

Wirral Fostering Service

Guidance for Foster Carers for Recording and Record Keeping

IT TAKES A BIG **HEART** TO FOSTER



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1. Why should I Keep Records?

Maintaining and keeping written records is essential in helping achieve good outcomes for looked after children and importantly assists Foster Carers in having both historical and up to date information which can be shared with other professionals.

Effective recording is central to good practice, helps with informed decision making and assists with your input to the range of meetings/reviews and other forums where decisions are being made about the children and young people placed with you.

Recording is achieved in different ways and in different formats – this guidance provides an overview on the most appropriate ways of recording and retaining your records on the children and young people placed with you. Generally, effective recording assists with:

- recalling events and incidents accurately
- detailing both positive and negative issues
- reflecting the progress of a placement
- informing decision making at reviews and other meetings
- providing back up information when writing reports
- protecting you and your family from complaints / allegations

2. Principles of Good Recording

People have different styles and approaches to writing. Recording is a particular type of writing achieved for a particular purpose (different to Report Writing for example, where your opinions, views and judgements are often required). To achieve consistency with your recording, remember that it may be accessed by others now and/or in the future (including young people and adults who have been in care), so it's helpful to recognise some key principles:

- be accurate – limit your comments to specifics (incidents / events etc.)
- be factual not judgemental – detail facts rather than offer observations or opinions
- be confidential – keep all recorded information safe
- keep records up to date – regular recording should be a good practice routine

Key Recording Formats

3. Foster Carer Diary

All Foster Carers are provided with a Wirral Borough Council Foster Carer diary/log book which also includes a range of useful reference information (including Fostering Regulations/National Standards/Law summaries).

Your diary should only be used for recording the following key areas of placement information:

- for key appointments – e.g. all appointments relating to a placed child; a young person's placement (health/school/meetings/reviews etc.)
- for using as an aide memoir / reminder – for example, highlighting a need for you to look on the child's information file for more detailed information about an incident/event

- for use as a brief record of specific events/incidents – e.g. a child’s absence from placement; a child’s achievement at school; a child’s illness

Your diary shouldn’t contain detailed day to day recording or large amounts of information on an individual child or incident. Day to day recording is best achieved via the Daily Dairy Recording Sheets (see 2 below). An up to date, accurate diary will also help you to recall key information if asked by other professionals.

Please remember that your diary is an important record which needs to be kept securely and retained after the year concerned expires.

It may be required that information recorded in your diary is accessed in the future by other professionals to check or corroborate information regarding a child’s placement.

4. Daily and Weekly Diary Recording Sheets

Diary Recording Sheets should be completed on a regular basis to record events/incidents/ children’s achievements and any issues of note which would be helpful as a reference for you or for informing other professionals involved with the child’s placement.

Using your diary sheet for **daily recording** is more appropriate for:

- new placements where it is particularly important to record a child’s placement progress; interaction with your family; recording key placement issues which can be used to inform written reports or key meetings; reviews etc.
- recording important placement related activities and appointments e.g. court proceedings; contact arrangements; a child’s response to contact
- detailing a child’s achievements at school; key social events; recording key health and development milestones

Using your diary sheet for **weekly recording** may be more appropriate for:

- settled, longer term or permanent placements where detailed day by day recording is not necessary
- providing a weekly summary of the placement or highlighting any important key facts and observations over the previous week

Keep your diary sheets in a separate child’s information file (see Record Keeping below), one file for each child. Diary Sheets are available via your Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

5. Outcomes Monitoring Form

This form is designed specifically for foster carers to record a child’s placement information for use at Child Care Reviews. The Form records placement activity under the ‘Every Child Matters’ 5 Outcomes categories:

- Be Healthy (includes health appointments & assessments; sickness)
- Stay Safe (includes safe care planning; risk assessments)
- Make a Positive Contribution (includes esteem and self - confidence)

- Enjoy and Achieve (includes education issues; achievements; leisure)
- Achieve Economic Well Being (includes independence skills; training)

The Outcomes Monitoring form should be completed prior to the Child Care Review and will be used at the review to inform discussion and decision making. Completing the form can be assisted by referencing your daily/weekly diary sheets and diary log. Outcomes Monitoring forms are available via your Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

Record Keeping

Child's Information File

Foster Carers are provided with a range of essential information about the children placed and this needs to be kept in a separate file (one for each child placed). Do not place child placement related information in other file formats you use (e.g. your Fact File or Personal Development Portfolio). It is recommended you purchase a folder/ring binder for this purpose (you can use part of your provided weekly allowance for this). The file should contain the following essential information:

- Looked After Children's Child Care Reviews
- Health Needs Assessments
- Children's Placement Plans
- Medication Records :
- Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Individual Education Plan (for disabled children)
- School Reports / any related education and training information or reports
- Delegated Decision Tool
- Accident / Incident Recording forms
- Safe Care Plan / Risk Assessment(s)
- Missing Person reports
- Outcomes Monitoring forms
- Daily / Weekly Diary sheets

If you have any other related child placement information linked to any of the above, then also place these in the child's information file.

Child's 'Life Story' Records and Information

Foster Carers need to keep separate and safe the range of information/records/memorabilia/ materials that contribute to a child's life story. These may include: photos; photo albums; video; children's drawings; certificates and awards for achievement; souvenirs etc.

You should be proactive in keeping any appropriate records/materials while a child is placed with you which would help reflect a story of their placement Also, these may need to be made available for other professionals undertaking life story work with a placed child.

All Life Story records and materials will need to be made available to accompany the child when moving from placement

Oversight and advice for your recording

Oversight and supervision of your recording is achieved by your Fostering Supervising Social Worker. They will periodically ask to see your recording (mainly the Daily/Weekly Diary Sheets) and are expected to sign and confirm on the Supervisory Visit Form that this has been achieved.

If you need any advice or help with your recording, please discuss with your Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

Other advice on Recording and Record Keeping:

- respect the child's right to confidentiality by keeping records safe and secure
- only share recorded information with the child (if age appropriate), the child's Social Worker or your Fostering Supervising Social Worker unless directed otherwise. If you have any queries about access to your recording, please discuss with your Fostering Supervising Social Worker
- once a child leaves placement, any records relating to that child should be given to the child's social worker to retain as part of the child's care record
- please refer to your Fact File (Handbook) for more detailed information on the range of policies/procedures mentioned in this guidance (e.g. Safe Care Planning; PEP's; Medication records; etc.)