgent action needs to take precedence over recording.

The report should have details as follows:

1. Child's name, date and start time of the incident.
2. Where did the incident happen and where was the child restrained?
3. Who was present? (For questions 2 and 3 this can vary over time, keep this clear on the report)
4. What Happened?
 - a) In the lead up to the incident? (However long you feel the build-up was)
 - b) At the start of the incident?
 - c) During the incident? (Give full details of who restrained the child, how and how long for)
 - d) After the Incident?
 - e) When did the incident end?
 - f) Was anyone injured? (If yes, who, what injury, what treatment was given)
5. Comments (yours and child's)

Care Plans

Each looked after child should have a care plan drawn up at a planning meeting. Ideally this is done before the child moves to a new placement but this is not always possible in an emergency and the meeting may take place after the child has been placed with you.

Planning for the child is crucial for the child's sake but also to make sure everyone involved has an opportunity to make his or her feelings known, and to contribute to a positive placement.

At a planning meeting, the background and reasons why the child is looked after will be discussed. The basic goals for the future work with the child; his/her family; and Foster Carers will be discussed and agreed, including medical and educational needs and contact.

A time scale (plan) of how long the child will stay in this foster home will be set. This will be reviewed at the Looked After Children (LAC) reviews and will be confirmed or altered according to the child's needs.

Child Abuse

Children are accommodated with Foster Carers for a variety of reasons. Some children may have suffered physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse. All these forms of abuse are damaging to children. The risk or likelihood of abuse can also lead to children being accommodated in foster care.

As part of the UK Fostering training program, all Foster Carers will be expected to attend the compulsory Child Protection Part 1 and 2 training courses. The subject of child abuse is also covered in 'Skills to Foster' and 'Working with Sexually Abused Children'. If you require more information about any of the categories of abuse please contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

If a child is being abused or is thought to be at risk of abuse, a child protection conference is called by the Local Authority in which the child lives, and their name is placed on a list held by the Local Authority. A Child Protection Plan is then drawn up which outlines the expectations of the parent or carer and the responsibilities of the professionals involved in

the plan. Hospital staff, GP's, health visitors, the police, social workers and any other agency working with the child and their family are then aware that the child's name has been made subject to a Child Protection Plan which can only be terminated by agreement of a Child Protection Case Conference.

Types of Abuse

Abuse is the repeated maltreatment or neglect of a child by an adult or other child, which results in injury, harm or emotional distress.

Categories of Child Abuse

- **Physical Abuse**

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, hitting, throwing, scalding, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy – includes shaking, smothering, beating, burning, deprivation of food or other necessities. It may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child. This unusual and potentially dangerous form of abuse is now described as fabricated or induced illness in a child.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Actual or likely effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. This category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse – it includes not providing love, praise, and physical contact like cuddling and imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations.

- **Neglect**

The persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependant and/or developmentally immature. This includes incest, indecent assault, sexual intercourse or involvement with pornographic material. It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child Protection Policy

The Children Act 1989 states that Foster Carers and Placement Consultants are expected to work in close Partnership with the Local Authorities in all matters relating to child protection. The terms 'safe guarding of children' is also used in respect of child protection.

Carers have a duty to inform the Local Authority of any concerns regarding child protection and the welfare of children placed.

When there are concerns about a child's welfare the Local Authority have a duty to investigate, which means to make enquiries. The reasons that a Foster Carer could initiate such an enquiry include:

- Unexpected injuries seen on a child

- Receipt of an allegation of being hit or smacked
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Disclosure of abuse by the child

Child protection concerns can arise at any time e.g. after a contact visit or when a child first arrives in your home. Carers may have a child protection concern by noticing an injury or being told information by the child. Sometimes an allegation may be made against a carer.

Foster Carers Role and Responsibilities

If a Foster Carer has a concern about the treatment or welfare of a child that they are looking after, the carer must report this immediately to the Supervising Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker or the Foster Carer, depending on the circumstances, will then contact the following people:

- The child's Social Worker
- The Team Manager
- The Duty Social Worker
- Out of hour's Duty Social Worker

Foster Carers must make a record of their concerns in their diary and also of any attempt to contact the Social Services Department.

UK Fostering Supervising Social Workers are always available and should be contacted for advise, guidance and consultation.

Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004

The Children Act 1989 covers all the law relating to the care and upbringing of children and the social services to be provided for them. Children who are looked after by Foster Carers come under this legislation.

At the heart of the Children Act is the belief that:

- The best place for children to be looked after 'is within their own families'.
- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Birth parents should be involved in all planning and decision making affecting their children.
- Legal proceedings should be avoided whenever possible.
- The welfare of the child should be promoted by a partnership between the family and the Local Authority.
- Children should not be removed from their families and contact should not be ended unless it is absolutely necessary to do so for their well-being. When this does happen it should be through a Court Order.
- The child's needs arising from their race, culture, religion and language must be taken into consideration.

The Children Act – Court Orders

Under the Children Act legislation, court orders are to be used as a last resort. It is not necessary for Foster Carers to be expert in child care law but it may be helpful to have an understanding of some of the more common court orders.

- **Emergency Protection Order (EPO, Section 44)**

This is an order under which children are removed from a situation in which they are at risk. The order must be signed by a magistrate. An Emergency Protection Order can last up to 8 days with a possible extension up to a further 7 days. 72 hours after the making of the order, an application for discharge can be made by a parent, a person with parental responsibility, the child, or anyone whom the child is living with at the time.
- **Interim Care Order (Section 38)**

As the 'Care Order' but it is only a temporary order pending an application being made for a full Care Order. Usually a child is subject to an 'Interim Care Order' before the Courts grant a 'Care Order'.
- **Care Order (Section 33)**

The Court will make a Care Order if it believes that; a child is suffering significant harm or is likely to suffer significant harm, or if the care being given is not what a parent should give, or the child is beyond the parent's control, or if making the order will help the child. The Order will state that the Local Authority must look after the child and provide somewhere for he/she to live. A Care Order gives shared parental responsibility to the Local Authority and the child's parents.
The Care Order lasts until the young person reaches the age of 18, or until the child is adopted, or a Supervision or Residence Order is made, or the Court discharges the Order. Under a Care Order the child/children it is presumed will remain in contact with their family unless the court states otherwise.
- **Contact Order**

Directs that certain person/s should have contact with a child, it will also state how often that contact should take place and possibly what form the contact should take. A Contact Order lasts until the child / young person is 16 years old or until the court agrees it is no longer necessary. In exceptional circumstances it may last until the young person is 18 years old.
- **Residence Order**

This Order specifies a person who has the power to dictate where a child may live. Parental responsibility is acquired by the person specified in the Order (assuming they do not already hold it).
- **Specific Issue Order**

The court is asked to consider and resolve a 'specific issue'. For example, educational or medical matters in the best interest of the child.
- **Prohibited Steps Order**

This Order states that certain things cannot happen without the Court's permission, for example, changing the child's school or moving the child to live abroad.

Other orders relevant to Children in Care include:

- **Police Protection Order (PPO)**

This is similar to the Emergency Protection Order. It enables the police to remove a child from anyone with parental responsibility and place them in a safe environment. A Police Protection Order for a child or young person can last for up to 72 hours.

- **Special Guardianship**

The 'Special Guardianship' was introduced by the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It provides another option for legal permanence for looked after children. It gives 'Special Guardians' overriding parental responsibility until children reach 18, but it tries not to remove parental responsibility from birth parents. Foster Carers who become Special Guardians, for a child would not receive a fostering allowance or any support services from UK Fostering. The Local Authorities would be required to make any such arrangements.

- **Voluntary Accommodation (Section 20)**

This is not a court order but is called upon when parents voluntarily agree to accommodate a child / young person in the Care System. Section 20 is the duty on the Local Authority to provide accommodation but on a voluntary basis/agreement – e.g. the parent may be prevented from providing care by illness. In Section 20 the Local Authority has not been granted Parental Responsibility (PR) which is retained by the parents.

Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004 provides the legal underpinning for the transformation of children's services as set out in the 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' programme, which has outlined the 5 outcomes for children in care. Please refer to appendix 1 for details.

Children's Handbook

The 'Children's Handbooks' are published for two age groups (5 - 11 years, 12 - 18 years) plus a separate booklet for parent and child placements. All Foster Carers and children in placement (over the age of 5) are provided with a Children's Handbook.

The booklet will be sent to the children and young people at around the time of their first LAC Review. All new Foster Carers receive a Children's Handbook together with their Foster Carer Handbook.

The booklet addresses and includes:

- Lists to be completed by the child or carer about personal details of the child, their family and the foster family.
- Information about UK Fostering.
- The five outcomes for children (staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing).
- Complaint procedure.
- Children's Rights.
- Help and advice.
- Feedback (Have Your Say)

Some children and young people will need help and assistance to understand and process the information in the Children's Handbook. Foster Carers are expected to provide support and guidance for the children and young people in this respect and are advised to familiarise themselves with its contents.

Clothing

A part of the fostering allowance is intended to cover the cost of maintaining and replacing the child / young person's clothing.

There is an allocated amount (please refer to the allowance guidelines) for the child / young person's clothing. It is for UK Fostering carers to budget with this allowance and to make sure that the needs of the child are met.

UK Fostering recommends that Foster Carers keep the receipts of any clothes purchased to ensure they have a record of the overall spending.

For young people preparing for their independence, it would make sense in most cases, to use the clothing allowance as a means of teaching young people to budget and plan ahead.

Complaints

Please refer to 'Allegations and Complaints' for details.

Confidentiality

As Foster Carers you are required to respect confidentiality and to keep records in a secure place e.g. a locking box file.

You are in a privileged position of knowing a lot of personal and intimate detail about a child / young person and their family. When a child / young person is placed with you, and during the course of the placement, UK Fostering and the child / young person's Social Worker will share with you information about the child / young person's background. This information may include details of his / her family and the circumstances which led to them coming to your home. Much of the information will be personal and all of it is told to you in confidence.

Who else needs to know?

You will need to share some of this information with your family members who are likely to have regular contact with the child / young person. Use your discretion or ask your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker. You should know how much your own children can cope with, depending on their age and maturity. It is important to emphasise to your children and family members the need for confidentiality. This places upon you and your family a heavy responsibility not to abuse this position of trust.

Who does not need to know?

Friends and neighbours don't need to know, they may be very curious, but basically it is none of their business. A firm refusal to talk about the children in your care will usually stop questions.

Discussions with other Foster Carers (including UK Fostering's Carers)

All Foster Carers are governed by the same principles of confidentiality. It is possible that another Foster Carer may have experienced the same issues as yourself, you may ask for general advice from them. This would not be breaking confidentiality, but you must not discuss specific details of a child / young person's case or their background. Confidential information may be discussed at training and support groups. Any information shared in this way must remain confidential to that group.

What the child / young person knows

Remember the child / young person has a right to privacy about their origins and their past experiences. The child / young person you are caring for will also be thinking about what they are going to tell people about being in foster care. Together you can decide what you can and cannot share - your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker can advise you about this.

If the child / young person tells you a secret

A foster child needs a confidant like any other child / young person. However, if the information they share with you involves a child protection concern or is likely to have an impact on their future, you should encourage the child / young person to share this information with their Social Worker. If a child / young person will not do this it is essential that you tell the child / young person you will have to tell Social Services. **Some secrets cannot be kept!** For example if a child / young person disclosed that they had been abused or ill-treated you have to inform the child / young person's Social Worker.

Any serious breach of confidentiality by a Foster Carer will be taken up by the Supervising Social Worker and the Social Work Team Manager.

Information that you give about yourself is confidential to UK Fostering, information concerning the placement of a child / young person is available to the relevant Local Authority.

(See 'Disclosures from Foster Children' for further details)

Contact

UK Fostering recognises that contact for children in care with their parents, siblings, relatives, friends, peers is likely to be an essential aspect of the care provisions. UK Fostering therefore expects its Foster Carers to be forthcoming, proactive and accommodating with regards to contact issues, where this is seen to be in the child's interest by the professional network, in particular by the child's Social Worker.

Foster Carers play a valuable part in promoting successful contact between a child and family and ensuring that family links are maintained. Research has confirmed the importance of the child's continuing relationship with parents and other family members, and the value of regular, positive contact. However, contact arrangements vary significantly from child to child, and it is essential that Foster Carers are flexible in their approach to contact arrangements.

Contact may take place in the child's home, in the foster home, or at a neutral venue, whichever is more appropriate for the child. Before you agree to take a child / young person, UK Fostering will advise you about the arrangements for contact (if known). You will need to consider the amount you will be able to provide in your own home, given your family commitments and bearing in mind what you would want for your own child if he/she were being looked after by someone else. Transport to and from contact is the responsibility of the carers.

The details of contact will usually be sorted out at the Placement Agreement Meeting so that there is agreement and understanding between the parties.

Before deciding the degree and nature of contact you feel able to provide in your home, you will need to give consideration to the following:

- Being clear about what you have to offer and your understanding of the child's need for contact.
- Being clear about what you feel comfortable with.
- Recognising the need to be positive and welcoming.
- Recognising the need to set realistic limits around your own family life.
- Acknowledging the child's background and family circumstances.
- Being aware that contact can be with a whole range of people, not just parents.
- Being aware that contact does not just mean visits, it can mean letters and telephone calls.

You may find it helpful to discuss these matters with the UK Fostering Duty and Placement Team, and / or your Supervising Social Worker.

It may be a good idea if you have a list of local parks, sports centers etc, available for parents to take the child / young person.

If contact has to be supervised, the child's Social Worker will decide who the most appropriate person to supervise is. This could be the Social Worker, another member of the child's family, a Family Support Worker or, in some circumstances, the Foster Carer.

Points to remember

- You are looking after children on behalf of others.
- Recognise that children's parents, relatives, friends, carers and Social Workers have different needs and attitudes to contact.
- Your skill, attitude and experience, patience and understanding are a powerful influence on the successful outcome of contact.
- Take your own family's needs into account.
- Never leave things to chance.
- You should expect help - do not hesitate to talk to your Supervising Social Worker.

Some carers may have a lot of contact with parents, especially with short-term placements. Or there may be regular visits for long-term placements. Even if you are not required to have any contact at all you may have to explain to a child why their parents do not visit.

Problems with Contact

UK Fostering knows that contact can have its difficulties. In some circumstances it may be clear that contact will not benefit children or could be damaging depending of the risks involved. This however is unusual and the Family Law Courts have the power to restrict contact if they decide it is not in the child's best interests.

Contact can also cause distress for children, and Foster Carers are often the people who have to deal with this when a child feels confused or disappointed. This can be emotionally difficult for Foster Carers who feel frustrated that the family is letting the child down. There are many possible reasons why parents and family members may find contact stressful. They may feel guilty or angry that their children are being looked after in Foster Care. Children are often placed in an emergency when the family is experiencing overwhelming problems and loss of control in their lives. Parents may feel angry that their children are living with Foster Carers if this against their wishes and resent having to comply with plans they don't fully agree with.

Parents and relatives can also worry that the Foster Carers will take their place in the child's life and affection. Parents may also feel they have failed their children which can impact on their motivation and reliability. These reasons and feelings can lead to parents behaving in ways which appear inappropriate during contact. They may be very emotional and give the children unrealistic messages or promise gifts.

Dealing with the problems that can result is often hard to manage but understanding the parents experience can help to make sense of the situation for the child as well as the family. Planning meetings involving the carers, prior to or shortly after the placement is made, can help parents deal with their fears and clarify how arrangements can work best for the child.

Foster Carers can also make invaluable contributions to the plans for children by recording the behaviour of children in relation to contact. This may identify patterns which can contribute to decision making which may otherwise go unnoticed. It is also important that the issue of contact is discussed in formal supervision with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker so that problems can be identified, shared and hopefully resolved. When it is considered safe and appropriate it can be beneficial for the Carer to facilitated contact either in the Carers home or at an agreed venue. This can increase children's sense of security when the people who are important to the child are comfortable with each other and can be less threatening for parents and other family members.

Corporal Punishment

UK Fostering **does not** accept **under any circumstances** the use of corporal punishment.

You will have signed an agreement with UK Fostering agreeing to **NEVER** use corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is smacking, hitting or shaking of the foster child, or using an implement (e.g. a belt, hairbrush, slipper, etc) to punish a child.

In addition to the section in 'Care and Control' of this handbook, the guidance to the foster placements (Children) Regulation 1991 states that the term 'corporal punishment' should be taken to cover the following:

- Slapping
- Pinching
- Squeezing
- Shaking
- Throwing missiles
- Rough handling
- Punching and pushing in response to violence from young people

(See 'Behaviour' and 'Care and Control' sections)

Court Appearance

In certain circumstances Foster Carers may be requested to go to Court or to give evidence to a Court. The records that Foster Carers make in their UK Fostering log books during a placement will be very important in assisting their responses.

Attending Court can seem a daunting experience. However, the Social Worker for the child / young person and your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker will offer advice and support and help to prepare you before the court date.

You may have to go to Court for one of the following reasons:

- 1 A child in your care may have committed a criminal offence. You will normally be asked to attend Court with the child to support him/her. In some circumstances this will not be necessary, if a member of the child's birth family goes with the child, or not acceptable if the offence has been committed against you, or you are a witness to the offence. In any case you will be given advice and support by the child's Social Worker and possibly also a solicitor. Your role in the first instance is simply to attend Court, but magistrates and judges may sometimes ask you questions. You may be asked to contribute to a pre-sentence report, which the Court will request if the child has been found guilty. These reports are usually prepared by a Social Worker from a Youth Justice team who will visit you and the child and help with your contribution.
- 2 The child's placing authority, or a member of the child's family, or anyone else allowed to do so by the law, may ask the Court to make an order on the child. Most commonly this will be care proceedings started by the placing authority. In this case you are likely to be a professional witness. This will mean preparing one or more 'witness statements'. This is a written document which lawyers, the child's guardian, and the judge (or magistrate) will read. More often than not you will not actually take the witness stand or even attend Court as the solicitors for everyone involved will discuss and negotiate everything and go back to the Court with a proposal.

Culture, Religion, Language

Culture describes the way people live their lives. Culture is founded on many different factors, for example; memories, common experience, background, language, racial identity, class, religion and family attitudes etc.

Culture is part of a child / young person's identity and heritage. All Foster Carers should respect and value a child's cultural heritage.

How you might help encourage cultural identity

The practical ideas that follow have four important aims:

1. To promote the child's cultural identity.
2. To give the child positive images of their identity.
3. To prepare the child for the society in which they will be growing up.
4. To learn about and share in the child's culture.

The following is a list of some of the ways in which you can actively involve yourself in your foster child's culture. The list is by no means definitive but does include some important ideas:

- Find out about special dietary rules.
- Find out about essential cultural customs - like hair and skin care.
- Make sure you have a stock of appropriate toys, books, etc.
- Find out about the rules of religion.
- Involve yourselves and the child with other families which reflect the child's heritage.

- Encourage the child to keep contact with members of their original community and to introduce you to them where this is appropriate.
- Learn about the historical foundations of the child's culture and share these with the child.
- Make contact with your local ethnic minority communities and attend social events with the child / young person.
- Be aware of racism in the language you use and examine your attitudes to it. Help the child find ways of coping with racist language.
- Encourage the reading of appropriate literature and the watching of television programmes directed towards ethnic minorities.
- Encourage mother-tongue speaking and learning.

Religion

UK Fostering expects their Foster Carers to care for a child's spiritual and moral well-being as well as their physical and emotional development.

Although you may not have strong religious convictions yourself, the foster child and his / her birth family may have. Under these circumstances it is part of your role to encourage the child to practice his religion. Alternatively, you may have strong religious convictions, whereas the child and family do not. It would be inappropriate to insist the child follows your religious practices.

You must never attempt to change a child's religion.

Language

Language is an important part of a child's identity and culture. Foster Carers should be aware that it is possible that a child / young person whose first language is not English may be placed with them. Every effort should be made to preserve a child's linguistic and communication skills, otherwise they may lose a large part of their culture. If you need an interpreter service please ask your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker to make enquiries.

It may be necessary to discuss the child's cultural needs with the child's parents or relatives. If you need more information or advice about a child's cultural and linguistic needs contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker or the child's Social Worker.

Data Protection

UK Fostering acknowledges that Data Protection is an important element for everyone involved in the care of a child or young person. Please see 'Records and Record & Recordings' for details.

De- registration / Termination of Approval

De-registration can occur for two reasons:

The Foster Carer decides they no longer wish to foster

If you decide you no longer wish to continue to foster please inform your Supervising Social Worker and / or the Social Work Team Manager. UK Fostering would request a letter of

resignation, this would be presented to the Fostering Panel, and you will receive a reply which will specify the date from which your de-registration takes effect.

The fostering Panel decides to de-register a Foster Carer and the household are no longer suitable to foster

If UK Fostering considers that you are no longer suitable to foster, either through the review system or because of an incident that causes concern, a report will be prepared on the circumstances. You will receive a copy of this report and be invited to prepare your own report. The reports will be submitted to the Independent Fostering Panel who can recommend de-registration of Foster Carers. Carers will be invited to attend this meeting.

The Fostering Panel will make a recommendation that will be passed to the Agency Decision Maker for ratification of the decision to de-register. You will then receive a letter giving:

- The reasons for de-registration.
- The date it will take effect.
- Details of UK Fostering's appeals procedure.

Diet and Nutrition

UK Fostering recognises the importance of a healthy and balanced diet, particularly for children and young people, but also for adults. Below are a few simple guidelines which will help Foster Carers to obtain an overview of the subject.

Growth and Development

It is very important to keep a close watch on the growth rate of children. Most children grow at a regular rate. This may not happen if the child has been ill or inadequately fed.

Some children may also put on too much weight, lose weight when unhappy or if they are given an unsuitable diet. This will affect their self-esteem and health in adulthood.

A record of a child's weight and height may be kept by the health visitor, family doctor or school nurse. It is a good idea for carers to measure the children too and note in your UK Fostering log book.

Diet and Exercise

Diet does not mean losing weight. It means thinking about what children eat, how much they eat and why they need certain foods. The connection between diet and health is now well recognised.

Try to find ways of getting a child to eat well and healthily – your health clinic or school nurse will be able to give you further help.

It is well recognised that children are less fit than in the past. This is due to a changed lifestyle. Regular exercise is essential for everyone. It can be running, jumping, bike riding, swimming or any other type of exercise the child enjoys.

Simply walking to and from school or playgroup can be good for everyone. The time can also be spent talking to the child.

Getting children to walk everywhere, rather than putting them in the 'buggy' or car because it is quicker, is strongly recommended.

Food and Meal Times

Good healthy eating habits need to start early but Foster Carers often have to deal with a child whose eating habits have developed from a deprived or unhappy atmosphere. Even where this is not the case a child may refuse to eat unfamiliar food when they have just left home. All sorts of behaviour are possible such as over-eating, hoarding, stealing, refusal or vomiting.

Whatever the case may be, it is always best to avoid confrontation, find out what the child's eating habits and preferences are and only introduce new eating experiences gradually, at the child's own pace.

Some children you will care for may need different diets for religious, medical or cultural reasons. You should ensure that you are given full information about the child's dietary needs before placement whenever possible. Specialist advice can be obtained from your health visitor or child's Social Worker. Be aware of any food allergies or intolerances.

Providing culturally varied meals can be an interesting experience for all the family and can help encourage all children to try different foods.

There are, of course, some sensible ground rules to make sure that eating is a pleasant experience for everyone in the family. These include:

- Making mealtimes a pleasant sociable occasion when adults and children can eat together.
- Encourage independence of choice and allow children to feed themselves as soon as possible.
- Take into account a child's food likes and dislikes.
- Never force a child to eat or trick them into eating more when they have had enough.
- Try not to give sweets and crisps as in-between snacks - try fruit as a substitute.
- Appetites and tastes differ.
- Do not automatically expect the same manners. Children learn by example and it is easier on everyone to reward good behaviour.
- Try not to express your own dislikes about food in front of children; it often puts them off trying something new.

Eating Problems

People vary a great deal in the way that they eat. Some eat a lot or will eat anything, others are more particular. These differences are to be expected and usually should not be a cause for concern. However some eating problems are serious and can have a damaging effect on physical and emotional health. The most common of these 'eating disorders' are Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and Compulsive Eating Disorder.

(See 'Eating Problems' section)

Food Safety and Hygiene

Good food safety depends on good standards of personal hygiene, proper storage and preparation of food. New food safety legislation now requires a more comprehensive monitoring of those who prepare and serve meals to others. Generally these regulations cover shops, cafes, restaurants, mobile food stalls etc, but they also require child-minders to be registered with the Environmental Health Department.

Food Sense Check-List

Take chilled or frozen food home as quickly as possible.

- Keep your fridge/freezer at the correct temperature - buy a fridge thermometer.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Do not eat raw eggs.
- Observe microwave standing times.
- Store raw and cooked foods separately.
- Check 'use by' dates on goods and use food within the recommended periods.
- Do not reheat food more than once.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen.
- Wash hands after handling the pets.
- Keeps your kitchen clean and tidy Wash and dry utensils between preparation stages.
- Always wash your hands with hot soapy water before preparing food.
- Raw food, particularly meat and poultry should be stored below cooked food in refrigerator.

Please refer to the following links for further detail and information:

Food Standard Agency: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Diet/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

NHS: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Diet/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Disclosures from Foster Children

Once a child / young person feels comfortable with you and your family they may talk to you (or a member of your family) about issues and subjects that they haven't felt able to discuss before.

This trust the child / young person is placing in you is very rewarding and indicates how well you are caring for them. However, whilst it is very important to maintain this trust, Foster Carers have a duty to inform the child's Social Worker and UK Fostering of any disclosures which raise concerns about a child's wellbeing (whether the disclosure relates to past, present or future). Therefore, you cannot promise the child / young person confidentiality.

Allegations of Abuse by Foster Children

If a foster child makes an allegation of abuse, or says or does anything that indicates they may have been abused, you **must** speak to your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker immediately who will contact the child's Social Worker. If your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker is not available speak to UK Fostering Manager.

Out of hours you should contact the UK Fostering Out of Hours Service (see 'Emergencies' Section)

At the point of disclosure let the child / young person know:

- You are listening and taking seriously what they are saying.
- That it is not the child / young person's fault.
- That you are pleased the child / young person has told you.
- That you understand the child / young person is likely to have mixed feelings.

- What you intend to do next (honesty is very important).

During the disclosure focus on listening and do not ask questions, or give suggestions, just feed back and affirm what the child / young person has said (no leading questions) and proceed at their pace.

Try not to react with horror or disbelief but stay calm and take seriously what they are trying to tell you. Try to write down **exactly** what the child / young person has said, using his / her own words, either at the time or immediately after.

Following allegation / disclosure, the responsible Local Authority will take responsibility for the investigation that will follow. Normally, it will be helpful for the child / young person to receive support from you during the investigation.

Other Disclosure

There are other matters that a child / young person may disclose to you. For example:

- If they are abusing drugs.
- If they may cause themselves harm.
- If they have committed a criminal offence.

Again, you must make it clear that you cannot guarantee confidentiality.

You must contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker immediately or as soon as practical to discuss the appropriate action.

Drug Abuse

Carers

UK Fostering expects all carers to remain within the law in regards to drugs. Suspected or known illegal drug use will lead to an investigation and could result in de-registration. This includes the use of cannabis in any form.

Children and Young People

Drug abuse is an increasing problem amongst young people and it is important for Foster Carers to realise that drugs can affect all young people. All children and young people can be tempted to take or experiment with drugs, no matter where they come from, which school they attend, how bright they are, and regardless of their home circumstances.

If Foster Carers are concerned that a child / young person placed with them could be using drugs they should contact their UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker to discuss these concerns.

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

Some possible indications of drug abuse are listed below:

- Sudden changes of mood from happy and alert to sullen and moody.
- Unusually irritable.
- Loss of appetite.
- Bouts of drowsiness or sleepiness.
- Increased evidence of telling lies or furtive behaviour.

- Unexplained loss of money or belongings from the home.
- Unusual smells, stains or marks on the body, clothes or around the house.

Many of these signs are easily confused with those of normal growing up.

It is important not to jump to the wrong conclusion but speak to your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker if you are concerned.

Information leaflets and details of help lines can be obtained from:

- **NHS:** <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Drug-misuse/Pages/Recovery.aspx>
- **National Drugs Helpline** (24h) 0800 776 600, for advice and leaflets/information
- **Adfam** – 0207 928 8900, for advice and counselling to families and carers of drug users (www.adfam.org.uk)
- **ACODA** (Standing Conference on Drug Abuse) – 0207 928 9500

Eating Problems

UK Fostering acknowledges that people vary a great deal in the way that they eat. Some eat a lot or will eat anything, others are more particular. These differences are to be expected, and usually should not be a cause for concern. But some eating problems are serious and can have a damaging effect on physical and emotional health. The most common of these 'eating disorders' are Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and Compulsive Eating Disorder.

- **Anorexia Nervosa**
People who suffer from Anorexia Nervosa have an extreme fear of normal body weight and feel fat, even when they have lost so much weight that it becomes obvious to others. They may starve themselves by only eating tiny quantities of food. Some stubbornly and angrily resist attempts to get them to eat or will pretend to have eaten when they have not.
- **Bulimia**
People with Bulimia gorge themselves with food on 'binges' and then make themselves sick to get rid of the food. They may also take large amounts of laxatives. They may not look overweight or underweight, which can make their eating problems difficult to detect.
- **Compulsive Eating Disorder**
People with Compulsive Eating Disorders may eat compulsively, consume much more food than their bodies need over a long period or use food to comfort or distract themselves. They may become very overweight which can lead to serious medical problems.

Eating problems, which frequently show during adolescence, should be taken seriously. As well as having an adverse effect on a young person's physical health, eating disorders are often a sign that something is troubling them emotionally.

It is not always easy for Foster Carers to spot the signs of eating disorders.

Below are some pointers which do not necessarily indicate an eating disorder but may suggest a problem:

- Regularly skipping meals and obsessively counting calories.
- Eating only low calorie food.
- Avid interest in buying or cooking food for others.
- Wearing very loose clothes to hide the body.
- An obsession with exercise.
- Dramatic weight gain or loss.
- Food missing in large amounts from fridge/larder.
- Disappearing from the table directly after meal (in order to make themselves vomit).

Eating disorders affect many more girls than boys but it is important to remember that boys do suffer from them too.

If Foster Carers are concerned about the eating habits of a child placed with them, they should contact their UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker to discuss the matter.

Information leaflets and details of help lines can be obtained from:

- **NEDA** (National Eating Disorder Association) www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/
- **NHS:** www.nhs.uk

Education

Local Authorities have a duty to promote the education of children in care. The National Minimum Standards address this in two of the five outcomes, namely 'enjoying and achieving' and making a positive contribution.

The guidelines by UK Fostering to promote educational achievements by children and young people in care are set out in accordance with the Children Act 1989, The Fostering Services Regulation 2011, UK National Standards and The National Care Standards.

Sadly, it is still a fact that Looked After Children continue to underachieve when compared with their peers who grow up in their birth family. UK Fostering encourages its foster carers to have high, but achievable expectations of the children they look after. Foster carers must be proactive in regards to a child's education, lead by example, invest time and resources in the education of any child placed with them.

It is never good enough to expect the school or others (the Local Authority or whoever they may be) to meet the child's needs in terms of their education. UK Fostering sees it as the prime responsibility of the Foster Carer to advocate for the best possible education for the child or young person in their care.

Basic Expectations, carers should:

- Support their child in every way, not just when there is a problem.
- Ensure the child gets any additional help they need, especially if they have changed schools several times.
- See the teacher regularly, establish a positive rapport with school staff
- Attend open evenings and parent evenings.

- Know what the child's homework is - it is usually recorded in their homework book. Show an interest and help if asked but the child must become responsible for doing it themselves.
- Have a quiet place available where the child can work.
- Fill in reply slips and return them straight.
- Show an interest; read to or with the child; talk, discuss; make plans; cultivate good working habits.
- talk about the child's education with the school.
- Purchase educational based toys (age appropriate).
- Read to the Child on daily basis (age appropriate).
- Engage in 'educational play' with pre school Children.

School Attendance

It is the responsibility of the foster carer to ensure regular and punctual school attendance. In most cases, children continue to attend their existing school, as opposed to changing school when being placed in foster care.

If the child is out of school for any reason:

- The carer must inform the school.
- If asked, the school must provide school work for the child to do.
- Carers should ensure this work is done and returned to the school for marking and further work received.
- If the child is suspended then a structured school day should be organised at home. A child should not see it as a chance to do nothing.
- When a child is placed who is not in school, UK Fostering Agency expects Foster Carers to contact the Local Education Authority and Local Schools immediately but no later than seven days of the Child's placement.

Promoting Participation in School Activities

In order to promote educational attainment children should be involved in extra curricular school activities. Foster Carers are therefore expected to address and raise issues where appropriate and attend Personal Education Plan (P.E.P.) meetings, Looked After Children (L.A.C.) Reviews, meeting with their supervising social worker which relate to education and extracurricular activities.

- Educational issues are discussed at Placement Agreement Meeting.
- Regular Foster Carer liaison with education professionals.
- Foster Carer to enable Child to go on school trips and field days.
- Foster Carer to establish availability of after school activities.
- The fostering allowance includes cover for most educational activity expenses.
- Consultation papers and discussion at the Statutory LAC Reviews .

Managing a Change of School

As stated above, moving to another home does not necessarily mean having to change schools, but in some cases this may be unavoidable. Most pupils change schools around their 11th birthday anyway, when they change from junior to senior school. Some children

will also change schools at around seven years of age when they go from infants to junior school.

It is extremely important that a change of schools is managed well. The list below gives an indication of what might be concerning a child or young person when faced with a change of school.

Children may worry about: New teachers , new lessons, new buildings/classrooms, new children, missing old friends, being the youngest instead of the oldest, being late, going to wrong class room, fear of being bullied or belittled, not making friends, etc

As a result of some of these worries children and young people may feel restless, have difficulties sleeping, be clingy, distant, withdrawn or talk much more than usual.

It is imperative that Foster Carers offer encouragement, listen to the child's concerns, take them serious and give reassurance.

Training and employment

There are several ways in which to support young people past their compulsory school age with their education that leads to training and employment. For example by:

- Working closely with the Social Worker and Leaving Care Team
- Keeping discussions about Education and Career Development on a daily agenda
- Having expectations of the young person so that they begin to expect of themselves
- Discussing Career Planning at LAC Reviews and PEP meetings
- Self care skills are monitored and supported throughout the placement

Emergencies

If an emergency arises, for example if a child / young person has an accident; is missing; is in trouble with the police; or any incident which you feel requires urgent attention; you should contact UK Fostering before you contact the Local Authority.

During office hours you should contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker, or if they are not available, ask to speak to Social Work Team Manager.

Out of Hours Service

If the emergency occurs out of office hours then you should contact UK Fostering's Out of Hours service. Your call will be re-directed to the UK Fostering Out of Hours officer on duty.

Local Authority Emergency Duty Team – EDT

On advice of the UK Fostering Out of Hours officer you may be asked to contact the Local Authorities Emergency Duty Team. All boroughs have an emergency duty team operating at night, at weekends and bank holidays. There may at times be a delay in getting a response if the Duty Officer is already working on an emergency. The Foster Carer should state they are a Foster Carer and give the following information: their name, address and telephone number, the name of the young person and brief details of the problem.

Remember that the Local Authority Duty Social Worker will know nothing about your situation and the child you care for. They will be able to offer advice, support and urgent action until the crisis can be dealt with in the morning by the child's Social Worker.

Police

If a child / young person has to make a statement because they got into trouble with the Police, the advice of the child / young person's Social Worker (or Duty Social Worker when out of hours) should be sought. We would also expect that you contact UK Fostering at this stage. Anyone under 17 years of age should have an adult with them when being interviewed by the police. It would be decided by the child / young person's Social Worker who would be the most appropriate adult to provide this support. In general terms, Foster Carers are classified as 'appropriate adults' under these circumstances.

Admission to Hospital

If a foster child / young person is admitted to hospital or has an accident this must be reported immediately to UK Fostering. Foster Carers must also ensure they inform UK Fostering of any child / young person having a serious illness, or any other reasons or circumstances, should they be admitted to hospital.

Missing from Home

Under normal circumstances you should make contact with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker no longer than an hour after the child was expected home.

If the child / young person is missing out of office hours you should call the UK Fostering Out of Hours telephone number and inform the Duty Officer, they in turn may ask you to contact the responsible authority's EDT number and the Police.

(For more details see section 'Missing Child')

Every Child Matters

UK Fostering is fully committed to improve the outcomes for children in care in accordance with the Every Child Matters agenda and other government legislations. The five outcomes in brief are as follows:

1. **Be healthy** (enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle)
2. **Stay safe** (being protected from harm and neglect and growing up able to look after themselves)
3. **Enjoy and achieve** (getting the most out of life and developing broad skills for adulthood)
4. **Make a positive contribution** (to the community and to society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour)
5. **Achieve Economic well-being** (overcoming socio-economic disadvantages to achieve their full potential in life)

(Please refer to 'Appendix One' for further details)

Exemptions

Exemptions under this heading relate to Foster Carers' approval status. When carers are first presented to UK Fostering's Independent Fostering Panel they are approved to foster

children within a certain criteria – this includes the type of fostering (e.g. respite, bridging etc), the age range, number of children, the gender and maybe the ethnicity of the child(ren).

Exemptions are usually applied for proposed placements which match your skills and expertise but are additional to your original approval.

Applications for an exemption to your original approval are requested for a variety of reasons – the most common being extending the age range or for increasing the number of children.

A report will need to be prepared by your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker or a member of the Duty and Placement Team. This report will look at:

- The number, age and circumstances of the proposed child(ren).
- The arrangements for the care and accommodation of the fostered child(ren).
- The intended and likely relationship between yourselves and the fostered child(ren).
- The period of time proposed to foster the children.
- Whether the welfare of the fostered children (and any other children living at the accommodation) will be safeguarded and promoted.
- Any other child care activities in your household (e.g. child minding and the effect this may have upon your capacity to provide sufficient care for the children fostered).

The exemption application will be presented to the Chair of the UK Fostering Panel for authorisation.

The Fostering Panel will be notified and the exemption will be discussed at the next panel, and will then give a date to be reviewed.

An exemption can only be granted for a named child, which means that when this child moves on, your approval reverts back to your original approval status.

Foster Talk

Foster Talk is an organization which works with everyone involved in fostering to make sure children and young people receive the best possible care.

YOU ARE A MEMBER!

As soon as you are approved as a Foster Carer you become a member of *Foster Talk*. Individual membership fees for all Foster Carers are met by UK Fostering. We regard it is a vital requirement that your interests are protected by an independent organisation.

Benefits of membership include:

- Legal protection insurance for Foster Carers
- Free subscription to Foster Care, a quarterly magazine
- Access to support, advice and information on fostering issues from expert staff in their four UK offices
- Special members' prices for publications and training courses

Their contact details are: **Foster Talk, Oak Tree House, Waterside, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, B60 4FD Tel: 01527 573790, www.fostertalk.org**

Please refer to their website for regional offices and a wealth of information on fostering.

Children's Guardian

What is a Children's Guardian?

Children's Guardians are appointed by the Court to represent the rights and interests of children in cases that involve Social Services. They are independent of Social Services, Courts and everyone else involved in the case and employed by The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). See www.cafcass.gov.uk for details on their services.

What do Children's Guardians do?

Children's Guardians are there to help achieve the best possible outcomes for the children they represent. In particular, they:

- Appoint a solicitor for the child who specialises in working with children and families.
- Advise the Court about what work needs to be done before the court makes any decision.
- Write a report for the court saying what they think would be best for the child. The report must tell the court about the wishes and feelings of the child.

To do this, Children's Guardians spend time getting to know the child and members of their family. They talk to other people who know the family, such as relatives, teachers, social workers and health visitors. They attend meetings on behalf of the children, check records, read reports and statements. They may also recommend to the court that other professionals are asked to help such as a Pediatrician or a Psychologist.

Confidentiality

What is said to the Children's Guardian may be used in the report that is given to the court. All information remains confidential to the court and the parties to the case and the Children's Guardian cannot give any information to anyone else without the permission of the Court.

However, the Children's Guardian must tell the court any information that is relevant to the welfare of the children.

Does the Children's Guardian always recommend what a child wants?

Although a Children's Guardian always considers the wishes and feelings of the child, their report will say what they think is best and this may not be the same as what the children want.

Does the court always do what the Children's Guardian advises?

It is the court that decides what will happen but the court takes careful notice of what the Children's Guardian says. If a court disagrees with what a Children's Guardian has recommended it will explain why.

UK Fostering expects all its carers to work in partnership with Guardians for children and must in particular support access for the guardian to the child. Foster Carers must keep their Supervising Social Worker informed of meetings and visits by the Guardian ad Litem.

Hazards

The first safety rule is **PREVENTION**.

While children are young they need to be safeguarded against risk of injury from every day hazards. These include kettles, cups of tea, stairs, electrical gadgets, power points, fires, glass, DIY equipment, garden tools, chemicals, drugs, and cleaning materials.

Some of the hazards that children need to be safeguarded against include:

- Choking and suffocation
- Falls
- Poisoning
- Burns and scalds
- Drowning
- Cuts
- Play accidents e.g. children on bikes, skateboards, climbing frames
- And of course, children on the roads and in cars are very vulnerable.

When buying child safety equipment, furniture and toys for children, it is important to be safety conscious. Look for items with the British Standard Kite mark for the European standard symbols, usually refaced with an E followed by the registration number.

UK Fostering's Expectations

When a child is placed, the responsibility for their every day safety becomes that of the Foster Carers. Like any responsible adult you must take proper care of the child both inside and outside the home. You should have regard for the child's age and understanding, and guide and instruct them in the everyday hazards of life.

UK Fostering expects carers to meet high standards of health, safety and hygiene. We expect that Foster Carers will exercise common sense but contact their Supervising Social Worker if they are unsure about a situation / issue.

All carers are given a copy of the Home Safety Checklist. This checklist will form part of the assessment and review process for all carers.

Finally:

- Talk to children about what to do in an emergency such as a fire.
- Teach them to dial 999.

(See 'Safety First' section)

Health

The guidelines by UK Fostering to promote the health needs of children and young people in care are set out in accordance with the Children Act 1989, FSR 2011, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the NMS.

'Being Healthy' is an outcome of Every Child Matters and therefore UK Fostering prioritises healthy lifestyles of children and young people.

The Children's Act 1989 provides a statutory requirement for the arrangement of health care plans and regular assessments for looked after children and young people. These arrangements ensure that medical problems are identified and necessary action carried out:

- Before placement, if reasonably practical, or unless an assessment has been carried out within the last three months.
- In emergency placements or as soon as possible after placement.
- At least once every twelve months

UK Fostering recognises that Looked after Children may often have increased health needs in comparison with other children and young people. They may also have experienced poorer access to services including universal services such as dental services, immunisations, routine child health surveillance and health promotion.

Helping to look after a child / young person's health needs is one of the most basic, but equally one of the most important responsibilities of any foster carer.

Healthy lifestyles and medical issues are given high priority during the Home Study Assessment, and subsequently at meetings with their Supervising Social Workers as well as part of the annual Foster Carer Reviews.

As part of a child's or young persons health foster carers and SSWs will also discuss issues in relation to sex education, personal hygiene, outdoor activities, alcohol and drug use, etc.

Initial Referral

The UK Fostering Placement Officer will establish as much background information regarding a child's health needs and conditions as possible, at the time of the initial referral, and share these with the Foster Carer. This includes medication, allergies etc.

UK Fostering recognises that on occasions, for example, in an emergency or out of hours, the Duty Social Worker may not be able to establish all or much information regarding current health needs. In such a case the Supervising Social Worker will liaise with the Social Worker at the earliest opportunity to clarify and establish the health needs of the child.

UK Fostering recognises that Foster Carers need to know the health plan for the child they care for. All the relevant health information should be recorded in the LAC paperwork which is prepared by the Social Worker but carers will have to ensure they have the minimum of the following information from the beginning of any placement:

- Medicines being taken – why? – what dosage?
- Known illnesses and allergies

Records should always be made in the Accident and Medication book and/or the Log Book.

GP Registration

The Social Worker will provide the Foster Carer with details of the current GP. If it is not possible or recommended for the child / young person to remain registered with their current GP then Foster Carers should arrange to register the child / young person with their own GP. The GP should know that the child is being looked after. You should also inform the school nurse at the child's school that the child is being looked after.

Dental Registration

UK Fostering Foster Carers are expected to register the foster child / young person with a local dentist, ideally their own family's dentist. Children in care must have 6 monthly dental checks. Current dental needs are also discussed at the Placement Agreement Meeting and carers are expected to ensure any appointments are maintained where appropriate.

Eye Care / Opticians

Foster Carers are responsible to ensure that any child in care has regular eye tests. These tests are free for children and young people under 16 years and students under 19. Foster Carers must ensure that any follow up appointment from an eye test are maintained and to purchase glasses etc where appropriate and recommended by the Optician. Looked After Children are entitled to the maximum value of NHS spectacles voucher towards the cost, as are all children and young people.

LAC Medicals / Health Assessments (Statutory Medical)

Foster Carers have a statutory responsibility to ensure that a child's statutory Medical is undertaken where requested by a Social Worker.

The required frequency of medical examination and health assessments, are as follows:

- Before placement if reasonably practical, unless an assessment has been carried out within the last three months.
- In emergency placements, as soon as possible after the placement.
- At least once every six months up to a child's second birthday, after which at least once every twelve months.

Depending on their age and level of understanding, children cannot be medically examined and treated without their consent. It is the responsibility of the examining doctor to decide this.

Sex education,

Sex education, sexuality, sexual orientation and contraception: UK Fostering recognises that these many be complex issues for a foster family which need to be considered for young people, e.g. legal considerations relating to age of consent, potentially different moral and religious views of young people, their parents, carers, social workers, ignorance of the facts of life and sexually transmitted diseases.

Foster carers need to clarify with their SSW and the LA social worker who should be advising the young people in the light of the above. Often this is discussed with the foster carer's supervising social worker and could be included in the placement agreement meeting, particularly if there are concerns about a young person's sexual activity.

Carers are expected to be involved in sex education with young people when appropriate, but can always rely on the support from their SSW. Carers are made aware by UK Fostering through training and their SSW that they cannot give consent for contraception.

Drugs and alcohol

The misuse of drugs both legal and illegal can damage a child's health. Foster carer's are told to look out for symptoms and speak to the child's social worker and their supervising social worker if they have concerns. Drug's awareness training is provided by UK Fostering to all carers.

Diet and exercise

Foster carers are encouraged to provide the LAC with a healthy diet and should think about what children eat, how much and why they need certain foods. All children need meals that provide them with nutrition. Good healthy eating habits need to be maintained. Some children need different diets for religious, medical or cultural reasons and UK Fostering carers will always respect and support such needs.

Exercise in a group or individual setting is to be promoted by UK Fostering carer's. Inclusion in sports that bring with them a level of fitness is encouraged and where possible families are encouraged to partake in leisure activities together e.g. joining a local gym / sports centre.

Emotional Health

UK Fostering recognises that many children and young people have suffered traumatic experiences and loss in their lives. UK Fostering offers specialist training for its foster carers to approach and support children and young people in this area. The training courses include: Working with sexually abused children, separation and loss, moving in moving on, life story work, therapeutic needs of children etc.

Car safety

It is essential that any transport used by carers is fitted with seat belts. Younger children should only travel in car seats appropriate to their ages secured by a seat belt. The car used to transport foster children should be in roadworthy condition with appropriate MOT/Tax and insurance.

First Aid Kit

Fostering households must have a basic first aid kit available so that small injuries can be dealt with quickly. UK Fostering run First Aid qualification courses and you should ask your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker for details.

Hospitalisation

If the child / young person needs to go into hospital, either by appointment or because of an emergency, inform your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker immediately. Stay with the child in hospital if you can without neglecting your own family.

Immunisations

It is easy to protect most children against infection with a simple course of injections. Children placed with Foster Carers must not be given inoculations without prior consultation with the child's Social Worker. Please consult your GP about the programme of immunisations required for children, you can also ask your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

Accident and Medication Book

Foster Carers are given an Accident and Medication Book for each child / young person placed.

In the Accident and Medication Book foster carers record any matters to do with the child / young person's health. This includes appointments with the doctor, dentist, hospital, optician, mental health service, school nurse, LAC nurse, etc. Foster Carers should also record details of immunisations, any illnesses, serious injuries and accidents that the child / young person has whilst in placement. It is the foster carer's responsibility to present the accident and medication book to their SSW as part of the placement visit routine.

Brief mention of the incidents must also be noted in the Log Book.

The Accident and Medication Book should be given to UK Fostering at the end of the placement to be added to the child / young person's file.

Confidentiality

UK Fostering expects that carers should maintain confidentiality and keep this paperwork in a secure place e.g. a locking box file.

Medical Consent

Foster Carers cannot sign medical or dental consent forms. Therefore Foster Carers must have a form signed by the person with parental responsibility (this would usually be a parent or Social Work Manager) giving their agreement to medical treatment and this form should be handed to the Foster Carer when the child / young person first arrives at their home. In an emergency, a doctor can take whatever action is necessary, even without parental consent.

Medication

Safe storage of medication is essential, ideally in a locked cabinet out of sight and reach of children. Under no circumstances should medication or drugs be left in a place where children / young people can get hold of them. Foster Carers should have guidance from their GP on the administration of prescribed drugs for children and young people.

Foster Carers should have advice from the responsible authority on the arrangements by which they can administer drugs not on prescription. The carer should also be aware of any possible adverse reactions to the medication and the necessary steps to correct such an occurrence.

Accidents / Serious Illness

Minor accidents - It is essential that you record in the Accident and Medication book and your Log Book any accident in which a child in your care is involved. Record the date and time, how the accident occurred, and what action you have taken. It can sometimes be difficult to remember or explain the signs of an injury weeks after. Always inform your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker as soon as you can.

Serious accident or sudden illness - If the foster child requires medical or hospital treatment, consent to treatment will be required. Young people sixteen years or over give their own consent to medical treatment. Some children under sixteen years may also be able to give or refuse consent if they are considered to have sufficient understanding. You must notify UK Fostering as soon as you have organised any medical treatment. Once again it is essential that you record details in the Accident and Medication book and your Log Book. The Registered Manager of UK Fostering must inform Ofsted of certain 'notifiable' contagious diseases and serious illnesses.

If the accident occurs outside normal office hours notify the Out of Hours Duty Officer.

Holidays

When a foster family goes on holiday there are two options that they can consider:

- 1 They take the foster child / young person with them.
- 2 They request respite care for the child / young person for the period that they are away. (See 'Respite' section)

At UK Fostering, we do our best to encourage carers to include the foster child in the holiday arrangements. By taking the foster child on holiday they are included as part of the 'family'. A child that needs to go to respite carers may feel alienated and not included in the family

that in all other ways are trying to make the child part of their set up. It is for this reason that at UK Fostering we have a holiday grant scheme. Foster Carers receive a holiday / respite payment amount irrespective as to whether they choose to go on holiday or not. A carer taking a foster child on holiday with them will receive an additional allowance per child. (See 'Allowances' section)

Permission

In some circumstances permission is required before a child / young person can be away from the Foster Carer's address overnight, even if they are accompanied by the Foster Carers. This could include school trips, scout camps, etc. Therefore before Foster Carers make any arrangements they should contact the child's Social Worker to discuss their plans.

Holidays Abroad

Where Foster Carers plan to take a holiday abroad with a foster child, the carer must give their UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker plenty of notice. Written permission for the child to travel abroad may need to be obtained from the child's birth parents, Social Services, or the court.

The particular legal status of the child / young person can have an effect on whether it is possible for a child / young person to leave the country. There may also be other reasons why a holiday abroad might not be in the best interest of the young person. A letter of delegated consent may also be needed when taking a foster child outside of the U.K.

Please make sure that you inform your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker in plenty of time in order to avoid any disappointment. UK Fostering advises that Foster Carers do not make any bookings prior to receiving written permission from the Local Authority.

Passports

If it is authorised for the young person to leave the country, obtaining a passport can be a lengthy process, as can obtaining the permissions and agreements required by the law. The child's Social Worker will assist with the application for the passport. Please note that this can be a lengthy process.

We are aware that there are many different considerations that need to be thought about which will impact on the possibility of a foster child going on holiday with the family. In those circumstances where a child cannot go with the family, the agency will look to provide 'in-house' respite placements. (See 'RESPITE' section)

At UK Fostering, carers should be aware that they will need to give 2 months notice of a holiday to give UK Fostering time to carefully find an appropriate respite option.

Hospitality and Gifts

Hospitality

It is acceptable for carers and staff to offer and accept normal hospitality - a hot or cold drink, a biscuit, or similar. There may be occasions when it is appropriate to share a meal but you should be careful to preserve your professional relationship and be aware that generosity, in some circumstances, can be seen as bribery or undue influence.

It is appropriate for you to welcome family and friends of the child/ren and other professionals with refreshments. There is no expectation that you will do this and we will support you in setting clear boundaries about visits, for example, the amount of time contact should take, whether you should offer a meal in certain circumstances.

Gifts – Cash

No carer should offer or accept a gift of money in any circumstances, other than from or to a child in your care. This should be clearly recorded in your daily logs.

Gifts – Kind

Gifts should not be refused if it would cause offence to do so, especially if from a child. In the event of a gift considered to be of more than nominal value being proffered the recipient should tactfully tell the giver that they are not allowed to receive gifts. You should be especially cautious about gifts to and from placed children's families and talk to your Supervising Social Worker about how this should be handled in individual cases.

Foster Carers are asked to be mindful of their professional relationship with Social Workers, parents, teachers and staff from UK Fostering. However, carers are free to give appropriate gifts to the children entrusted to their care. If in doubt, carers are asked to seek guidance from their Supervising Social Worker.

Household Family Policy

The household family policy forms a critical part of the documentation which supports the framework in which the family, including the foster children, live together. UK Fostering requests that each family has a family policy to help reinforce an understanding of what safe caring means and to help achieve high standards of safe care.

The policy is completed as part of the Form F assessment. For those Foster Carers who were approved prior to this policy being introduced, the Supervising Social Worker will complete the policy with the Foster Carer. The policy should be reviewed annually at least, and should be adapted and changed to suit and meet the needs of all the children, including the birth children. The template below is a general example and can be modified to individual circumstances.

Example of a Household Family Policy

Name of the Foster Carers:

1. **Privacy** (issues such as who uses each bedroom; knocking and waiting for permission before entering room; where the child can have quiet area for homework; etc)

- *Everyone in house is expected to maintain their own privacy and also respect privacy of other members of the house.*
- *If any member of the household has to go into foster child's room, or vice versa, then the bedroom door remains open.*
- *Everyone knocks on the door before entering others room.*
- *Our Bedroom is out of bounds.*
- *Foster child room has sufficient space and table for study and for doing homework.*

2. **Dress** (issues such as appropriate dress, the wearing of dressing gown whilst using communal area before and after bathing)

- *Everyone locks the bathroom before using.*
- *Foster Carers and the children are always dressed unless in bed and I wear Shalwar kurta in the house.*

3. Language (issues such as swearing / inappropriate words not tolerated within the home)

- *No swearing is allowed and abusive language is not tolerated in house.*
- *Everyone in the house should respect each other. No use of inappropriate words in the house. I will be insistent on this as I have my own children to consider and don't want them to learn bad language.*
- *Television watching – There are two televisions, one in the living room downstairs where everybody watches it together. The other TV is in the elder son's room but even he is not encouraged for late night programs.*

4. Touch (issues that no-one touches another persons body without that persons permission)

- *Our family is aware of inappropriate touching and the possibility of accusations arising from misinterpreted behaviour.*
- *I intend on being with the foster child and my own at times and if this situation arises to explain the expected behaviour and lead by example.*
- *Touch will depend upon the foster child's wish.*
- *Children in the house will not be allowed to touch or hit each other.*

5. Sorting Out Differences (will everyone in the households perspectives be listened to and will family reaction to these views be fair?)

- *In case differences arise, it will be discussed and dealt with in a fair manner. I will assess the situation and deal with it fairly. I will discuss it later, talk about how to recognise feelings and how to deal with them.*
- *Everyone will be given a chance to express their feelings and thoughts.*
- *In case any issue needs further support or clarification, then the respective Social Worker will be contacted for help in sorting out the matter. I will keep a note of it for the Social Worker and allow them to talk to the child about it.*

6. Discipline and Sanctions (what are the family rules; what sort of discipline do the carers promote?)

- *Self-discipline is expected by every one in the house. Certain rules like coming home by a set time (depending on the age and circumstances); no food in bedrooms, personal hygiene; helping in household chores, including keeping own room clean and tidy.*
- *General respect is the most important rule and 'do as you would be done by'.*
- *Some things I expect to have to nag about (tidying, homework...) and sometimes grounding or removal of computer time for these things.*
- *Rules, repercussions and jobs for pocket money or rewards for good behaviour will be clear and fair, and always followed through by both parents.*
- *In case the young person or foster child doesn't follow rules or disciplines, then we will withdraw certain privileges, or 'ground' a child, by banning television for certain period, withdraw pocket money, ask to go early in bed etc. I will also give appropriate notice or warning to the child and if needed will use sanctions to correct child's behaviour. I will always do it in the best interest of the child and will also discuss with our UK Fostering Social Worker.*

7. Bedtime Routines

- *I will allow siblings to share room.*
- *Bedtime may depend on the age and whether it's a school day or weekend or holidays.*

- *Usually during week days children under 11 yr age should be in bed in between 7.30 to 8.30 pm and 11 yr and above by 9.00 to 10.30pm*

8. Managing Sexualised Behaviour (what strategy would the family use to react to such behaviour?)

- *I will always talk to the child who is placed if they are showing inappropriate sexualised behaviour. I will seek the guidance of the child's Social Worker and my Social Worker at UK Fostering.*
- *I will also put strategies in place in our home to safeguard myself and my family.*
- *With the help of 'Safe Care' training, we will be able to manage this issue appropriately.*
- *This is something I will ask for help with rather try and tackle on my own.*

9. Bathroom Routines

- *No male members in the family will be involved in bathing young children in care alone. (If deemed necessary, the bathroom door would remain open) Children under 11 years will be asked not to lock the bathroom door from inside for safety reasons.*
- *Everyone in the house is expected to clean the bathroom daily and after using it leave it as it was found for others to use.*
- *Everyone in the house is expected to properly wash and bath in order to maintain personal hygiene and cleanliness.*
- *If there proved to be issues with hygiene I would talk to the Social Worker and discuss how it should be addressed.*
- *Bath times are in the evening before bed when the house is full and both parents are present (in the kitchen).*

10. Transporting Children (car seats; insurance; MOT etc)

- *We are aware that by law no child under 11 years should sit in the front of a car, and all children should be strapped in their seat appropriately.*
- *We are also aware that the car used for transporting children should be insured with current MOT and road tax.*
- *And also that any person who is driving the car should have a proper driving licence.*

11. Baby Sitting/Childminding (who are the baby sitters/ are they CRB checked?)

- *We don't use baby sitters but if we did I would use a qualified one or our back-up carer who has been CRB checked by UK Fostering.*

12. Confidentiality (how does the family maintain confidentiality about the child?)

- *Matters of confidentiality would always be respected by us and only divulged such information as necessary to professional bodies, in the child's best interest.*
- *Documents will be stored in a lockable cabinet*
- *Any documents related to foster children will be sent back to UK Fostering for the archive record.*

13. Pets (where do the pets sleep? are dogs and cats that live in the household free to roam all around the household?)

- *Our cat sleeps in the conservatory on her bed but is free to roam the house. If a foster child did not like her then they could close their bedroom door.*

Signatures.....

(Also see 'Your Family' for further details)

Independent Fostering Panel

UK Fostering's Independent Fostering Panel consists of up to ten members with wide professional and personal experiences including the fields of Social Services, health, education, police, fostering, racial equality, etc.

The Independent Fostering Panel meets on a regular basis to consider the following presentations:

- **Form F assessments**
The panel considers every Form F assessment that is completed for Foster Carer applicants. The panel meets the Assessing Social Worker and the applicants. The panel make recommendations to the Responsible Individual before approval can be granted.
- **Foster Carers Reviews**
Approved Foster Carers have their approval reviewed annually. A Review will also be completed every time there is a major change in the Foster Carer's circumstances, and if there is any issue of concern raised (see 'Review' section).
- **Changes in approval of Foster Carers**
Panel will consider any requests for a change to the original approval (i.e. age, gender, number of children). They will make recommendations to the Responsible Individual before any change of approval can be granted.
- **Exemptions including emergency exemptions**
Exemptions are usually applied for proposed named placements that match your skills and expertise but are additional to your original approval (see 'Exemptions' section).
- **Allegations and Complaints**
Panel will consider reports, may ask to meet the Foster Carers in question, and make recommendations to the Responsible Individual (see 'Allegations' section).
- **Investigation Reports**
Reports may be commissioned for purposes outside of the 'Allegations and Complaints' procedures. Panel will consider reports about Foster Carers, may ask for follow-up actions, and make recommendations to the Responsible Individual.
- **De-registration of Foster Carers**
De-registration can occur for two reasons:- the Foster Carer decides they no longer wish to foster, or UK Fostering decides that the Foster Carer is no longer suitable to foster. Panel will consider reports, may ask to meet the Foster Carers in question, and make recommendations to the Responsible Individual (see 'De-registration' section).

All matters presented and discussed in the panel are confidential.

Foster Carers are always invited to attend their initial approval Panel and may be invited to attend panel meetings, depending on the reason for presentation. Foster Carers are notified

in writing of the Panel's decisions and are given details of appeals procedure, should they disagree with the Panel's recommendations.

Professional Advisors to UK Fostering Fostering Panel

As part of agreed procedures for calling on specialist advice, panel members will have access to expert advice if so required. This expert advice will be provided by the agency and be available to clarify any aspect of the assessment or approval review report. This will include access to:

- Legal Advisor
- Medical Advisor
- Independent Fostering Consultant

Independent Visitor

Independent Visitors are adult volunteers who are appointed by the responsible Local Authority to befriend a child / young person in care. Any foster child who has had infrequent or no contact with their family in the past twelve months' is eligible to have an Independent Visitor.

Independent Visitors are usually associated and recruited by non profit organisations that are vetted by the Local Authority or have an agreement or contract with them. It is important that Foster Carers work in partnership with independent visitors.

An independent Visitor can have several functions including:

- Befriending a child
- Taking a child out for leisure activity
- Providing encouragement and support to the child
- Listening to the child's worries/concerns
- Be present with the child at reviews and other relevant meetings
- Spend fun time with the child
- The independent visitor is usually a volunteer

Insurance

Buildings and Contents

At the time of your assessment, and subsequently at Annual Reviews, you will be asked for copies of your buildings and contents insurance details.

It is your responsibility to inform your insurance company that you are fostering otherwise you may invalidate your buildings and contents insurance.

Membership of Fostering Network gives carers legal insurance cover for issues involving foster care, including allegations, and you should consult your Fostering Network membership pack for further details of this scheme. (See 'ALLEGATIONS' section)

An important leaflet covering this area is Fostering Network's 'Foster Care and Insurance'.

Car

Carers are advised to take out fully comprehensive car insurance. A copy of your current car insurance must be passed to your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker annually.

Carers are advised that their car insurance is invalidated if they do not have current car tax and MOT for the vehicle.

Leaving Care

According to the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities have a duty to prepare young people which are placed in foster care for independence. They also must provide after-care support until the young person is 21 years of age although most leave care at age 18. In some cases, support can be extended to the age of 26 years if the young person is in education or training.

Foster Carers have a vital role in preparing a young person for independence. They need to assist, encourage and motivate the young person to develop the necessary skills for shopping, cooking, budgeting, contacts with banks, contact with GP practices, managing their day to day practicalities and many others. The Local Authority may even ask foster carers to extend placements beyond the expected age of Leaving Care. If a foster carer is interested in extending the placement of a young person who has reached 18 years old, they are expected to inform their supervisory social worker who will discuss their intention with the Local Authority.

We encourage Foster Carers to save regularly for the young person so that at the time of leaving the foster placement, funds are available to buy necessary furniture etc. The Local Authority usually provides a 'leaving care grant' which supports and complements these spending.

UK Fostering encourages carers to mark the placement end with a celebration, event or gathering, as appropriate for the young person.

The continued interest by Foster Carers in young people who have left their care is an invaluable source of support for these young people.

(See also 'Independent Living Skills')

Life Story Work

Foster Care Handbook

UK Fostering encourages their Foster Carers to undertake Life Story Work with the child / young person placed in their care.

Children who live with their birth families have plenty of opportunity to know and learn about the events in their lives. They generally grow up surrounded by their family members; they accept and feel secure about their place within the family structure.

Children separated from their birth families are often denied this opportunity; they may have lived with a number of different families, they may have changed Social Workers, homes and neighborhoods. Their past may be lost, confused and much of it forgotten.

All children are entitled to accurate information about their past and their family. When children lose track of their past, they may find it difficult to develop emotionally and socially. If adults cannot or do not discuss this past with them it is reasonable for children to assume that it may be bad.

Life Story Work is an attempt to give back some of this past to children separated from their family. Compiling facts about the child's life and the significant incidents and the people in it helps children to begin to understand and accept their past and move forward into the future.

Many children separated from their families blame themselves and believe they must be unlovable or worthless, but a suitably worded version of the truth can increase a child's sense of self worth and identity.

Life Story Work gives you, the Foster Carer, the opportunity to show children why they should be proud of themselves and this positive attitude should be evident in any life story work. For example, although you will tell the child a suitably worded version of the truth about their family and why they are being looked after, it is important to find and emphasise all the things that are positive.

Some suggestions for the content of a child's Life Story Book:

- Birth Certificate or a copy, information about the child's birth, photograph of the child's birth hospital.
- Photographs of birth parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family and any details and information available. Draw a family tree.
- An explanation of why the child is separated from their family
- Information about visits with birth parents.
- A flow chart to help clarify the moves and changes in the child's life.
- Photographs of previous Foster Carers, children's home, previous schools.
- Photographs of favorite activities, significant incidents, holidays, birthdays and festivals.
- Write down memories after a chat.
- Anything else which the child feels is important.

Media (including Emails / Internet)

The media has an enormous influence on all our lives, and not all are bad. However, for Looked after children who have degrees of emotional illiteracy, abusive early experiences and attachment problems, unrestricted access to all media can be damaging. Whereas some children can relatively easily differentiate fantasy and reality many looked after children have blurred boundaries. The 'excitement' level, particularly of video games, is high and not always suitable for children who need a soothing environment. Children will usually accept control by adults, especially if they know the rules in advance. You may have problems if you have a 'relaxed' approach to begin with and then have to impose restrictions.

UK Fostering expects its Foster Carers to:

- Be aware of the effect the media have on the child/ren you look after – some children need very little monitoring, others a great deal.
- Ensure as far as possible that your children have access only to suitable material. You may need to control the games and videos they use, including any they buy, borrow or swap for themselves. This is reasonable parental control.
- Limit the time they spend on playing games. It sometimes helps to have a general rule for this, e.g. half an hour 3 times a day.
- Prevent them from having free access to non-terrestrial TV channels.
- Consider whether TV in their bedroom is appropriate. Music is better for relaxing.
- Do not allow internet access in a child / young person's bedroom and have clear rules about bedroom computer use.
- Monitor and consider time-limiting the use of game-boys etc in bedrooms, especially before bedtime as they are not always the best way to relax.
- Be aware of what they watch on TV. Try to watch with them and use the programme to talk about issues directly relating to the children. Limit the time they spend watching. As with games it can help to have a general rule, e.g. one hour each evening. You can always make exceptions.
- Encourage them to use 'good' material. Read to them, and with them, and get them to read to you. Take them to the library and bookshops and get them to choose books. Go to the cinema but don't always let them choose the film. They will often enjoy something you might think babyish but will not choose it themselves.

Computer and Internet Safety

The company encourages all carers to have computers at home and to be familiar with the internet, e-mail processes and to be computer literate. We appreciate that children require access to computers to enable them to meet their educational needs.

To ensure safety the following guidelines should be followed by carers:

- Carers are advised to place computers in public areas of their home so that it is easier to monitor what use young people are making of the internet.
- Carers are advised that their home computers need to be password protected.
- Carers are encouraged to attend training on internet safety.
- Carers are encouraged to talk to young people in their care regarding Internet use and how to keep themselves safe.
- Carers are advised to use software that blocks and filters the material that comes onto their computer.
- Carers are advised to check the access history of how young people have been using the internet.
- Carers are encouraged to report any thing illegal or suspicious to the internet Watch Foundation at www.iwf.org.uk
- All carers should refer to their copy of 'Keep your child safe on the internet' leaflet produced by the Home Office and available on their website under 'child protection'. www.homeoffice.gov.uk
- Carers should familiarize themselves with the advice on thewww.thinkyounknow.co.uk.

Carers are advised to discuss with young people:

- How to keep themselves at friend's houses safe when using unfiltered equipment.
- To remember that everyone you meet online is a stranger.
- To use a nickname when they log on and not to give out personal information.
- To never arrange to meet up alone with someone they make friends with online.
- To try to have online conversations in public forums.
- That by accepting emails or opening files from people they don't really know, they can get into trouble.
- To talk to an adult they know well if anything makes them feel uncomfortable when using the internet.
- To talk about being bullied by any of their peers or anyone else when using the internet.

In addition to the above young people are expected to share their log on and password details with their carers, so that carers are able to monitor use of MSN/BEBO/Facebook, My Space and YouTube accounts. This is in recognition of the fact that some young people have had very inappropriate contacts in these social networking sites. A balance does need to be reached between respecting a young person's right to privacy and protecting vulnerable young people from harm. It is hoped that by young people knowing that their accounts can be monitored and the computer being in a public part of the home, and the open discussion of the dangers and safety tips between carers and young people, the risk of harm or inappropriate communication can be reduced.

The **S.M.A.R.T.** tips are an useful way of doing this:

S: SAFE – don't give out personal details.

M: MEETING – make sure they don't meet someone without your permission.

A: ACCEPTING – e-mails or viruses from strangers could contain viruses.

R: RELIABLE – people lie on line and may not be who they say they are.

T: TELL – if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable.

(Please also refer to 'Data Protection', 'Media' and 'Records & Recordings')

Missing Child

On occasions you might find a foster child disappears or leaves the foster home without your permission or knowledge of their whereabouts. This may follow a specific incident or be part of a behavioural pattern for the child.

The way you manage any difficulties will depend on the young person's individual needs and circumstances. Consider the time the child / young person has been missing for and the child / young person's needs.

Under normal circumstances you should make contact with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker **no longer than an hour after the child was expected home.**

If the child / young person is missing out of office hours you should call the UK Fostering Out of Hours telephone number and inform the Duty Officer, they in turn may ask you to contact the responsible authority's EDT number and the Police.

(See 'Emergencies' section)

If the young person is known to be associating with others who may pose a risk to them, or if a child / young person has a learning disability, you should notify your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker or the Out of Hours Duty Officer immediately.

All children and young people should be given clear guidance on where they are allowed to go, when they are expected back and what to do if they are unable to get back or get into difficulties.

In the interim if they do not return when expected, then the following should be put into action:

- Contact them by telephone to ascertain their whereabouts and remind them that they are late returning and encourage him/her to return as quickly and safely as possible, ensuring he/she is not intimidated by the prospect of returning.
- Contact their friends and/or family to see if they are with them or have seen them.
- Keep a written record of any actions you have taken.

Other Useful Tips

- Keep an up-to-date list of their friend's contact details
- Try and remember what they were last wearing
- Try to have a recent photograph available
- Discussion with the Supervisory social worker may assist foster carers to think about what has happened in previous placements and what either led to or prevented placement breakdown

However if a child / young person has a history of going missing or absconding, it is essential that this is fully discussed within the placement planning meeting and fully recorded as to the expectations that you need to follow as their Foster Carer.

The following need to be considered as part of those discussions:

- Identification and assessment of the degree of risk to the child / young person if they go missing.
- To detail the level of supervision and support that is required for the child / young person.
- Consideration of the child / young person's parent's views as to what actions should be taken if their child goes missing.

Ofsted

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Ofsted regulates and inspects all Independent Fostering Agencies regularly. Ofsted produces inspection reports on their findings which are accessible to the public. Previously CSCI (Commission for Social Care Commission) was responsible for the inspection of fostering agencies.

The Education and Inspection Act, which established the new Ofsted, states that Ofsted is concerned to:

- Promote service improvements.
- Ensure service focus on the interest of their users.
- See that services are efficient, effective and promote value for money.

UK Fostering works in partnership with Ofsted to improve outcomes for children and young people entrusted to our care. UK Fostering, as any other Independent Fostering Provider, has to report child protection concerns caused by a Foster Carers, or allegations against Foster Carers to Ofsted.

Contact Details:

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
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Tel: 0300 123 1231
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email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Further details on criteria and evidence pertaining to the individual outcomes.

Parental Responsibility (PR)

Parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent has in relation to a child and his or her property. People with Parental Responsibility can make important decision about areas such as food, clothing, education, home and medical treatment.

Birth mothers automatically have parental responsibility and also married fathers. Parental responsibility continues after divorce.

An unmarried father has parental responsibility if his name is registered on the birth certificate (for births after December 2003), or if they get married to the mother, or obtain a relevant order from the courts.

In some circumstances other people may acquire parental responsibility. For example, Special Guardians appointed as carers acquire overriding parental responsibility. Social workers can also exercise overriding parental responsibility in situations where a child's health and safety have been compromised.

Pets

Foster Carer's Pets

In line with BAAF (British Association for Fostering & Adoption) guidelines UK Fostering has to ensure carers know about, and adhere to, the following:

- Pets are healthy, e.g. regularly wormed
- Pets are kept under control
- Feeding bowls and litter trays are not within reach of children
- Gardens are free from pet urine and excrement
- Carpets and furniture are kept free of pet hairs.

The safety of children fostered in a family with dogs must be considered carefully. It is always a possibility that a dog may attack a child; the dog may be provoked or merely perceive a threat.

If you have a family pet, of any kind, this will be noted on your initial Form F assessment and at subsequent Annual Reviews. Please inform your Supervising Social Workers if your household has pets.

Occasionally a child / young person will come into care and they may have a pet to bring with them. This pet may be a source of comfort and consistency to the child / young person. We encourage Foster Carers to accept the pet. Your Form F will note if you are willing to take pets, and which type of pets. If you have an allergy or intolerance of any animal please inform your Supervising Social Worker.

Photographs

During a child / young person's stay with you it is important that a visual record of their time in care is captured however brief it might be.

A child / young person who lives within their birth families will normally have plenty of opportunities to know and learn about events in their lives. However this is not the case for those children who come into care. It is therefore important to capture key events and moments not only of the child / young person but also of yourself, members of your family and pets, as well as events such as birthdays, weddings, holidays, school events and festivals.

Please bear in mind safe caring principles when taking photographs and ensure that the child / young person's permission has been sought.

Always avoid taking photographs where they are scantily dressed or in the bath.

No photographs should be stored on your computer.

As a Foster Carer you cannot give permission for a child / young person's photograph to be publicised. If their school or anyone else approaches you for this purpose please contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

(See 'Life Story' section)

Placements

UK Fostering has a specialist team of placement officers who are responsible for the referral and matching process.

The Referral

Placing Local Authorities contact our duty team with details and a profile of the child they wish to place with a Foster Carer. The Local Authority is responsible for passing on all relevant information about the child / young person. This information is sent by telephone and email, sometimes by fax.

Placement Officers from our duty team will give placing authorities an immediate response if there is a possibility of a placement with a Foster Carer or if suitable match is available. At this point an informal discussion about the child and any possible carers takes place to eliminate any obvious reasons why placement would not be appropriate. During this period initial contact will be made with any potential foster family to establish if they would like to consider the placement. If so, the profile of the foster family will be sent to the placing authority.

Matching

'Matching' is the process of aligning the child's needs with the skills, ability, experience, likes, characteristics and location of the potential foster family.

During the matching process the placement officer and the Local Authority establish that the proposed placement:

- Reflects the expressed wishes of the child/ren
- Takes into account the wishes of the child's family
- Will be able to meet the child's physical, educational, emotional, health, cultural, religious and social needs
- Will be able to meet the needs for contact
- Will not disrupt any child already in placement
- Will not be harmful to any child of the carer
- Will bring no substantial risk to any member of the carers' household or their property

If any one of these criteria's cannot be met, further serious consideration will be given to the appropriateness of the placement.

In case of an 'emergency placement' the matching process may have to be short and brief. For example if a child is not able to return to the family home after school and a foster family has to be found on the same day. The majority of children coming into care for the first time are placed in an emergency situation.

UK Fostering also provides a placement service out of hours which means that children and young people may be placed with Foster Carers during the night. In these situations only limited information may be available about the child's history or background.

Where possible and appropriate, introductions will be arranged so that the child / young person can get a feel for the foster family.

It is the Local Authority Social Worker and the Local Authority Placement Service who decide which Foster Carer they want to place a child with. However, it is the foster family's decision whether they want to accept the referral. UK Fostering will never place a child / young person without the full agreement of the foster family.

There are various types of placements. Below is a brief overview of the differences:

- **Emergency / Short Term Fostering**
Short-term placements could involve a period of days, weeks, months or years but it is never intended to be long term or permanent placement. Ideally children in short term care will return home to their family.
- **Long Term Fostering (Permanency)**
Children and young people who are placed in this type of placement will often have significant contact with their birth families but are not able to live at home. Long term fostering for these children may be a more appropriate option than adoption. Ideally the child / young person will remain with you until they reach adulthood and be part of your family for the rest of their life.
- **Respite Care**
In this type of placement a child / young person will join your family for short periods of time on a regular basis. The idea is to ensure that the child / young person remains in the care of their birth family but has regular visits or stays with an alternative family. This enables families to stay together by providing them with regular periods of respite. Alternatively you might provide respite care for when another Foster Carer has a break or attends training courses.

UK Fostering provide respite placements for disabled children and those with additional needs. The aim of this service is to offer short-term family based care to disabled children and young people to:

- Achieve flexible responses to disabled children and their families
 - Reduce risks of family/placement breakdown
 - Prevent the need for long term accommodation
 - Provide day care or overnight stays
- **Remand Foster Care**
This type of placement is for young people who are at risk of being given a custodial sentence or have been remanded into the care of the Local Authority. Some children provide challenges in the home as well as involvement in anti social behaviour outside of the home. Some young people may indeed behave well within the home setting but are extremely influenced by their peer group outside the home and are vulnerable to involvement in inappropriate behaviour.
 - **Unaccompanied Minors**
Unaccompanied young people come from different parts of the world, generally these children are seeking to escape the risks of war and many will have lost family members in conflicts. UK Fostering recruits Foster Carers from within the relevant communities who understand the cultural needs of these young people and speak their languages. UK Fostering also recruits carers from within the indigenous communities who are interested in this type of placement.
 - **Mother and Baby / Child Placement**
Some carers provide foster care to young mothers and their babies when there are concerns that the mother may require additional experienced input, or concerns that the behaviour of the mother may put the child at risk. These placements are part of a comprehensive parenting assessment carried out by the responsible Local Authority.
 - **Adult Mother and Baby / Child Placement**

Due to the shortage in parenting assessment centers, the courts have resorted to placing mothers over the age of 18 into foster care with their children. Although the mothers themselves are not technically in care, the child is - and the carer is required to support the mother in the same way they would if she had been under 18. The general reason the placement is sought is as an interim measure in order to safeguard the needs of the child in a safe and monitored environment.

Placement Moves

Placement endings are major and significant events, which need to be planned and handled well, with a lot of thought and time committed from everyone involved. There is always some pain in even the best ending as there will be some sense of loss but, hopefully in all cases, there will be growth and learning identified. Carers and their families will be able to take further placements after they have had time to recover.

Placement End Reasons

- Planned return home/to birth family/others
- Unplanned return home/ to birth family/others
- Planned move to another placement
- End of task – e.g. assessment
- Unplanned move to another placement as a result of allegations: against child, against carers, other members of household
- Unplanned move as a result of threat to carers' family from child's family
- Move into custody
- Move to independence
- Carers give notice
- Placement breakdown
- Inability of carers to continue – illness, domestic difficulties
- Absconding and not found
- Abduction of child

Common Factors to Endings

Satisfactory endings are very important, for you and the child, and will almost always produce mixed feelings. Ideally, every ending should involve:

- Planning
- Discussing
- Tying up loose ends and ensuring continuity – reports, recording etc
- Sharing feelings
- Goodbye ceremonies
- Future contact
- Debriefing and learning from the placement
- Time to regroup: everyone needs a breathing space, sometimes short, sometimes longer: It depends on the circumstances who take a role in each of these activities.

Whenever a placement comes to an end, whether planned or not, you as the Foster Carer will always need to consider the following:

- The occasion is marked by a special meal or treat for the child / young person, so that they are able to say goodbye to significant people associated with that
- The child / young person's possessions should be packed in a suitcase or holdall, **Never** in black plastic bin-bags.
- Any photographs that were taken whilst the child was in placement should be made available to the child / young person on placement.
- As the current Foster Carer you should ensure that information about daily routines is shared with the new carers to assist in the transfer of care.
- As the current carer you may experience a change in the child / young person's behaviour as the end draws near. They may have mixed emotions of excitement but also anxiety. It is important that you reassure the child / young person that you will stay in contact with them and that you care about them.

Problems in Placement – Planning Meeting

There may be difficulties in the placement that could, in time, lead to breakdown of that placement. In that eventuality an urgent planning meeting can be called where all parties will sit together to discuss the problem and attempt to find a solution. The solutions would be varied depending on the individual cases. The meetings may formalise a new plan to approach the issues or potentially agree to investigate the providing of additional resources. The hope is that this urgent meeting will allow all parties the chance to help resolve the problems before they become irreconcilable.

Disruption Meetings

If after the planning meeting the identified difficulties cannot be resolved, and it is felt by all concerned that it is in the interests of the child to move, it is expected that the Foster Carer will give the Local Authority a reasonable notice period to find an alternative placement (28 days). This will ensure that the child / young person is supported and prepared for a change in their care arrangements.

A disruption meeting may be held before the placement ends or on some occasions afterwards.

The purpose of a disruption meeting is not to apportion blame but to consider the following aspects:

- Bring closure and moving on
- Contribute to the process of healing
- Provide an understanding of the child / young person, finding lost history and its meaning
- Understanding what happened, prior to/during/after the disruption
- Identifying learning and gaps in practice/resources
- Pulling together common themes
- An opportunity to look at planning processes

Pocket Money

Pocket Money is very important to all children. UK Fostering believes that having money of their own to spend (or save) gives children and young people some independence and teaches them to budget.

A portion of the weekly fostering allowance is intended to be used to provide pocket money for your foster child. The amount will vary according to the age of the child, and the Annual Information Sheet, which you receive about updates to the fostering allowance, gives guidance about the age-appropriate levels of pocket money.

It would be useful for you, your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker, and the child's Social Worker to discuss what the child spends their pocket money on and to agree what portion should be saved each week towards the cost of presents, holidays and special items.

The child should be encouraged to spend the remainder of their pocket money as they wish. As the child gets older it may be appropriate to balance this with teaching the child budgeting skills as part of the training and preparation for independence.

Pocket money should not be withheld from a child as punishment for unacceptable behaviour. However, it may be appropriate in some circumstances to withhold a part of the pocket money as payment towards the cost of repairs or replacement of items resulting from deliberate damage. This action can only be taken with prior approval from your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker.

Children need to be told about the pocket money system; to be told what they will get both now and in the future; and they need to be involved in deciding how any special allowances are spent.

(See 'Allowances' section)

Police

If you or any of your family members or other significant adults are subject to a police investigation or questioned about an offence you must let UK Fostering know immediately, even if you know you have done nothing wrong, or if the offence in question seems trivial. This will ensure:

- UK Fostering can support you and deal with any implications for your placed children
- UK Fostering can deal with Local Authority Social Workers in a clear and open way
- Panel can be given a full picture

If in doubt, tell your Supervising Social Worker. You will never be penalised for openness but concealing an issue would be considered extremely serious.

Racism

Each individual will have a different understanding, awareness, experience and attitude about racism. However, as Foster Carers of children from different ethnicities, it is important to be able to recognise racism and also to be able to distinguish between different types of racism. This is vital if you are to effectively challenge racism for the benefit and protection of the children we care for.

It is important to understand what exactly constitutes racism and similarly the understanding of labels associated with people from ethnic minorities. It is equally important to appreciate that each person will have an individual level of understanding and awareness, but the impact of racism on the lives of young people is measurable through negative behaviours and attitude, low self esteem, anger, hate, denial, isolation, loneliness, pain, low educational achievement and aggression.

- **Personal Racism**
A belief, attitude or feeling that people of another race are less equal or inferior.
- **Organisational Racism**
A system that is structured and functions to the detriment of people from ethnic minorities.
- **Prejudice**
A belief or pre-conceived idea about issues such as individuals, cultures and organisations. An idea that is usually based on non-factual evidence and influenced by negative images.
- **Direct Racism**
Direct Racism is usually extremely obvious; insulting or abusive name calling or labels, clear exclusions from services or events, humiliation, fear and threats.
- **Indirect Racism**
This is usually very subtle and sometimes difficult to detect. It is often incorporated into systems and organisations although individuals are indirectly racist in their actions, ideas and thoughts. Sometimes people do not realise just how indirectly racist they are.

The Impact of Racism on Children and Young People

The effects of racism on young people differ with each individual. The impact on their lives is dependent on many factors including the level of security and support young people have. However, there are definite areas in which the impact of racism can affect individuals and their human needs in dramatic and serious ways.

(See 'Culture', 'Religion' and 'Languages' sections)

The Foster Care Handbook

Records and Recording

UK Fostering records and stores data and information in accordance with relevant legislation and Regulations such as the Data Protection Act, Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards (NMS).

Keeping and maintaining records of children in care is an important part of the responsibilities of Foster Carers. UK Fostering expects all its carers to record relevant data and information and produce regular written logs (see below for details) on the children and young people entrusted to their care.

Records on Foster Carers

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 require UK Fostering to keep the following information on you:

- Form F assessment, checks and references

- Foster Carer agreement
- Records of approval and termination
- Records of placements
- Records of Supervising Social Worker visits
- Records of your professional development training
- Reviews of your approval

Social Workers from the responsible authority may have access to your file when making placements or addressing complaints. If you wish to see your records you should discuss this with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker. Confidentiality is always maintained.

Records on the Child / Young Person

UK Fostering and the responsible authority will give you various types of paperwork regarding the child / young person placed with you. From the Local Authority Social Worker you will receive the Looked After Children Documentation (LAC Documents) which includes Care Plan for the child, Essential Information 1 and 2, Placement Plan 1 and 2, and others). Foster carers are to store these documents in a folder (separate for each child) in a secure place (see below for more details).

Records kept by Foster Carers are important in many ways, for example:

- They can contribute to any assessment or review that may be taking place.
- They can be required by the courts as evidence.
- They can help the carer/any professional involved or the child make sense of what is happening or has happened to them.
- They can assist the child / young person with Life Story Work.
- They can reduce the risk to you if a complaint or allegation is made against you (especially if the complaint is made a long time after the event).

UK Fostering Log Book

Foster Carers are given a UK Fostering Log Book to record the daily events of caring for the child / young person in care. UK Fostering requires you to complete the Log Book on any child / young person you are caring for.

The purpose of the Log Book is:

- To provide a record of the child / young person's progress and development.
- To keep a record of family contact.
- To provide an element of care and protection.
- To promote a professional and responsible approach to the fostering task.

The Log Book entries should contain information relating to positive behaviour and areas of concern. It should include all contact with UK Fostering, notable incidents at home and school, contact visits/telephone calls, accidents etc. You should make a clear distinction between facts, opinions and impressions as well as supporting your comments with examples.

Any significant incident or event should be reported to your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker at the earliest opportunity and written up within 24 hours. If you have more than one

child in placement, please ensure that entries for each child are recorded on separate pages in your log books. Copy sheets should be handed to your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker each month.

You are required to pay particular attention to recording data, information and observations on the 5 Outcomes for children in care (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being).

UK Fostering Accident and Medication Book

Records of matters to do with the child's health should be recorded in the Accident and Medication book. Brief mention of the incidents may also be noted in the Log Book. (For further details see 'Health' section)

Electronic Information and Data

UK Fostering recognises that an increasing amount of data and information is shared and transmitted electronically via email and attachments. Foster carers are advised only to use email addresses from 'UK Fostering' or the Local Authority to send emails to, and not private email accounts of individuals.

Foster carers are reminded to ensure to use initials of children / young people in care when referring to them in emails, rather than their full name. Also, it is imperative that carers save data relating to children and young people in a separate folder on their computer which is password protected (see below), or on a CD (which is kept locked away) or a memory stick which is password protected.

Storing of Records and Information

All records relating to a child / young person are to be kept in locked case, drawer or cupboard. This includes electronic data (memory stick, CDs). Electronic data on the computer is to be password protected and kept in a designated folder, inaccessible to third parties.

All records and copies of documents are to be handed to UK Fostering at the end of the placement to be added to the child's file.

Confidentiality

For further details see 'Confidentiality' section.

Respite

At UK Fostering, we do our best to encourage carers to include the foster child in the holiday arrangements. By taking foster children on holiday they are including the child as part of the family. However, UK Fostering is aware that there are many different considerations that need to be thought about which will impact on the possibility of a foster child going on holiday with the family. In those circumstances where a child cannot go with the family, the agency will look to provide 'in-house' respite placements.

At UK Fostering, carers should be aware that they will need to give two months notice of a holiday to give UK Fostering time to carefully find an appropriate respite option.

When a holiday form is filled out by a carer, it is received in the UK Fostering Duty and Placement Team where it is considered alongside current and future vacancies.

As with any placement, considerations of the suitability of a carer for the said placement are undertaken. These considerations involve:

- The ethnicity of carer.
- The location of the carer in relation to the child's school.
- The ability to take a child to school if required.
- The ability of the child to stay in contact with friends.
- The ability to maintain contact with the family of the child.
- The overall general ability of the carer to meet the needs of the child specific to that individual with as little disruption as possible.

When a suitable carer is found by UK Fostering we would send the Form F assessment to the child's Social Worker for approval. Should the Social Worker be happy with the arrangements made then we would look to arrange introductory visits for the child to ease them into the move to the new carer for this respite.

There may be circumstances where UK Fostering is unable to find a suitable respite option for the child and in this case we would ask the Local Authority to arrange a respite option of their own.

There is the option of 'In Home' respite care, this is when the Foster Carer identifies a family member who can live at the Foster Carer's home and look after the foster child / children. This option provides both convenience and familiarity for the foster child / children and ideally the child will know the respite carer from past meetings. UK Fostering will undertake an assessment of the proposed respite carer and complete all the necessary statutory checks (if not already done). The assessment will be presented to UK Fostering's Independent Fostering Panel for their consideration and recommendations.

UK Fostering pays its foster carers £15 per week for every week where a child or young person is in placement. This payment is made per family, not per child. The maximum amount of £750 per year is for the foster carer to use during a respite/holiday period. Foster carers are entitled to the respite payment, regardless if they do take a respite or not. It is part of their allowance entitlement, for every week that they foster.

(See 'Independent Fostering Panel' section)

In emergency situations Foster Carers are able to use their 'police checked' back up carers for an interim period of a few hours and one overnight stay at most, if sanctioned by UK Fostering and the Local Authority. If an emergency proves to be longer then UK Fostering would consider an in-house emergency respite. This would run alongside the agreement of the Local Authority.

Reviews

There are different formal reviews in which Foster Carers may be involved – the main ones being their own 'Foster Carer Reviews' and a 'L.A.C. Review' for the child / young person's care planning.

Foster Carer's Review

This process is led by UK Fostering and all approved Foster Carers have their approval reviewed annually. The main purpose of their **Annual Review** is to assess whether the Carers and their household are still suitable to foster. Whenever possible, reviews are carried out at the Carer's home and are a two way process where the Carer is invited to express their views about their fostering experiences. It will be an opportunity for the Foster Carer to discuss their successes, difficulties, training needs, current approval status and to give their views about UK Fostering's service.

The Foster Carers, the carer's children, the looked after children as well as the Social Worker are asked to complete a feedback form which forms part of the Review process.

CRB, statutory checks and health and safety checks will also be completed at the time of the Annual Reviews if due for renewal.

The Annual Review recommendation made by the Reviewing Officer will be presented to the Fostering Panel and then approved by the Responsible Individual. The Carers will be notified of the outcome. Carers are requested to sign a new agreement following each Annual Review.

A Review will also be completed every time there is a major change in the Foster Carer's circumstances.

A Review will also be completed if there is any issue of concern raised, for example an allegation or complaint against the carer.

Review of the Child or Young Person (L.A.C. Review)

This review process is led by the Local Authority. Regular reviews for the foster child / young person are carried out to examine plans and decisions as well as setting goals for future action.

The review is part of a continuing planning process and involves the Foster Carer, the child / young person, birth parents, child's Social Worker and UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker. It may also involve other representatives concerned with the child's welfare i.e. education or healthcare professionals if appropriate.

The purpose of the review is to:

- Review the carer plan of the child / young person is in the child's best interest.
- Review the child's welfare and progress, including their health, physical, emotional, educational and social development.
- Seek and take into account the views of the child / young person, parents, Foster Carer and any other person involved with that child.
- Consider whether fostering and this particular placement are the most suitable for the child and redefine the tasks that each participant will be undertaking.
- Ensure that the child's needs arising from their cultural background, racial origin and religious persuasions are being met.
- To consider the future needs of the child and plan accordingly.

The contents of the review are recorded in writing. The first review should take place within four weeks of placement, it should be followed by a second review within three months, and thereafter reviews should take place at six monthly intervals.

You may also hear the term 'Disruption Review'. (See 'Placements' section)

Role of a Foster Carer

UK Fostering acknowledges that Foster Carers have a critical role to play in ensuring children in care are able to achieve their full potential.

Foster Carers are expected to work in partnership with their UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker, the child / young person's Social Worker, and other professionals in order to achieve the best outcomes for the children.

Every Child Matters

Foster Carers are expected to help children achieve the five outcomes that the Government Policy document 'Every Child Matters' outlines. These outcomes underlie most government policy relating to meeting the needs of Looked After Children.

The Five Outcomes are:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Enjoying Economic Wellbeing

During supervision you will be encouraged to consider how you are working to achieve these outcomes for the children placed with you. Training will be offered.

- Carers must respect and promote a child's cultural heritage, and encourage children to have a positive understanding of their origin, culture, religion and language.
- Carers must ensure that children are protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation so that children stay safe. Carers should afford the same level of protection and care to a child as they would to their own child.
- Carers must encourage and facilitate children to maintain contact with their family and friends.
- Carers must have a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life.
- Carers, working alongside UK Fostering, the child's Social Worker and other professionals, must ensure that the child / young person is given the opportunity to express their wishes and feelings over any issues likely to effect their daily life and future.
- Carers should ensure attendance at meetings, and maintain contact and communication with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health, church etc.
- Carers must ensure that children receive appropriate health care to meet their physical, emotional and social developmental needs; together with information to enable informed involvement in decisions about their health needs so that children can be healthy.
- Carers must ensure that high priority is given to ensuring children's educational needs are met and that children are encouraged to attain their full potential. Also to encourage interests and hobbies so that they can enjoy and achieve.
- Carers must encourage and enable children / young people, to develop the skills, competence and knowledge needed for adult life, so that they can make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.
- Carers must inform UK Fostering about changes in the household and problems that may arise.
- Carers should have a commitment to professional development training.

- Carers must respect confidentiality.
- Carers must adhere to UK Fostering's policies and procedures including making a daily record of care and keeping lines of communication open.
- Carers to keep accurate appointments in their diary and log-books in respect of health, development and education of the child or young person.

Safer Caring

The following notes should help you to keep you, your family and your foster child/ren safe.

Key Points – Your Family

- Create a climate of openness where everyone is given an opportunity to express their own views and wishes.
- Good communication is essential. It is particularly important that your own children feel able to tell you if they are worried by a foster child's behaviour. It is a wise precaution to ensure that your own children are clear about what they should and should not accept, i.e. good touch/bad touch, aggression, verbal abuse. If you have any doubts about how and when to do this talk to your Supervising Social Worker.
- Plan how to protect your family and others if a foster child's behaviour presents risks.
- Get advice from your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker and talk through ways of avoiding risks with everyone who could be affected.
- Look at your household/family policy you drew up when being assessed and check its relevance for the current placement. A clear family policy should encourage everyone to stick to it as this can help reduce risks and let everyone know what is expected of them.
- Ensure you complete your log books with a daily diary and other relevant paperwork is kept up-to-date. You will need to record any event or circumstance which may have an effect on the well-being or safety of any member of the foster family including the fostered child.
- Make sure the whole family's needs for rest, relaxation and support are met. Its tiring being constantly vigilant.
- Foster Carers can feel overwhelmed by the task of caring for other people's children – be aware of the warning signs that you may be facing 'burn out' – sleeping/eating problems, irritability, withdrawing from others, feelings of failure, difficulties in concentration, blaming self or others. Use your Supervising Social Worker and your network with other Foster Carers for support.

Key Points – Looked After children

- Children and young people have a fundamental right to be kept safe from abuse.
- We have an obligation to looked after children and young people to explain their rights and the responsibilities of adults towards them.

- Think about the age/stage and the child / young person. Remember to use language they can understand to help them explore issues of personal safety and keeping safe issues.
- Help children and young people to protect themselves – sometimes an abused child needs 'permission' to refuse to do what some adults say. Help them to understand what kinds of adult attention or requests are unacceptable and how to refuse them.
- Make sure they know where to get independent and confidential advice.
- No one has to keep a secret. A distinction should be made between surprises (which are fun) and inappropriate secrets (which are scary).
- Build into your daily routine a quiet time when both the foster child and your own children can talk to you about their day.
- If a child discloses a fear or anxiety to you, treat it seriously.
- Children are never to blame for abuse, and their fears and anxieties whether real or imagined, must not be dismissed as 'silly'.

Safety First

Most accidents to children happen in the home. Many of these accidents and subsequent injuries could have been prevented.

Foster Carers should regularly check their homes and gardens to ensure every precaution is taken to keep everyone in the home safe. The list below will help and assist you to focus on some of the main areas.

In addition, UK Fostering Supervising Social Workers will carry out a health and Safety Inspection at least once per year. Carers need to ensure that:

Fire

- Smoke detectors/alarms are fitted on each floor.
- Smoke alarms are tested weekly.
- Fire extinguisher and/or fire blanket is available and appropriately installed.
- You have a fire escape plan and everyone in the home is aware of it.
- Fire Guards are used.
- UK Fostering recommends that you contact your local fire station and ask for a safety assessment. This is usually free of charge.

Other areas in the home to focus on

- Banisters must be boarded up or gaps no wider than 4 inches.
- Use protectors on furniture with sharp corners.
- Safety glass must be used on all low glass surface areas.
- Windows must have a lock.
- There is a fully stocked first aid box.
- Sockets are covered with child resistant covers.
- Hot drinks are kept well out of reach of children.

Kitchen Safety

The vast majority of accidents in homes happen in the kitchen.

- Children always need to be supervised in the kitchen.
- Food should be appropriately stored and kept at the correct temperature.
- Knives and other sharp utensils are kept out of reach.
- Cupboards containing detergent and other chemicals are fitted with a childproof lock and are kept out of reach.
- All items are kept in the correct containers/bottles and clearly labeled.
- Kettle flex should be short and not overhanging.
- Cooker guards are used where appropriate.

Bathroom

- Medicines and shampoos are locked in a cabinet or well out of reach.
- Bathwater is at the correct temperature.

Car Safety

- Seat belts are worn including in the back seat.
- Childproof locks are on.
- Appropriate car seats are used, e.g. car/booster seat.
- Foster children are covered under their insurance.
- Road traffic rules and regulations are observed at any time.

Garden

- Garden and paddling pools are fenced off and or covered.
- All activities by children near and in water is appropriately supervised.
- Chemicals and tools are kept in a locked shed.
- Swings and playing frames are securely fitted.

General Advice

Other general advice on how to make your home safe, in particular for small children, includes:

- Bath time: Children can very quickly drown in just a few inches of water. Children under five should never be left unattended in the bath. Do not assume that an older child is enough to supervise a smaller brother or sister.
- Small children's skin is delicate and injuries caused by burns and scalds can be horrific. Carers should turn thermostats to below 54C (130F) to avoid scalds from hot water taps and when filling the bath always run the cold water first.
- Fit window locks or safety catches that stop windows opening more than four inches.
- Move furniture such as beds, sofas and chairs which might allow a small child access to a window.

This is not an exhaustive list and Foster Carers have to be vigilant and alert at all times to ensure the safety of children in their home.

Any accidents should be recorded in your UK Fostering log book and your UK Fostering Accident and Medication book.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive!

(See 'Accident and Medication Book' and 'Records and Recording' sections)

Settling a Child into Your Home

Introductions

When a child / young person comes into care, they will probably be feeling confused and frightened. This is likely to be a very stressful period for them. It is therefore important that as a Foster Carer you try to understand how they might be feeling and attempt to put them at ease.

Some of the children and young people who come to stay with you will have suffered from some form of abuse or neglect. As a result they may present with emotional, behavioural or developmental difficulties.

Your home environment will be different to their own home or previous placements and your family rules and expectations, which are taken for granted by your family, can be bewildering to a child / young person.

- It is important to value and respect all that a child / young person brings with them including their clothes and belongings.
- It is also important to exercise restraint in seeking to change too quickly, if at all, the child's behaviour, culture, lifestyle and familiar belongings.

Initially you will need to familiarise yourself with the child / young person's routines and their likes and dislikes. They might be feeling confused regarding the relationship they will have with you, for example what to call you? They might have been separated from siblings as well as other family members. It will therefore be imperative that they are supported in maintaining these relationships through regular contact in person or on the telephone.

As their carer you will be pivotal in providing such support to children in preparing for such meetings as well as dealing with difficulties that present afterwards.

During the course of a placement, you might witness the following in a child / young person:

- Homesickness.
- Blaming themselves and feeling guilty about being removed from their parents care.
- Requesting that they return to their parents care even though they have abused them.
- Feelings of anxiety and loss associated with the separation from siblings and other members of the extended family.
- Feelings of rejection or of being unwanted.
- Difficulties in dealing with multiple foster placements.
- Presenting with mixed emotions about becoming attached to you as their carers.

- Feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about their future.
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative behaviour.

Remember to log any difficulties as they emerge and discuss with your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

If the child / young person joins your family home as a planned placement there may be meetings and overnight stays to familiarise the child / young person. Having a photograph album about your family for them to see prior to their meeting you will be useful as an initial introduction.

(See 'Behaviour', 'Contact' and 'Life Story Work' sections)

Sexuality / Sex Education

The Children Act guidance suggests that for every young person the experience of being cared for includes recognition of their need for sexual education. Children and young people leaving care often report that they are not given enough information or help to learn about sexual health and sex education. The fact that the UK continues to have one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Europe only underlines this.

UK Fostering recognises that there is a need to support carers and their families in addressing and dealing with issues of sex education and sexual health of children and young people. UK Fostering therefore provides specialist training courses e.g. regarding HIV/AIDS for its carers.

UK Fostering recognises that talking openly about relationships and sexuality may feel uncomfortable for some individuals. However, it is very important that carers make themselves available, are proactive and initiate conversations about these issues with children and young people where appropriate. However in the first instance, Foster Carers should use their meetings with Supervising Social Workers, visits by the child's Social Worker and/or Placement Agreement Meetings to seek guidance on how these issues are to be addressed.

Sexual Orientation

Although it might seem that everyone lives according to the boy meets girl stereotype, lots of people make different choices about their partners, often in the face of prejudice and hostility from those around them.

UK Fostering expects its Foster Carers to take a positive approach to provide the information that young people need to help them to develop their sexual identity. Foster Carers are required to have an open mind to a child's / young person's sexuality which includes supporting them if they are gay or lesbian.

The child / young person needs to have the support, acceptance and understanding of those who are caring for them. For advice on how you can support your foster child contact your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

There are websites and organisations that the Foster Carers or the young person themselves can contact for confidential advice and support. Ask your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker for details.

Care

Sex Education

Most children are gradually prepared at home for the changes in their own body and feelings. If you are the people closest to the child you will need to guide and support them through the difficult area of sexual relationships.

Sexual Precocity and Promiscuity

Some children learn to use their sexuality to stimulate the interest of the opposite sex at an early age. Sometimes they are copying their parents' behaviour and may not have experienced a normal parent/child relationship. Sometimes they will not know that their behaviour is inappropriate. Promiscuity is a difficult problem. Some children feel deprived of love and feel unsure of their attractiveness so love-making helps them to feel wanted.

Part of your responsibility is to explain the dangers (both physically and emotionally) of sexually transmitted disease and unwanted pregnancy.

Illegal Sexual Activities

Although for a number of reasons Looked after children are more likely to become involved in illegal sexual activity than non-Looked after children, most Looked after young people don't get involved in illegal sexual activity.

Whilst it remains illegal to have sex for girls under 16, and for boys under 18 in respect of homosexual sex, the police have long taken a common sense approach to 'normal' sexual activity between boy and girlfriends over 14, especially where the young people are close in age and the sex is consensual (both parties agree to the sexual activity). Sexual activity below this age tends to be more suspect and more likely to call for legal intervention.

The common sense approach normally calls for a parent or carer to ensure the young person is well informed and taking no unnecessary risks and that the sex is consensual. There is little tolerance where there is any considerable age gap (regardless of gender), and none whatsoever if the sex is non-consensual, in which case legal action is likely to be taken.

Warning signs of possible involvement in illegal sexual activity

- Unexplained absences from home or when the young person is not where they said they would be
- A sudden abundance of money
- Mood changes
- Excessive bathing
- Provocative clothing
- Health changes especially mental health
- Lying
- Phone calls from people unknown to you or 'wrong numbers' or silent hang-ups
- Pregnancy
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

What You Should Do

Make sure as far as you can that there is an 'open' attitude to sexual matters in your home and that young people in your care know you can be approached on any sexual matter. The best defence against sexual exploitation of Looked after young people is that they are well informed about sexual matters and sex is something that their carers are not afraid to talk about. If you would like training in this area you should talk to your Supervising Social Worker.

If you suspect a young person in your care is sexually active talk to the young person directly.

If you suspect that a young person is at immediate risk from illegal sexual activity e.g. involved with a paedophile ring, being sold for sex, you must inform your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker immediately. If there is an immediate danger phone the police.

If you know a young person under 16 (or 18 for homosexual boys) is sexually active you must tell your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker. In most cases you will all agree to take a common sense approach but there will be times when the sexual activity will be considered abusive and there will be the need for child protection procedures to start.

Significant Changes

The Foster Care Regulations require that you notify UK Fostering in writing of any significant changes in your family and household.

For your guidance listed below are examples of the sort of changes we consider significant and need to know about.

- If you are planning to move house.
- If you do move house and details of your new address.
- If you change your telephone / mobile phone numbers.
- If you change your G.P.
- If you receive penalty points on your driving license.
- If you are charged with a criminal offence / receive a Police caution.
- Any member of the family who is charged with a criminal offence/receives a Police caution.
- If anyone is planning to stay in your home who has not been CRB checked:
 - If any family member, friend or relative, joins your family for more than one week.
 - If anyone is planning to visit or comes to stay in your household who has a criminal record involving offences against children or violence against a person.
- Any change in your employment status:
 - If you start or stop working.
 - If your working hours change significantly, e.g. part time to full time, or to evening and weekend work.
- If you are in serious financial difficulties e.g. rent arrears, debts, re-possession.
- Any severe marital difficulties including one partner leaving home (even temporarily).
- If you become pregnant / miscarry / give birth.
- The birth of a child to any immediate family member.
- A serious deterioration in the health of any significant family member.
- Diagnosis of a serious illness for yourself or any significant family member.
- If any immediate and significant family member dies.
- Anyone leaving the family, e.g. adult children to University.
- If your foster child is suspended from school/college.
- You have a dog that becomes registered under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

- Any other significant event that you think is important to share.

Following notification, your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker will respond by arranging to visit and will complete the relevant forms. They will then discuss the change with the Fostering Manager to decide whether a review would be helpful or whether it is required to return your case to the Independent Fostering Panel.

Smoking

It is the responsibility of UK Fostering and its Foster Carers to safeguard and promote the health of any child and young person placed with them. There is overwhelming evidence of the negative effects smoking has on children.

Local Authorities do not place children under the age of five years, with Foster Carers who smoke. The UK Fostering Foster Panel does not approve carers who smoke to care for children under the age of five.

Whilst UK Fostering acknowledges the skills and abilities of its Foster Carers who smoke, UK Fostering wishes that children's health is given the primary consideration.

Guidelines For Carers Who Smoke

- Under no circumstances are carers to smoke in the house or in front of children.
- Carers must ensure children at any time eat, sleep and play in a smoke free environment.
- Never smoke whilst washing, dressing or playing with a child.
- Carers must never smoke in their car, even when the child is not present.
- Carers smoking habits will be considered at the Foster Carer Review.
- We ask all carers to discourage children from smoking and Foster Carers must never provide cigarettes or tobacco to Looked After Children.

General Guidelines

- Foster Carers are role models. The children in your care will learn from your good and bad habits and this can have an influence on whether they become a smoker.
- Carers are asked to avoid 'smoking environments'.
- Foster Carers are asked to be mindful when visiting friends or family who smoke to not expose the children to passive smoking.
- The minimum legal age for tobacco sales is 18.

Social Workers

Throughout your fostering career with UK Fostering you will be involved with Social Work staff. These will include Social Workers from the Local Authority responsible for the child / young person in your care. Sometimes these are referred to as Field Social Workers. If you have more than one child or children from different authorities you will have more than one

Local Authority Social Worker. You will, of course, also have your own UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker. Here's a brief summary of their roles:

Supervising Social Worker (from UK Fostering)

When fostering for UK Fostering, Foster Carers will be allocated their own UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

The Supervising Social Worker supports the Foster Carers in looking after the children. This entails giving support and encouragement as well as monitoring and advising. Supervising Social Workers visit the Foster Carers twice per month during the first 12 month of a placement. Thereafter the fostering manager makes a decision to reduce visits to monthly or to be kept at fortnightly intervals. It is mandatory that Foster Carers make themselves available for these visits.

Your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker will always be prepared to discuss and advise on problems or difficulties experienced during the fostering task. The Supervising Social Worker plays a key role in ensuring that Foster Carers receive appropriate training and support.

When their Supervising Social Worker is not available, Foster Carers may be given the name of another Supervising Social Worker to contact should any issues arise.

Your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker will also be making at least one unannounced visit per year in order to provide a balanced perspective of the quality of life in the foster home.

Supervising Social Workers have a duty to ensure that guidelines and fostering regulations are fully adhered to and therefore also carry out bedroom checks, H&S checks and meet with the Looked After Children as well as the Foster Carer's own children.

UK Fostering recognises that Foster Carers, in order to be able to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in their care, need to be supported and supervised to the highest standard. Every Foster Carer has an allocated named Supervising Social Worker (SSW).

The role of the SSW includes providing the following support to carers:

- Two weekly or monthly placement visits
- At least one unannounced visit to the foster home per year
- Regular phone contact
- Regular bedroom checks
- Being present when a child is placed with a carer and when they move out from the foster home
- Accompanying the carer to meetings such as LAC reviews, placement planning, disruption and strategy meetings
- Completing annual H&S checks
- Discussing and deciding on training needs
- Provide guidance on legislations and policies including Every Child Matters, Care Standards Act 2000, Children Act 1989, Fostering Service Regulation 2002, National Minimum Standards, Child Protection policies as well as UK Fostering Fostering Policies
- Ensure that legislations and policies are implemented and adhered to

- Provide guidance on practice issues such as safe caring, behaviour management, life story work, sexual health, emotional wellbeing and record keeping.
- Complete Annual Foster Carer Reviews
- Meeting with the Looked After child / young person to ensure their views are heard
- Meeting with the carers children to ensure they are happy and content within their home
- Support and guidance during investigations into allegations

The monthly link visits include discussions on the child's / young person's welfare, the five outcomes and how the carers contribute to improving them, issues concerning the foster family, partnership working and others. The SSW completes monthly reports on each foster family which is signed by the carer, SSW and the fostering manager.

Child Social Worker (from the responsible local authority)

Under the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities are required to provide every child in care with an allocated Social Worker.

The child's Social Worker has statutory duties, such as to visit the child within the first week of placement and at least every six weeks thereafter. Visits will often need to be more frequent, and the Foster Carers must agree to a visit whenever reasonably requested by Social Workers.

The allocated Social Worker is primarily responsible for the overall planning for the child / young person and who is supervised by a Team Manager or Senior Practitioner. It is important for carers to know the name and contact details, as well as the office address of the Social Worker. Also, carers need to know the Duty Social Worker or Duty/Emergency telephone number of the relevant department so that they can get in touch without undue difficulty.

The child / young person's Social Worker has an important role to play as a link with the child / young person's family. Whenever appropriate, they will arrange visits of the child / young person's parents, relatives or friends to Foster Carer's home, in accordance with the placement agreement forms.

(See 'Contact' and 'Support' sections)

Supervision and Support

When placing a child / young person with a Foster Carer, UK Fostering allocates a named Supervising Social Worker (SSW).

The Supervising Social Worker's role covers a variety of activities ranging from advice and encouragement, the practicalities of equipment and finance, and supervising the Foster Carers in their task appropriately. (See above: 'Social Worker' for details).

Records are kept of visits, the carer's daily Log Book sheets will be collected, and the Supervising Social Worker will discuss with the Foster Carer any difficulties, problems and placement progress.

Foster Carers may ask, at any time, for more supervision or contact UK Fostering for advice.

Where does supervision take place?

Normally in the Foster Carer's home. Since the discussion is confidential, the meeting place must provide for privacy.

How long does it take?

Although there are no set timescales, carers should allow at least one hour for a home visit by the Supervising Social Worker. If more than one visit is made in the course of a month, the second visit may be shorter, depending on the support you require. Other contacts can be as short as a phone call.

Can children / young people be present during visits?

Each child copes differently with having visitors in the house. Some are able to allow the Foster Carers some private time to talk and will go off and play or watch a video; others will feel insecure or left out and will want to be included. As a general rule children should not be 'talked about' when they are present, therefore it is important that carers and supervisors should have dedicated, private, supervision time. Children should be told that adults need time for grown-up discussions but, if there is anything important they should know, the carers will tell them once the Supervising Social Worker has gone.

What about confidentiality?

The Supervising Social Worker will treat information Foster Carers provide with respect. All information regarding foster children can and should be shared openly. Information about the foster family will be shared with other professionals outside of UK Fostering on a strictly 'need to know' basis. (See 'Confidentiality' section).

What will be discussed?

Any issues affecting the foster family, the care and well being of the foster child, and difficulties and problems carers may be experiencing as a consequence of fostering. The Supervising Social Worker will also be checking and making sure that you are fostering in a way which is promoting the child's well being, adhering to safe caring policies and in line with UK Fostering's policies.

The Supervising Social Worker will also advise Foster Carers about new developments within fostering, provide information about UK Fostering, gather information for the annual review and endeavor to build up a professional and supportive relationship with foster families. (See 'Reviews' section).

It is important that Foster Carers work closely with UK Fostering and keep communication open. Communications between the Foster Carer and their UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker should be regular and candid.

The Supervising Social Worker will always be prepared to discuss and advise on problems or difficulties experienced during the fostering task. The Supervising Social Worker plays a key role in ensuring that Foster Carers receive appropriate training and support.

In the event where a Supervising Social Worker is not available, Foster Carers will be given the name of another Supervising Social Worker who they can contact if necessary.

All of our Foster Carers have the benefit of continued support and information sharing delivered in a variety of ways.

Newsletter

UK Fostering produces a regular newsletter keeping you updated about new developments and benefits, and forthcoming events. The newsletter also includes information to supplement your professional development training. Contributions and feedback to the newsletter from Foster Carers and children are always most welcome.

Support Groups

UK Fostering organises regular support groups for Foster Carers. They provide a place where Foster Carers can share experiences and thoughts about fostering children. They are also the place to discuss current issues and new ideas relating to fostering. They provide information sharing and training opportunities.

Foster Carers often find that talking with other carers is a hugely valuable resource. Meeting with other Foster Carers can also become a useful way of setting up 'back up' care arrangements for respite breaks.

To assist your attendance the groups are held in venues chosen for ease of travel. You can attend any of the groups – most carers choosing to attend the group most local to them.

UK Fostering pays for your membership of the **Fostering Network**, a national charity that provides support, advice and information on fostering issues.

Television / Films / Computer Games

Children today are exposed to more violence, sexually explicit images and sexual violence on the screen than ever before. Television, videos, films and computer games as well as the Internet all provide scenes and images that can be considered unsuitable to children / young people.

Research is increasingly proving a link between violence or sexually explicit material and the subsequent behaviour of children. UK Fostering believes it is the responsibility of all our Foster Carers to supervise children's access to screen images.

There are no legal rules or specific UK Fostering guidelines about what are acceptable levels of violence on the screen. This is partly because standards of what is acceptable change with time, and partly because children react differently to stories and images they see depending on their age and maturity.

While it may be difficult to be precise about acceptable levels of screen violence, this is not the case with sexually explicit and sexually violent images, all of which are unsuitable viewing for children / young people.

Below are some things you can do to protect the children in your care:

- Follow the television 'watershed' and film classification systems. Remember that these are only a guide. It is your responsibility to decide if material is suitable for children / young people.
- Check television guides, not only for the film classification but also the explanation of the classification such as 'contains scenes of violence' or 'contains scenes of a sexually explicit nature'.
- Watch out for warnings that a programme may cause upset or distress. Take into account the experiences and history of the child who is placed with you and be sensitive about what may be distressing for that child.
- If you are not sure about the suitability of a video, watch it yourself first.
- Don't leave unsuitable material around where children may see it and keep unsuitable material locked in a safe place.

(See 'Emails and Internet' section)

Training

UK Fostering regards training as an essential part of a fostering career and therefore provides a comprehensive annual training programme to help our Foster Carers develop skills and knowledge.

Foster Carer training begins during the preparation and assessment process when you attend the Skills To Foster training. From this foundation course you will be expected to continue your professional development in the fostering field including the completion of CWDC (Children's Workforce Development Council) workbooks.

You will be advised, well in advance, of the training programme with dates, subjects, and venues. There are many courses run over a period of twelve months covering a wide variety of subjects. Some courses are compulsory and all carers have to attend e.g. Safe Care, Health and Safety, Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Working with Sexually Abused Children and First Aid.

Courses vary in length, they are held at venues throughout the UK Fostering region and they are conducted by external trainers and/or UK Fostering staff. Foster Carers will receive a certificate for each course.

UK Fostering wants to assist and support carers in their fostering role and has a very strong expectation that all carers will attend as much training as they can. If there are any concerns about a Foster Carer's commitment to training it will be addressed by their Supervising Social Worker and may be referred to the Independent Fostering Panel.

Carers are asked to raise any training needs at support group meetings or during Supervising Social Worker visits.

Examples of other training courses are:

Drugs, HIV/Aids, Unaccompanied Minors, Preparing for independence/Moving on, Child Development and Attachment, Working with sexually abused children, Working with Birth Families/Contact, Separation & Loss, Logging & Recording and Allegations.

Further training will help demonstrate the Foster Carer's ability to meet the standard competences set out in the CWDC workbook. Foster Carers and their Supervising Social Worker, will start working on the CWDC workbook once a placement has been made.

UK Fostering also offers the opportunity for carers to undertake an NVQ3 in working with children and young people. Certain criteria's have to be met before carers are put forward for the NVQ - your Supervising Social Worker will discuss this option with you.

Transitions – Preparing to Leave the Foster Home

UK Fostering acknowledges the importance of children and young people being adequately prepared when returning home, moving on to a permanent family or to independence.

Foster Carers should be fully involved in the preparations for a child / young person to leave their home. Their emotional and practical support for an impending move is critical in enabling the child to link past, present and future.

Foster Families and children in care may have developed strong attachments. Understandably it is therefore a difficult time for all involved and very important that Foster Carers communicate openly and proactively with their UK Fostering Social Workers about the child's and their own feelings.

UK Fostering encourages carers to celebrate the 'moving on' in an appropriate way. This may include giving the child / young person a leaving present, holding a leaving event (party) etc.

Transition

Youth or 'adolescence' is a key period of transition in our society.

- Childhood is seen as a period of dependency on the adult world - a dependency which is physical, emotional and economic.
- Adulthood in contrast is a period where we are seen as independent. A state where we can 'look after ourselves' and often have others who in turn are dependent on us.

UK Fostering regards youth as a period of transition between these two key periods of our lives - a time of change as we move from childhood to adulthood.

Youth is a period of great excitement and challenge. It is a time of life when we have new experiences and build our identity and self-image.

It is evident that the experience of young people who are 'looked after' is sometimes very different from the experience of children and young people cared for within their birth families. Those 'looked after' are more likely to have experienced loss and change, less likely to have educational qualifications and more likely to have suffered deprivation in childhood. Whilst the transition to adulthood may be difficult for young people it is likely to be more difficult for young care leavers.

We need to be aware of the excitement and challenge of this transition. It is a crucial period of personal development and change. During the transition from childhood to adult status we learn from making mistakes, taking risks and rising to challenges. These opportunities should not be denied to young people leaving care.

We also need to look at what is at the end of the transition. Whilst we all speak of adulthood as being a period of independence, this concept is actually not very accurate. In a complex society such as ours we are all dependent on others. We interact with household members, work colleagues and people in our communities everyday. It could be argued therefore that none of us are independent as such and that inter-dependence is a more accurate way of describing how we live.

This transition is a diverse experience for young people depending on their social and educational background, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and so on.

Preparing Young People for Leaving Care

The concept of 'transition' is helpful in getting familiar with preparing young people for leaving care. Foster Carers should prepare for a process that should be planned, gradual and takes place over a period of time.

UK Fostering expects its Foster Carers to take responsibility and be fully committed to ensure that all young people leave care with a set of skills and relevant experience to help them succeed in life.

- Young people need to be supported in developing life skills including:
 - Self care (hygiene, sexual health, personal safety etc)

- Practical skills (cooking, washing, ironing, shopping, cleaning etc)
- Interpersonal skills (telephone manners, dealing with bank and post office, making and keeping friends, budgeting etc)
- Foster Carers should involve young people in decision making.
- Foster Carers (and Social Workers) should treat young people as people in their own right - active partners in the care process.
- Foster Carers must take an active role in building up young people's self esteem, confidence and sense of identity.

Practical Issues and the Foster Carers Role

It is UK Fostering's expectation that young people leave care with a set of practical and financial skills and knowledge which include:

- How to shop, prepare and cook food.
- Eating a balanced diet.
- Laundry, sewing and mending and other housekeeping skills.
- How to carry out basic household jobs such as mending fuses (which will involve basic electrical and other knowledge).
- Safety in the home and first aid.
- The cost of living.
- Household budgeting including the matching of expenditure to income, the regular payment of bills and avoidance of the excessive use of credit.
- Health education including personal hygiene.
- Sexual education including contraception and preparation for parenthood.
- Applying for and being interviewed for a job.
- The rights and responsibilities of being an employee.
- Applying for social security benefits.
- Applying for housing, as well as locating and maintaining it.
- Registering with a doctor, dentist or optician.
- Knowledge of emergency services (fire, police, and ambulance).
- Finding and using community services and resources.
- Contacting the social services department and other caring agencies.
- Contacting organisations and groups set up to help young people who are, or have been, in care the role of agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, local councilors, and MPs.
- How to write a letter of (a) complaint; (b) to obtain advice.
- Have their birth certificate, national insurance number, NHS card.
- Have their legal status secured

Emotional Preparations

The Foster Carer can help the young person to explore positive and negative feelings about moving on.

- Feelings about identity.
- Feelings about transition from being a young person dependent on others to more responsibility for their actions.
- Feelings about family, relationships and support networks. Where can they go to receive support in times of crisis i.e. continuation of therapy/counseling if applicable.
- Recognition of ongoing unresolved issues.

Transport and Travel

Seat Belts/Car Safety

UK Fostering expects Foster Carers to comply with the Highway Code. Particular care has to be given to keeping children and young people safe in the car. Children should always sit in the back seat of a car. Babies, children and young people must always be securely strapped into car seats for every journey, no matter how short. Rear facing infant carriers should never be used in the front of cars fitted with passenger air bags.

Children should never travel in the boot area of estate cars unless the model of car is specifically designed to take passengers. All car seats and restraints must comply with either British or European Safety Standard.

Make sure seat belts and harnesses are positioned low on the child's hips to avoid abdominal injuries in the event of an accident.

Never buy a second-hand car seat, as the protective structure may be invisibly damaged, which could prove fatal in the event of an accident. Always replace the child's car seat as they grow.

Never carry a child on your lap in front or rear of a car even with a seat belt. It is illegal and highly dangerous.

Never leave a child in the car alone even if they are strapped in.

The Law on Child Car Seats

The law requires all children travelling in cars to use the correct child restraint (child seat or booster seat) until they are either 135cm in height or are the age of 12 years (whichever they reach first). It is the Foster Carers' responsibility to ensure the correct child restraint is used. After this they must use an adult seat belt.

Note: Regulations and laws regarding car seats are changed from time to time. It is the Foster Carer's responsibility to ensure that these are complied with.

Car Insurance

Carers are advised to take out fully comprehensive business use car insurance. A copy of your current car insurance should be passed to your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker annually.

Note: Car insurance is invalidated if they do not have current MOT and car tax for their vehicle.

Travel Costs

It is carer's responsibility to take the child / young person to appointments, school etc within a 20 mile radius of the Foster Carer's home. UK Fostering will only contribute if the journey is outside of the 20 mile radius. Please ask your UK Fostering Supervising Social Worker for further details.

Unaccompanied Minors

UK Fostering recognises that a significant number of young people in care have come to the UK seeking Asylum. In most cases, these young people have left behind a loving family, friends, relatives and a home. The journey to the UK often takes several weeks and is a frightful and scary experience.

It is a particular challenge for Foster Carers to be sensitive to the cultural and religious needs of these young people. Foster Carers need to be proactive in catering for these needs and if unfamiliar with the details find out from a friend, another foster carer, their supervising social worker, the library, the internet etc.

Please note:

- At the early stages of a placement, Foster Carers should not take anything for granted. For example a child or young person may not know how to use a gas oven, a kettle etc.
- The Young Person may come from a rural background and is not used to traffic and public transport.
- Their experience of family life may have been very different to that in the UK
- The young person may be frightened, or have been intimidated. They may not want to discuss their situation or reasons for coming to the UK.
- They may have lost friends or family members in an armed conflict (war) and are under shock or grieving.
- It is imperative that these young people learn English and access the Educational System. It is the responsibility of the foster carer to enrol them with a local school or College.
- All Asylum Seekers must officially register on their arrival in the UK. The foster carer has to support them in this legal process.
- Foster Carers need to be sensitive to any emotional trauma these children and young people may have.
- UK Fostering expects carers looking after children from a different cultural background to their own to be proactive and interested to learn about the child's origin, culture, festivals, food, etc.
- Education and independence skills. Carers should be creative and resourceful when working with asylum seekers.

Contacts:

Refugee Council

240 – 250 Ferndale Road
Brixton, London SW9 8BB
020 7346 6700

Refugee and Migrant Justice

Nelson House

153 – 157 Commercial Road
London E1 2DA
Tel: 020 7780 3200

Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture

111 Isledon Road
Islington, London N7 7JW
Tel: 0207697 7777

Violence and Abuse

You will always be supported in making safety a priority and refusing to deal with situations where people are violent or abusive. This includes hanging up if someone is abusive over the telephone.

Violence from Foster Carers or their family, or toward them, will **not** be tolerated. In the extreme this could lead to de-registration for carers and / or prosecution of any perpetrators.

After making a violent situation safe, UK Fostering will put in place measures to limit the possibility of the situation reoccurring. This could mean, for instance, refusing to host or supervise contact.

- Violence in this context is any attack or threat of attack on any person or his property.
- Abuse is inappropriate language, defamatory statements, racial or any other taunts.

UK Fostering will also support Foster Carers in keeping their home and family safe by supporting them in refusing to have dealings with people who have offered or threatened to offer violence or abuse. The Police will be involved in any incidents of actual harm or risk of harm to people or property.

Whistleblowing

UK Fostering recognises that we live in a society where people can act in a manner that is abusive, discriminatory, oppressive or unethical and that even with a comprehensive programme of training, policies and promotion of good practice, unacceptable activities and language can occur.

UK Fostering also recognises that it takes courage to challenge inappropriate behaviour by colleagues within the organisation and that when abuse, etc occurs in an organisation there is usually someone who had concerns, but may not have felt able to act on them.

UK Fostering wishes to reassure all Staff, Panel Members, Foster Carers, and Advisors, and anyone else directly involved with the organisation, that it takes all such matters very seriously. UK Fostering will safeguard anyone who does disclose any inappropriate behaviour to make sure that they are not in turn victimised for raising any issue they feel uneasy about. UK Fostering would wish to create an environment in which all employees feel their dignity is respected.

Any concerns should be brought directly to the Director Social Work service, the Registered Manager or the Responsible Individual. Concerns should be raised preferably in person, or in writing, but this can also be done anonymously if need be. If the concerns are against the Director please contact

OFSTED Office: Tel 0300 123 1231 email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000
For Deaf Users Textphone 0800 056 0566

NSPCC: If you do not speak English you will be asked, in clear English, what language you do speak. You will then be put on hold whilst an interpreter is being contacted.

Alternatively, you can email at help@nspcc.org.uk, or write to the NSPCC at:
NSPCC Helpline
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH

Working in Partnership

In line with the Children Act 1989, partnership is a key principle underpinning the Fostering Service. Working effectively in the best interests of children requires close collaboration and co-operation between all involved parties:

- Children, their parents and extended families
- Foster Carers and their families
- Family Placement Officers and Managers
- Children's Social Workers and Managers
- Other internal professionals e.g. Independent Reviewing Officers, Children's Rights Service, Legal Section, Family Support Workers
- External professionals such as teachers, youth workers, health workers and voluntary sector workers who support children and carers.

UK Fostering expects its Foster Carers to work in partnership with all the above mentioned stakeholders. It is imperative that this partnership is underpinned by respect, consideration and understanding for each other.

Your Family

Children who Foster

Foster Carers' birth children play a crucial role in fostering. Not only do they agree to share their family with other children, they are often the first person in the family a placed child will trust and tell their problems to.

- They share and sometimes lose their possessions and their friends.
- They introduce children to the local child-friendly facilities and often support them in school.
- They can get caught in-between when there are difficult times.
- They have to try to understand why a child would behave completely differently from the way they would.

Life can be restricted or changed by the needs of placed children and parents can become preoccupied with their problems, with less time and attention to birth children.

Foster Carers are encouraged to create a climate of openness, where everyone is given an opportunity to express their own views and wishes.

Good communication is essential – it is particularly important that the carer's own children feel able to tell their parents if they are worried by a foster child's behaviour. It is a wise precaution to ensure that your own children are clear about what they should and should not accept.

Family Folder

UK Fostering encourages all carers and their families to make up a 'family folder' which can be lent to any child/ren who are being considered for placement with you, or who are placed with you.

This could contain descriptions of your family, your family's interests and hobbies, your home and garden, photographs of you, your pets, the area, local clubs/activities and so on. Other material could be something written by your children.

It is recommended that a photocopy or notes of the contents of the 'family folder' is kept as a back-up in case it gets lost or mislaid.

(Please refer to 'Safer Caring' and 'Household Family Policy' for further details)

APPENDIX 1

Every Child Matters

Background to Every Child Matters

In 2003, the Government published a green paper called 'Every Child Matters'. This was published alongside the formal response to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié, the young girl who was horrifically abused and tortured, and eventually killed by her great aunt and the man with whom they lived with. The green paper was built on existing plans to strengthen preventative services by focusing on four key themes:

- Increasing the focus on supporting families and carers - the most critical influence on children's lives.
- Ensuring necessary intervention takes place before children reach crisis point and protecting children from falling through the net.
- Addressing the underlying problems identified in the report into the death of Victoria Climbié - weak accountability and poor integration.
- Ensuring that the people working with children are valued, rewarded and trained.

The green paper prompted an unprecedented debate about services for children, young people and families. There was a wide consultation with people working in children's services, and with parents, children and young people.

Following the consultation, the Government published Every Child Matters: the Next Steps, and passed the Children Act 2004, providing the legislative spine for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and families.

The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to improve outcomes for all children. To date the outcomes achieved by Looked After Children have been unacceptably poor, and the government is committed to addressing this disparity, as they are seen to be one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect.

Every Child Matters: Change for Children is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. It places better outcomes for children firmly at the centre of all policies and approaches involving children's services.

The Five Outcomes According to Every Child Matters (ECM):

Being healthy

Enjoy good physical and mental health and lead a healthy lifestyle

Staying safe

Be protected from harm and neglect and grow up able to look after themselves

Enjoying and achieving

Get the most out of life and develop broad skills for adulthood

Making a positive contribution

To the community and to society and not engage in anti-social or offending behaviour

Economic well-being

So that they have a good start in life and are able to achieve their full potential and secure employment

Being Healthy

Definition

- Physically healthy
- Mentally and emotionally healthy
- Sexually healthy
- Healthy lifestyles
- Choose not to take illegal drugs
- Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices

UK Fostering is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in our care:

- Have access to a healthy diet which takes into consideration any cultural or religious choices, as well as dietary restrictions due to allergies.
- Have access to fruits and vegetables as part of their healthy diet.
- Have access to regular health care appointments as a preventative measure (opticians, dentist, and health assessment appointments), as well as when the need arises, in terms of emergency treatments or the attendance at appointments connected to an on-going condition whether this is in connection with physical or emotional health.
- Be given appropriate advice and guidance about the risks associated with alcohol and drug misuse, as well as smoking and the impact this can have on their health.
- Are encouraged to have a healthy lifestyle, which includes a balanced diet, as well as access to exercise and sports.
- Have access to advice in relation to sexual health.
- Are registered with and attend at GP, dentist, optician, pediatrician etc.
- Meet their developmental milestones.
- Have age appropriate awareness of drug, alcohol and sexual health.
- Are encouraged to have regular exercise and be involved in sportive activities.
- Have an age appropriate sleep pattern and receive sufficient sleep.
- Are monitored and supervised in terms of TV and computer use (time spent and programmes and sites accessed).
- Are supported and encouraged in having an age appropriate personal hygiene.
- Supported by their carers regarding accessing therapeutic services where appropriate.
- Have Foster Carers who act as role models.

Additional suggestions for evidence:

- Have opportunities for privacy
- Set of clothes appropriate to age and weather conditions

Staying Safe

Definition

- Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation
- Safe from accidental injury
- Safe from bullying and discrimination
- Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school
- Have security, stability and are cared for
- Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability

UK Fostering is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in our care:

- Are cared for where they are protected from harm and abuse.
- Are protected from bullying and discrimination.
- Are cared for within an environment that is free from hazards through the use of safety equipment (e.g. cooker guards, appropriate car seats, stair gates) according to the age and needs of the child / young person.
- In the event of any accidents, these will be recorded and reported to the child's Social Worker and the fostering team as soon as possible.
- Receive care that is deemed to be safe care and develop a safe care plan in conjunction with the fostering Social Worker to ensure that this is implemented within the household.
- Are guided about safety within and outside of the home environment and given strategies to use if they feel threatened.
- Have carers who provide appropriate supervision to children and young people according to their needs.
- Are given fair, appropriate and consistent boundaries and sanctions in order to manage behaviours, without anyone to resort to physical or other inappropriate punishments. (UK Fostering does not accept the use of corporal punishment. Carers should never resort to physical chastisement of a child / young person).
- Are encouraged to have a lifestyle that is free from crime and antisocial behaviours.
- Are provided with primary care and protection with sensitivity and dignity to reinforce their self worth.
- Have their own bed, bedding and storage space that respects their need for privacy and space.
- Have adults who are aware of their fears and ensure they receive reassurance and support.
- Have carers who are aware of potential dangers, yet allow the child /young person to take moderate risks.

- Have carers who ensure that if a child is missing from placement that this is reported to the child's Social Worker or Emergency Duty Team who will be able to advise on the next course of action.
- Have stability and continuity of care.
- Are with a foster family who has a family policy in place (safer caring)
- Have a risk assessment carried out by a Social Worker or Foster Carer where appropriate.

Additional suggestions for evidence:

- Monitoring of internet access
- Up to date H&S check
- Foster family being proactive in addressing any H&S issues
- Foster Carers working in partnership with Local Authorities and UK Fostering
- Foster Carers communicating effectively and transparently with relevant professionals and agencies
- Accurate recordings by the Foster Carer
- Trust between carer and child / young person
- Knowledge of the child's whereabouts at all times
- Management of prescribed medication
- Guidance and advise in road safety
- Foster Carer takes duty to inform seriously and is reliable

Enjoying and Achieving

Definition

- Ready for school
- Attend and enjoy school
- Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school
- Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation
- Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school
- Parents, carers and families support learning

UK Fostering is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in our care:

- Receive encouragement and equal access to opportunities to develop and pursue their talents, interests and hobbies. Each child should be encouraged to develop a range of interests and hobbies appropriate to their age and ability. This will be an area where Foster Carers can make the most significant contribution.
- Are supported by carers who are actively involved in stimulating and developing the child through play and learning.
- Are provided with age-appropriate play and learning materials which avoid racist, sexist, and other stereotypes.

- Are aware that their learning and educational needs are given a high priority and they will be encouraged to reach their full potential.
- Are cared for in a home environment that values education and will facilitate good studying habits. Their Foster Carer will establish an expectation of regular attendance at school, and support the child's full participation through provision of necessary uniform and equipment, support for completion of homework, and financial and other support for attending school trips and after-school activities.
- Are encouraged to make friends outside of school and be involved in community, social and leisure activities. Having friends can make a significant difference to a child's self esteem.
- Are given the opportunity to develop social skills and to become emotionally secure and confident. This can be through involvement in leisure, social or sporting activities and membership of organizations such as scouts and guides. Children and young people can build up their self-esteem through achieving success and building friendships.
- All children have some aptitude or skill which once identified can be developed and lead to greater confidence.
- Are provided with information about and encouraged to access opportunities for further or higher education, vocational training and employment.

Additional suggestions for evidence:

- Age appropriate life skills
- Celebrating achievements with positive feedback, treats and rewards
- Positive reinforcement and praise for desirable and positive achievements
- Foster Carers being proactive, creative and persistent about promoting interests, activities and social opportunities
- Foster Carers being proactive and enthusiastic to support age appropriate independence skills
- Maintaining contact
- Responsibilities within the house
- Age appropriate activities

Making a Positive Contribution

Definition

- Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment.
- Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school.
- Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate.
- Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges.
- Develop enterprising behaviour.
- Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour.

UK Fostering is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in our care:

- Are encouraged to develop a positive self-image.
- Are encouraged to participate and contribute to discussions about decisions that affect them.
- Are encouraged to make choices about day to day issues that affect them (e.g. what to wear?).
- Are encouraged to learn practical skills that assist them when moving into independence.
- Are encouraged to influence the work of the Local Authority through children's participation.
- Are provided with appropriate support to make the transition to adulthood.
- Are encouraged and supported in accessing opportunities for education and training, as well as volunteering, to enhance their life skills.

Additional suggestions for evidence:

- No offending behaviour
- Member of community Group
- Links with the community
- Constructive use of leisure time
- Library membership
- Appropriate response to antisocial behaviour
- Positive role model
- Developing a sense of purpose in life
- Carers giving moral guidance
- Developing a set of values
- Respect of others and their property
- Able to take active role in decision making
- Attendance of before / after school clubs
- Engagement with religious groups
- Toddler groups

Economic Well-being

Definition

- Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school
- Be ready for employment
- Live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- Know how to access transport and material goods
- Live in households free from low income
- Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active

UK Fostering is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in our care:

- Have access to advice and guidance to promote educational or vocational training opportunities so that they achieve economic independence in adulthood.
- Are provided with the opportunity from an early age to open a bank or building society account.
- Are given regular amounts of pocket money as a way of learning to budget and save.
- Have sufficient clothes
- Have a choice in what they want to prioritise concerning their allowance/pocket money
- Are encouraged and supported in developing self discipline
- Are supported to learn to look after themselves e.g. independence skills

Additional suggestions for evidence:

- Savings
- Budgeting skills
- Clothing stock
- How is the allowance spent (by the carer and the child / young person)
- Is the child/young person treated as part of the family
- Special interests and associated outfit / kit
- Budgeting skills
- Appreciation of the value of things
- Part time job for teenagers

APPENDIX 2

Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

BAAF: British Association for Adoption and Fostering

CHAMS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

CPR: Child Protection Register: A list of children's names, kept by the Local Authority, of children at risk of significant harm. Foster Carers are likely to be involved in 'Child Protection Conferences' which address and deal with children on this register.

CRB: Criminal Records Bureau

DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families (Former DfES: Department for Education and Skills)

DOH: Department of Health

EPO: Emergency Protection Order (Section 44)

ECM: Every Child Matters: Government White Paper which followed the enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié.

FCO: Full Care Order (Section 33)

Five Outcomes: The five outcomes according to ECM: Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, economic well-being

ICO: Interim Care Order (Section 38)

IRO: Independent Reviewing Officer, chair of Statutory Child Care Reviews

LAC: Looked After Children, a child / young person in care of the Local Authority

Key Worker: Main professional co-ordinating the services that a child receives.

Key Stages: Age related stages in the National Curriculum

Multi Agency Working: Agencies (such as the Local Authorities, Health Department, Independent fostering agencies, Police, Schools) working together, each with own area of expertise, service and skills.

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. The body responsible for inspecting schools and independent fostering providers.

PEP: Personal Education Plan

PPO: Police Protection Order

SSW: Supervising Social Worker from UK Fostering

SW: Social Worker from the Local Authority