



2019-20
FOSTER CARER
Handbook

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Foster Carer Handbook

SUMMARY

This document is the latest edition of the foster carer handbook of Brighter Futures for Children: Fostering Service. It has been designed for new and existing foster carers and deals with the day to day practicalities you may face.

OWNER

Steffi Roth, Fostering Manager

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Introduction

We are pleased to introduce you to the latest edition of Foster Carer Handbook of Brighter Futures for Children: Fostering Service. It has been designed for new and existing foster carers and deals with the day to day practicalities you may face.

We are dedicated to providing the highest possible standard of care to Children and Young People in foster care.

As foster carers you make a real difference to the lives of children and young people by providing a family to local children who really need one. We want to ensure that we provide the best possible service to children and young people in foster care and to you as foster carers. To do this we need to provide you with a high level of support.

We will add updates to our handbook whenever new legislation and procedures come in and your Supervising Social Worker will be able to offer further guidance and support. You will be able to find further information on our website; <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/services/fostering/>

All fostering documents and policies are available to you on request or by clicking on the relevant links within the table under [Appendix One – Fostering Service document register](#)

Acronyms

ABBREVIATIONS LIST - 2019

SW	- Social Worker
CSW	- Child's Social Worker
SSW	- Supervising Social Worker of foster carer.
ATM	- Assistant team manager
CLA	- Child Looked After
PPM	- Placement planning meeting
AA team	- Access and Assessment team
IFA	- Independent Fostering Agency
JLM	- Joint Liason Meeting (between Service managers & RCL)
RCL	- Reading Carers Link
LA	- Local Authority (RBC - Reading Borough Council)
BfFC	- Brighter Futures for Children
CPR	- Child Permanency Report
ICO	- Interim Care order: BfFC shares parental responsibility with the birth parents whilst the court proceedings continue and further assessments are completed
IRH	- Issues Resolution Hearing: Timescales for the final hearing and

	further assessments are agreed
CO	- Care Order: BFFC shares parental responsibility with the birth parents, court proceedings are likely to be concluded
ICPC	- Initial Child Protection Conference
CPP	- Child Protection Plan
CPC	- Child Protection Conference
CG	- Core Group
SCA	- Safer Care Agreement
PLO	- Public Law Outline
SECTION 20	- Accommodation Order
CA	- Children Act
SGO	- Special Guardianship Order
CAO	- Child Arrangement Order
SO	- Supervision Order
PO	- Placement Order
CRB	- Criminal Records Bureau(no longer in use)
DBS	- Disclosure and Barring service
CAMHS	- Children & Adult Mental Health Service
BAAS	- Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service
ATV	- Adopt Thames Valley
GAL	- Guardian ad litem - Appointed by the Court to Advocate for the child
IRO	- Independent reviewing officer

Allowances

As our foster carer you will receive a weekly fee and a child's allowance when a child is living with you.

Weekly child allowances are based on those recommended by the Fostering Network, plus an additional 4 weeks incorporated for holidays and Christmas.

There are 3 levels of fee paid to foster carers which are dependent on evidence of skill levels. The fee is designed to recognise the continually developed skills, experience, availability, time and commitment involved in caring for a number and range of children/young people in addition to working in partnership with birth families and the Fostering Service.

As a new foster carer you will likely start your fostering journey receiving fee level 1 following recommendation of approval at Foster Panel and the decision by the Agency Decision Maker. However, if you have extensive transferrable skills and knowledge, the Fostering Service has the discretion to offer you a higher fee level. The Fee will start when you are available to have a child live with you.

As a current foster carer, who is transferring from another authority or agency that operated a comparable scheme, you will transfer at an equivalent level on provision of evidence of your skills and ability.

There is no expectation on behalf of the Fostering Service that any carer should progress beyond level 1 if they do not wish to do so. In order to progress to a higher level, the foster carer and the Supervising Social Worker will need to submit evidence outlining how you meet the criteria. However, if you are not meeting the requirements expected of you within your level, you may become subject to an action plan and your level could be reviewed.

The Fee will start when you are available to have a child live with you. Allowances and fees are started or ended by the Supervising Social Worker.

Foster care allowances and fees are paid into the carer's bank or building society account fortnightly in arrears. The level of payments is reviewed once a year. The foster placement allowances are not taxable since they contain no element of reward. Foster Carers cannot claim tax relief, child benefits or income support for children in their care.

A child with a disability may be entitled to a 'Disability Living Allowance' from the Department of Social Security. This allowance is payable in addition to the fostering allowance. If you consider the child you are caring for is entitled to this benefit, discuss the matter with the child's social worker before approaching the D.S.S and completing an application.

If you have any queries about allowances or if you think you have been underpaid contact your Supervising Social Worker. If you have been overpaid you must notify your Supervising Social Work or Duty Worker immediately.

Please refer to the 'foster carer payment scheme' for full details.

The child allowances and fee levels for 2019/20 currently are:

Age	Child Allowances per week 2019/20
0-4	£153.82
5-10	£175.21
11-15	£218.12
16-17	£265.35

Fee Levels	Per week
Level 1	£106.36
Level 2	£212.73
Level 3	£425.46

Fostering allowances are provided to cover all the costs of caring for the children/young people in your care. The costs covered by the allowances include, but are not exclusively for the following items:

- Food (including school meals)
- Toiletries and nappies
- Hobbies and sports including subscriptions to clubs
- Treats and outings
- Toys, books, games and equipment
- Clothing and shoes
- Nappies
- Toiletries
- Household items to include costs of replacing breakages of items in daily use
- Local travel and normal transport costs, including to and from local school (40 miles per week are incorporated in child allowance payment)
- School trips
- Holidays
- Out of school activities
- Pocket money (see section on pocket money guidance)
- Savings (see section on savings)
- Birthdays and religious festivals
- 4 hours per month babysitting (Carers personal social/leisure)
- Contribution towards driving lessons

It is expected that a child will attend some out of school activities. Additional finance may be available through the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) for children/young people to access extra-curricular activities using the pupil premium.

There is an expectation however that carers provide all food, toiletries, basic hair care, transport to education and all school equipment, support with leisure activities and finance celebrations including presents. These items should be supported from the overall budget and not detract from the child's personal allowance. If there are specific equipment or social needs that cannot be met due to financial constraints these should be identified within placement planning meetings or reviews.

Discussion between foster carers and their Supervising Social Workers should determine how the money is broken down. It is good practice for a foster carer to record the amount spent on clothing, personal and transport in order that this is a transparent process.

For further information please see the [Finance for Foster Carers](#) section.

Savings

In line with a child-centred approach and to make it equal for siblings living with different carers, Brighter Futures for Children is expecting that you save a minimum of £5 per week for younger children (under 10 years) and a minimum of £10 per week for older children, (over 10 years). This should be recorded in your monthly summary, which will detail the ongoing total of savings.

We recommend that you open individual savings account for children living with you, saving the amounts highlighted above. This money is expected to be used for children and young people when they are post 18 years of age.

There are a number of saving options that are available. For example, you could consider a Junior ISA, this is a long-term, tax-free savings account for children.

Pocket Money

The following principles should guide the payment of pocket money to our children and young people looked after:

- Having pocket money is good for the child/young person. It gives a sense of independence and a measure of choice in making decisions about how the money is spent.
- Receiving pocket money helps children understand the value of money and is the start of developing budgeting skills.
- The amount to be paid must be clarified and addressed within the **Placement Plan** at the **Placement Planning Meeting**.
- In principle children in care and the foster carer's birth children of the same age should get the same weekly pocket money and it would be unfair if foster children received either more or less than the foster carer's own children.
- It is suggested that pocket money is given out on a regular day each week.
- In many families an understanding may be reached that once a child is old enough to help out with basic household chores, top-ups to pocket money can be arranged in exchange for jobs done. In some foster homes this could be appropriate, especially in long term living arrangements where such an understanding and trust could be built up over time. In shorter term living arrangements this may be less easy to achieve or inappropriate.
- As a child gets older s/he may want more expensive extras which can be reflected in pocket money or be paid for by the carer out of the basic allowance received. For a teenager a monthly allowance to cover pocket money, clothing and other larger personal items should be considered (depending on their maturity and situation).
- To promote a child/young person's positive contact with their birth family top-ups to their pocket money will need to be made to enable birthday and Christmas presents to be bought for birth and foster family members.
- When a young person becomes a teenager, a monthly allowance should be considered in their pathway plan to cover pocket money, clothing and other larger personal items should be considered (depending on their maturity and situation) and discussed with them.
- The rate of pocket money paid to young people should be realistic. It is the responsibility of carers and social workers to help ensure the smooth transition to independent living after foster care. It would be unhelpful to this process if a young person's pocket money enabled her/him to enter in to a lifestyle which was not possible if s/he later had to live independently.

Each child/young person should ideally be given pocket money. The amount is at the discretion of the foster carer and should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker. An up to date guideline is £2.50 pw for younger children aged 2-8 years, £3.50 pw for aged 9-13 and £10 pw for teenagers.

It is not permissible to withhold pocket money for poor behaviour as more appropriate strategies should be used.

Attachment

What is attachment?

We all form affectional bonds with a range of people during our life. These are people for whom we feel affection and whose company we like to be in. The attachment bond is a special form of affectional bond that forms when one person experiences security and comfort from another. This

is typically the bond that forms between a child with an adult who is in a caring role to that child. Most typically this is the parent.

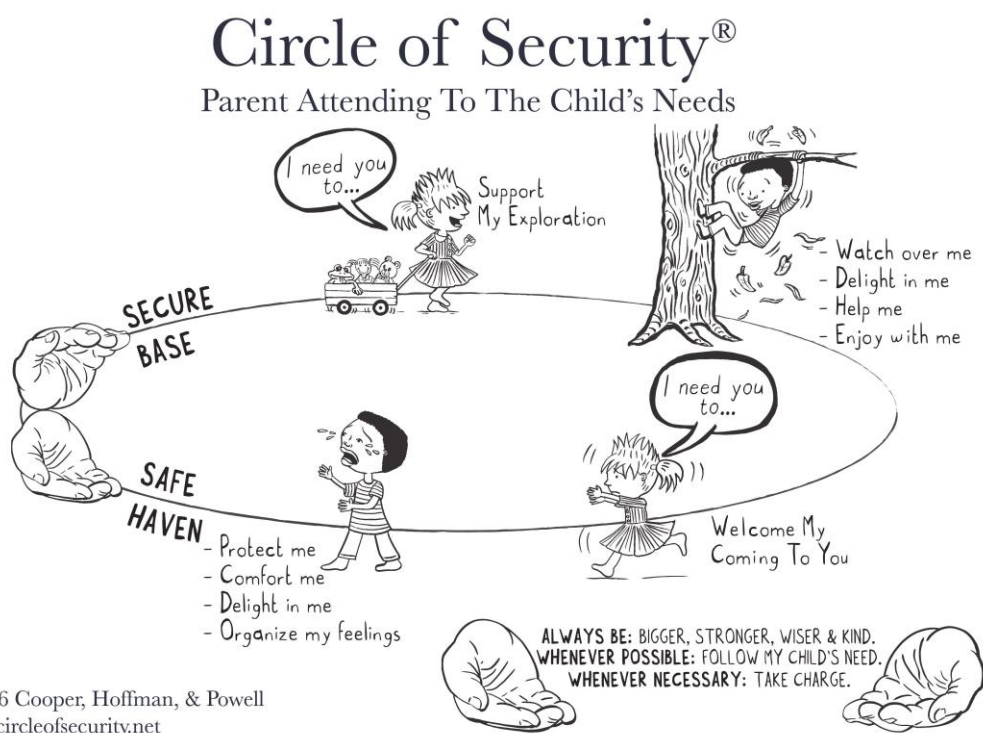
Attachment theory suggests that infants are biologically predisposed to form attachment relationships from which they can experience security and comfort. The child develops a range of attachment behaviours that are designed to keep the carer close, to act as a secure base. Such behaviours are triggered by threats of separation, physical rejection or alarming conditions in the environment.

These attachment behaviours are complemented by exploratory behaviours that the child will engage in if feeling safe. The early experience of attachment relationships leads to the development of a cognitive model (internal working model) of these relationships that influences and is modified by later relationships.

Why are attachment relationships important?

The very earliest years of a child's life are critical for the child's later development and ability to develop and form close relationships. Secure attachments allow children to develop trust in others and self-reliance in themselves. Securely attached children with positive expectations of self and others will approach the world with confidence. Thus, when faced with potentially alarming situations, the child will tackle them effectively or will seek help to do this.

The Circle of Security diagram shows how a child needs secure attachment in order to feel safe and be able to get on with important developmental tasks.



Importance of Attachment Theory for Children growing up in foster care

Many children and young people in care will have experienced inadequate parenting early in their lives, and may have had to cope with multiple placements following their removal from their family.

These experiences will have had an impact on their early development of attachment relationships as well as on their capacity to form an attachment to a new parent.

Importance of Attachment Theory for Foster Carers

Attachment theory can guide our understanding of the effects of early abuse, neglect, separation and loss on the child's ability to form attachments to new foster carers. The way that children relate to their foster carers can be heavily influenced by the way they learned to relate to their birth parent(s). Foster carers may find themselves caught up in interactions with their foster child that are not their own. Understanding this process can help a foster carer resist responding to the child in the way they are anticipating. Instead they can gently lead or guide the child into different ways of relating and the child will then be able to experience a more secure attachment relationship.

What is the impact on a child's development and behaviour of having attachment difficulties?

Research shows that problems in attachment can lead to a range of difficulties:

Brain development

- Children who do not have an attachment to a primary carer early in life tend to experience cognitive delays.
- Children learn how to learn through a series of interchanges with the primary carer. For example, a child learns that discomfort associated with hunger is relieved by eating.
- If an infant is in a state of high arousal such as when their needs are not being met all of their energy goes into coping with increased body tension and little is available for processing the environment and hence learning.
- If a child is exposed to trauma (abuse, Domestic Violence etc.) they become hypervigilant and are stuck in the fight/flight/freeze response. This response stops other parts of the brain working properly preventing some kinds of learning.
- Unsurprisingly - When children feel safe near their parents their brains work better.

Developmental delay

Common delays seen in children with attachment problems include:

- auditory processing (may struggle to understand what you are saying rather than not listening), language development
- expressing self verbally (struggle to express their views, needs etc.),
- gross motor problems,
- fine motor adaptive skills,
- personal-social development (lacking social skills etc.)
- inconsistent level of skills (some skills may be over learnt e.g. memory for people, places, numbers etc. whereas there may be many other gaps).

It is thought that these delays reflect the lack of a well organised nervous system and/or lack of adequate stimulation.



Emotion regulation

1. An inability to understand one's own emotions or the emotions of another (empathy)
 2. An inability to regulate one's own emotions
- Through the attachment experience children learn to modulate their emotions - the caregiver can comfort them and reduce distress when they are experiencing negative emotions - from this experience children learn to modulate their emotions themselves
 - Insecurely attached individuals seem to have chronically elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol (whereas secure attachment appears to equip individuals to recover from anxiety)
 - Insecurely attached individuals use their strategies of self-management (detachment or control/helplessness) to cope with stress.



Social relationships

- The child's first relationships with their carers set the stage for future relationships when they learn what he or she can and cannot expect from others
- Children who experience adults as being unreliable in terms of their availability and affection may subsequently develop difficulties in new interpersonal relationships
- Having never received unconditional love these children can have difficulty showing affection themselves without thinking "what's in it for me?"
- Children without a secure attachment can have difficulty trusting others and may exhibit behaviours aimed at keeping people at an emotional distance

Self-esteem/ sense of self

- The more social interactions an infant has with someone the more strongly attached he or she becomes to that person and the more likely they are to feel lovable and worthwhile – important components of self-esteem

- Children with attachment problems can have difficulty getting satisfaction from tasks well done. They may see themselves as unworthy, and incapable of change. They may have difficulty having fun.



Making a home that provides safety and promotes a secure attachment

What is therapeutic parenting?

Therapeutic parenting describes parenting that provides all the normal parenting experiences for the child but tailored to the developmental stage the child is at. Additionally, this provides an environment within which the child can begin to heal and recover from early more traumatic experiences of being parented.

All children need attuned, sensitive and responsive parenting. In addition, traumatised children need parents who:

- Understand the developmental and behavioural impact of previous parenting experience and the loss and separation from these parents
- Understand the developmental stage the child is at
- Understand the behaviour the child has learned to deal with the world
- Understand the insecurity that this experience has left them with.

Foster parents of children with poor early attachment experience need to be available and responsive, in common with all parents, but also need to be gently challenging. They need to help the child revise beliefs and assumptions developed as a legacy of their early experience, for example, 'Parents can't keep me safe', 'I am bad and will not be loved', 'Parents always leave you'.

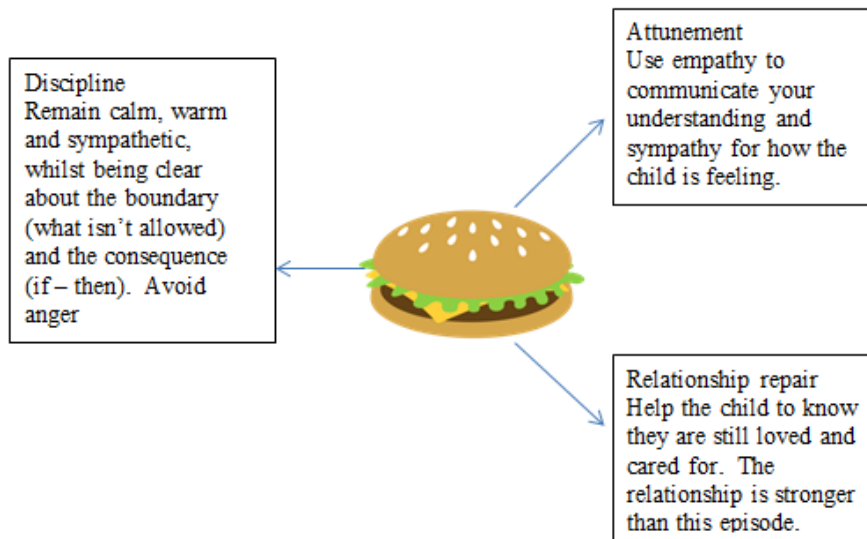


A final note on parenting children experiencing shame

Children with attachment difficulties can experience shame 'I am a bad person' rather than guilt 'I did a bad thing' in relation to their behaviour.

Children who quickly experience shame that they cannot regulate will find it difficult to trust and will be over-sensitive to signs that others think they are not good enough, that they are bad. As these children experience increased stress they draw away from the relationship, becoming controlling instead.

It is important to regulate the shame that the child is experiencing. This means that discipline in the form of boundaries and consequences are important, but they need to be sandwiched between lots of attunement and relationship repair.



Information in this section taken from 'Nurturing Attachments: Training Resource', by Kim Golding 2014

Baby sitting/child care for foster carers

Our children and young people who are being looked after, need consistency and stability and therefore careful consideration needs to be given to any babysitting or child care arrangements. Generally, adults in the foster carer's own support network will be DBS checked in terms of suitability to provide short periods of care to children/young people. This work will be undertaken as part of the foster carer's initial assessment and annual review in recognition that this is a standard form of support for most foster homes.

BFFC: Fostering Service recognise that all parents including foster carers need a break and occasionally have to leave their children with relatives or a babysitter, but this should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker.

Use of the sons and daughters of the foster carer to provide babysitting should be agreed as part of the Placement Planning Meeting at the beginning of the placement and reviewed subsequently. This decision would therefore include input from the parent, child (if old enough to express their wishes and feelings), carer, child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker. A balance will need to be struck between normalising family experience for the child in the foster home with a requirement to take an informed decision as to the suitability of the proposed babysitter arrangement. If you consider your son and/or daughter to babysit or provide child care they must be at least 18 years of age.

BFFC: Fostering Service provides respite care and babysitting to carers dependent on the needs of each individual child. This will be discussed with you during the placement planning meeting and ongoing as part of your regular supervision sessions.

In terms of child care arrangements it is expected that you will exhaust all options within your own support network. If this is not an option then BFFC: Fostering Service will look to provide you with another approved foster carer.

All foster carers are expected to pay, from the child's allowance, for the first 4 hours babysitting per month per child for their own social or leisure activities.

If you require babysitting or childcare in order to attend training or any other meetings relevant to the child then BFFC: Fostering Service will fund the arrangement if it is undertaken by an approved foster or day carer.

The level of babysitting or childcare arrangements will be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker in your supervision.

Best practice would be that your babysitter or child carer (in your own support network) has attended the following training:

- Emergency First Aid
- Universal Safeguarding

Behaviour Management

Children and young people in care will often have experienced neglect, abuse and trauma all of which will have a significant impact on their behaviour. The children and young people living with foster carers are likely to display a variety of challenging behaviours that carers will be expected to manage.

Support is provided in managing challenging behaviour both through training and supervision. Wherever possible carers will be provided with information about how the child/young person's behaviour has been managed in the past and any triggers for specific behaviour.

BFFC: Fostering Service has a written policy on behaviour management, a full copy of which is available from your Supervising Social Worker. Foster carers should be particularly aware they are never to use any form of corporal punishment or restraint. You will be expected to agree, in writing, that you will not administer corporal punishment or restraint as part of your Foster Carer Agreement.

All issues relating to behaviour management should be clearly recorded as part of your daily and monthly recording requirements.

Whilst all foster carers will have their own set of house rules, which children and young people will be expected to know and adhere to, it is important to remember that any behaviour management strategies you use should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the children and young people in the foster home and must be discussed with both their social worker and your Supervising Social Worker.

Further information regarding the training and support provided in managing children and young people's behaviour can be sought via your Supervising Social Worker.

Corporal Punishment

The fostering team does not accept the use of corporal punishment within a foster carer's home. This means that a foster carer should never physically chastise a child in their care. Remember many

of the children being looked after by BfC have suffered injury and physical abuse, therefore physical punishment merely reinforces the belief that adults hurt children.

It is BfC's belief that corporal punishment is not an appropriate method of changing a child's behaviour; it will merely teach a child what is not desired, not what is acceptable. Corporal punishment tends only to work when the threat of further punishment is present, and the child will quickly learn how to avoid the punishment, rather than how to behave in an acceptable way.

More information regarding appropriate forms behaviour management can be found in Brighter Futures for Children "Managing Behaviour Guidance". A copy of this can be provided by your Supervising Social Worker.

Belongings

Foster children may bring items of clothing, toys or other possessions with them when they come to stay. These belongings may not seem very valuable to an adult but they may be precious to a child and therefore should be treated with respect. Remember the child will have been separated from their family and familiar surroundings and has come to live with strangers. In an unknown and potentially scary environment these belongings can comfort a child and help them settle in with you.

It is good practice to make an inventory (this can be found in the [Start of Placement Checklist](#)) of all valuable items a child or young person brings with them and to add to this as more possessions are acquired.

You may wish to offer to look after especially valuable items and keep them in a safe and secure place.

It is the responsibility of the foster carer to ensure that the child's belongings (including gifts purchased for them) are placed in suitable luggage (no plastic/waste bags) when they leave their foster home (either when they move to another foster home or move onto adoption/move to a permanent home).

Birth Certificate

If a birth has been registered, then a birth certificate can be obtained which will record the details of the child's birth. If a copy of a child's birth certificate is required, i.e. to open a savings account for them the foster carers should contact the child's social worker or seek advice from their Supervising Social Worker. The cost of a birth certificate will be met by the child's social work team.

Buddy Programme

The purpose of the buddy programme - is to provide an opportunity for our new foster carer applicants to spend planned time with experienced carers to find out more about fostering in reality and what they will be expected to do when they are approved. It allows the applicant time to ask questions informally without the assessing social worker being present and to learn more about the role in general and explore scenarios about how it might work best for them in practice.

It also provides a befriender and support to new applicants, so that they have someone who can introduce them to other carers and take them along to their first meetings, e.g. support groups, following their approval.

How this takes place – the applicants go to the carer’s homes who have been matched with them. We provide the buddy carers with a simple plan to cover with the applicants during the visit and applicants are expected to ask questions. The applicants are likely to spend around one and half hours at this visit. Extra time or visits can be agreed if both parties feel that this will be beneficial – this is down to the applicant and buddy to agree between them.

Who – who we use is important to us, we keep a record of who was matched to which applicants and why, based on the particular strengths that foster carers will be able to provide for interested applicants. Buddy carers will write a short paragraph about themselves which will be used for this purpose.

Buddy carers need to be interested in actively helping applicants explore what fostering is really like in practice and provide informal support during the assessment process. Ideally buddy carers will have applicants visit them in their home, in order to experience what fostering is like in ‘real life’ and provide simple feedback as part of the assessment process. They must also be approachable and amenable and have good communication skills, giving applicants space to ask questions – i.e. not be too directive or tell potential carers everything and also be willing to answer informal questions outside of the home visit and provide general support to the carer, as required. Buddies must also be willing to accompany newly approved carers to their first meetings, e.g. support groups and introduce them to other carers and be professional and generally positive about Brighter Futures for children Fostering Service.

Outcome – applicants will have an understanding of how caring for children looked after can have a huge impact on their lives and what this is likely to entail. They will leave with an understanding of safer care and risk assessments, planning for the child / young person in care, contact, recording, training, support groups, working as part of a team, the amount of time involved and generally how being a foster carer is likely to impact on their day to day life.

The applicants are asked to write up what the session/s provided for them, any learning points gained and what they learned that they had not been aware of previously. The buddy carer also provides short, key feedback and both of these documents are used as part of the Form F assessment process.

The buddy system provides our existing carers with evidence for Training Support and Development (TSD) standards, evidence of best practice for carer reviews and also for inspections.

Expenses – buddy carers can claim any relevant out of pocket expenses as part of the normal expense process with receipts. As the applicants are visiting the carer’s home, it is not anticipated that any expenses will be normally be incurred.

Support for buddies – the programme co-ordinator will keep in touch with buddies to check how things are going and provide or signpost to other help as required. Buddies can also discuss issues with their Supervising Social Worker and there will be opportunity to meet with other buddies once every 6 months or so at a group meeting to share general feedback and strengthen the process for the future.

Cars

Most of you will have your own car (including company cars or hire cars) which means you are responsible for ensuring that it is road worthy and fitted with age appropriate restraints and that all child seats meet required standards.

Insurance:

Foster Carers who use their cars to transport children and young people they look after are expected to have up-to-date, Fully Comprehensive Insurance.

The original, copy or electronic version of the Insurance Certificate needs to be seen by the Supervising Social Worker and noted on the carer's Mosaic records.

MOT:

Foster carers must ensure they have an up-to-date MOT Certificate for their car.

The original, copy or electronic version of the MOT certificate (including advisory notes) needs to be seen by the Supervising Social Worker and noted on the carer's Mosaic records.

Car seats and restraints:

Using a child car seat or booster seat:

Children must normally use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135 centimetres tall, whichever comes first.

Children over 12 or more than 135cm tall must wear a seat belt.

You can choose a child car seat based on the child's height or weight.

Please follow links for further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport>

<https://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules>

Information on how to fit a car seat can be found here: <https://www.childcarseats.org.uk/choosing-using/>

Changes in Circumstances – Foster Carers

If there are any significant changes in the foster carer's household the foster carer should inform their Fostering Supervising Social Worker. For example, if somebody joins or leaves the household, illness or health matters, involvement with the police, injury or accident or change in employment status. This is so that we can re-assess the suitability of the foster home which will be completed via an annual review or an updated Form F assessment.

Changing a Child's Name

A child's name is part of their identity and careful consideration should be given if it is an intention to change their name.

Some children find it hard having a name that is different to yours – it means that people can ask awkward questions. This may be particularly true if the child has lived with you for a while. However, the law is very clear on this issue.

When you can change the child's name

You can only change the child's name:

- If all persons with parental responsibility give their consent and agreement. Carers only have parental responsibility (in the legal sense) if they have a Child Arrangement Order, and then they share parental responsibility with the birth parents.

Or

- If there is a Court Order. The courts are very reluctant to agree a change of name for a child unless they believe that it is overwhelmingly in the child's best interests to do so. This means that they will only agree in exceptional circumstances.

Otherwise, you cannot change the child's name:

Unless everyone with parental responsibility agrees, or there is a Court Order, you cannot change the child's name.

This means that you cannot arrange for them to be known by any other name – including at school.

If having a different name causes the child that you are looking after a lot of distress, or if they are finding this very difficult, you must discuss the problem with the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker.

The poem below is a reflection of the importance of an individual's identity.

What's in a name?

By Mariyam Maule

What's in a name?

The love of a mother, whose daughter is yet unborn,
Suspended in the chamber of life
Still to be revealed in all her beauty.

What's in a name?

The roots of a father
Land whose blood runs through you
As the Nile runs through the land of your birth.

A missing link in the chain of life

The clue that solves the puzzle

A name to remember, to be proud of

A name to greet you first thing in the morning

To say farewell at night

What's in a name?

A sense of your history,

Your birth right.

I ask the question again

What's in a name?

A name is everything

To me.

Child Care Law

The information below gives a brief overview of some of the child care laws that might be relevant to a child in your care.

Children Act 1989

Applies to England and Wales; some sections affect Northern Ireland and Scotland

This Act introduces major reforms to legislation for children, including introducing the concept of parental responsibility and giving powers to local authorities to provide service for children in need.

Protection of Children Act 1999

Applies to the UK

This Act created a system for identifying people unsuitable to working with children and introduced the checking of criminal records of people who want to work with children or young people.

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

Applies to England and Wales

This Act amends the Children Act 1989 and places duties on local authorities to assess and meet the needs of young people leaving care.

Care Standards Act 2000

Applies to England and Wales

This Act establishes regulatory bodies for social care in England and Wales, and provisions for registration and standards in social care work and training.

Children Act 2004

Applies to England and Wales

The Children Act 2004 received Royal Assent on 15th November 2004. The Act provides the legislative spine for the government's strategy for improving children's lives through the Every Child Matters agenda. Key provisions include the creation of the post of Children's Commissioner for England, closer joint working and information sharing between agencies involved with children, the introduction of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children looked after.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Applies to England and Wales

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill received Royal Assent on 8th November 2006. The Act introduces a number of provisions relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, including barring lists and an Independent Barring Board.

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Applies to England and Wales

The Children and Young Persons Bill received Royal Assent on 13th November 2008. The Act is intended to reform the statutory framework for the care system in England and Wales, and to make provisions in relation to well-being of children and young people, private fostering, child death notification to Local Safeguarding Children Boards and appropriate national authorities.

Children Act - Orders (Public Law)

Care and Supervision Orders

The Court can only make a Care Order or a Supervision Order if it is satisfied that: the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and the harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to the care given to the child, or likely to be given if the Order were not made, not being what would be reasonably expected of a parent; or the child is beyond parental control.

A Care Order (under Section 31(1)(a) of the Children Act) places the child in the care of the Local Authority, with parental responsibility being shared between the parents and the Local Authority.

The Court will expect to be informed by the Local Authority of what plans there are for a child and be satisfied that the Care Order is in the child's best interests.

A Care Order can last until a young person is 18 years old; or until an Adoption, Supervision Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order is made; or until the Court decides that the Order is no longer necessary. The Local Authority, or persons with parental responsibility for the child, can apply for the discharge of the Order.

Interim Care Orders

The court may make an Interim Care Order (for up to eight weeks in the first instance) where, in an application for a Care Order, the proceedings are adjourned or where a Court in any proceedings gives a direction for the investigation of a child's home circumstances.

Supervision Order

This places a child or young person under the supervision of the Local Authority or a Probation Officer, who are required to advise, help and befriend the child.

The Order can only be for one year in the first instance, but the Supervisor can apply for this to be extended although it must not be for more than three years in all, and not after the person is 18 years old.

A Supervision Order may have conditions. For example, that the child should have medical or psychiatric examination or treatment. It may also say that the child should take part in particular activities at specified times.

The Order can be stopped if any interested parties apply to the Court and the Court agrees, or if a Care Order is made.

Accommodation - Section 20

Some children are looked after by the Local Authority by agreement with, or at the request of, their parents. Under Section 20 of the Children Act, it is the duty of all Local Authorities to make accommodation available for such children in need. Children may be accommodated (in residential or foster care) for a short or longer period. No court proceedings are involved, and the parents retain full parental responsibility.

Section 8 Orders

Under the Act all efforts should be made to resolve problems voluntarily and court orders should only be sought if they will be of positive benefit to the child. Section 8 of the Act details the following Orders:

Child Arrangement Orders (CAO) - May be made by the Court because there has been a dispute about the child's residence, or because there has been a question about the child's welfare, which has required an Order to be made.

Anyone named in a CAO as living with the child and caring for them, obtains parental responsibility for them with the making of the Order (Section 12) but they lose it once the Order ends.

Contact Orders – It should be noted that it is the child's right to have contact with their parents and not the parents' right. Contact Orders define the arrangements for a child having contact with the person named on the Order. Although usually a parent, contact can also be granted to grandparents or siblings.

Prohibited Steps Orders - restrict parental responsibility. Prohibited Steps Orders prevent the taking of an action that would otherwise be quite reasonably exercised by someone with parental responsibility. For example, if the parent who has the care of a child is concerned that the other parent may seek to abduct or harm the child they may obtain one of these Orders to prohibit the 'absent' parent from having any contact with the child except by prior arrangement and under supervision.

Specific Issue Orders – resolve particular areas of disagreement relating to the exercise of parental responsibility.

Importantly, Local Authorities cannot apply for or be granted Section 8 Orders; they are private law Orders that would normally be used in family disputes.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (for further information please follow this link: [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#))

Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in local authorities are the key points of professional and political accountability, with responsibility for the effective delivery of these functions.

National Minimum Standards for Fostering

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services are an integral part of the legal framework in which the fostering provision is regulated and conducted under the Care Standards Act 2000. The National Minimum Standards are mandatory and as a Fostering Service Provider Brighter Futures for Children must comply with them.

The Minimum Standards represent the 'basic' requirements rather than 'best' possible practice and are designed to be applicable to a wide variety of Fostering Providers rather than a standardisation

of service. As well as providing a measure by which services are regulated, the Minimum Standards act as a basis for the induction and training of staff and a guide for families as to what they should expect from a Fostering Service. They are structured under a series of key topics that service providers are expected to evidence. These include:

- Statement of Purpose (aims and objectives)
- Fitness to provide and manage a Fostering Service (the skills, experience and qualifications of its staff)
- Management of a Fostering Service (effective and efficient monitoring to evidence quality)
- Securing and promoting welfare (placements which prioritises physical, mental and emotional welfare)
- Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and Foster Carers (selection and vetting processes to ensure a skilled, well organised service)
- Records (comprehensive relevant information on children and administration systems which are appropriately accessible)
- Fitness of Premises (a secure, accessible suitably equipped building)
- Financial requirements (a financially viable and audited accounts system)

Further information can be found here: [Fostering Minimum Standards 2011](#) and [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)

Child Protection

The information below has been adapted from Berkshire Local Safeguarding Board's Child Protection Procedures and the publication Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

For further information on Working Together 2018, please follow this [link](#).

Child Protection Plan

Where a Child Protection Conference determines that a child is at continuing risk of Significant Harm, a multi-agency Child Protection Plan is formulated to protect the child. A Core Group of professionals including a 'Keyworker' (usually a social worker) are responsible for keeping the Child Protection Plan up to date and co-ordinating inter-agency activities within it.

Child Protection Conferences

Initial Child Protection Conference - This is a multi-agency meeting designed to make judgements about the likelihood of the child suffering Significant Harm in future and decide whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm. A decision is made at this meeting whether or not to make the child subject to a protection plan and if so the category of abuse or neglect the child has suffered. The meeting also decide what future action is needed to safeguard the child and promote their welfare.

Review Child Protection Conference - The purpose of this meeting is to review the safety, health and development of the child against the intended outcomes set out in the plan formulated at the initial conference. A decision is made at this meeting whether or not the child should continue to be the subject of a child protection plan. If the child is considered no longer to require a protection plan then the meeting must consider what support can be offered to the child and family and who is responsible for providing it.

Pre-Birth Conference - A pre-birth conference is an initial child protection conference concerning an

unborn child. Such a conference has the same status and purpose and must be conducted in a comparable manner to an Initial Child Protection Conference.

Transfer Conference - When Children's Social Care is notified that a child, subject to a Child Protection Plan in another area, has moved permanently within its own boundaries, a transfer conference should be held within 15 working days of the notification of the move by the originating authority.

Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Neglect are all categories of Significant Harm.

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is a form of Significant Harm which may involve including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a form of Significant Harm which involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of Pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a form of Significant Harm which involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect

Neglect is a form of Significant Harm which involves the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

More information can be found in Berkshire Local Safeguarding Board's Child Protection Procedures, available online <https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp>.

Children in Care Council



The Brighter Futures for Children - Children in Care Council

Each Local Authority area has a Children in Care Council, our one in Brighter Futures for Children is known as Your Choice Your Voice for 13 years plus and Your Destiny Your Choice for 5 years plus. This may be something your foster child would like to attend, but it might be down to you to let them know about it. The chances are they won't have heard of it before. We have put some questions and answers together to help explain it to your child.

What is the Children in Care Council? It's a group of children that are in care who meet every month to take part in activities and to make sure they have an opportunity to have their views, issues, and aspirations heard and that managers use these views to inform what they do. It's a way of having a voice and be listened to about the things that matter to them.



What day does the group meet? The two groups meet on different days and different times each month to try and give everyone the opportunity to attend at some time. We have activities on in the school holidays too.

What activities does the Your Destiny Your Choice do? All sorts; this is just a flavour of what we have done: make and bakes, trampolining, canoeing, football, pizza and games evenings, yoga, arts and creative activities, music and forming a band evening, museum trip, Reading Football Club matches, Christmas panto. It's run in a fun way and it's a really nice way for your foster child to get to meet other children in care .



What activities does the Your Choice Your Voice do? We get involved in interviews for new social workers or senior managers at Brighter Futures for Children. We deliver training to staff on how to listen to our voices and if there are things that are not being done that should be we let managers know about it. It's a great experience for the children and young people plus they quite often get vouchers for giving up their time. This opportunity often helps young people to develop their skills in self-confidence, self-worth and self-belief.

What do you need to do as a foster carer? All we need the foster carer to do is drop off and pick up the children and young people.

How do you get your foster child involved?

It's easy! Speak to your social worker, IRO, or Catie Blundell who organises everything for these groups.

Her number is 07843642528.

All the children are made to feel very welcome!

Children in care (CIC) reviews

A CIC review is a legal requirement. Children who are looked after by Brighter Futures for Children or Local Authorities must be reviewed regularly. A CIC review is a meeting which is held to get people together to share information about the child, critique the care plan and to review the progress or challenges in the foster home.

BFFC or the Local Authority must make sure that the care plan for each child looked after continues to be appropriate and that the child's needs are being met in line with the care plan. Only a CIC review can change the care plan. Therefore, the main reason for having a CIC review is to make sure that everything possible is being done so that the child can grow up to be healthy, happy, secure and confident.

Content of CIC reviews

CIC reviews will always discuss issues about a child's development and welfare. This will include a discussion about a child's education, health, conduct and family contact.

It will also be necessary to discuss any matters related to the plans for the child's future. The people attending the review can also ask for other issues to be discussed.

The review will also address plans for the child's future. The people attending the review should know about what will be discussed at the review so that they can be prepared. The child's social worker will be responsible for producing the written report for the CIC review and this report will contain information about the child and the progress with the care plan.

The foster carer's role in CIC reviews

Foster carers play a very important role in children's reviews. The foster carer will be expected to help the child to prepare for their review and assist them with thinking about the topics they would like to be covered. Children will often ask for somebody to support them during the review meeting and frequently approach their foster carer to provide this support. Foster carers are expected to play an active role in the review meeting and the reviewing officer will ask them to provide feedback on the child's progress.

It is expected that the review meeting will take place in an environment the child feels comfortable in and therefore reviews often take place in foster carer's homes. There might be times where it is appropriate for birth parents to attend.

Parental involvement

Most parents continue to have a high level of responsibility and influence about their child's upbringing even when they are looked after by the local authority and are not living at home. Most parents want to remain involved and informed about what is happening in the life of their child. Therefore, it is important that parents attend the review and contribute to the discussion about their child.

Frequency of reviews

The first review must be held within four weeks of a child moving into your home. The second review must be held within three months after the first review. After this all other reviews must take place within every six months. Reviews can be held earlier than these time periods, if necessary, and dates can be brought forward if needed.

At the end of each review the child should be advised of their right to request a review at any time.

The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

The following information has been adapted from the handbook for IROs.

The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's need and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child. As corporate parents each local authority must act for the children they look after as a responsible and conscientious parent would behave.

IROs carry out the following two main functions:

- chairing the child's review
- monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis

The IRO must ensure that the child's current views, wishes and concerns have been established and taken into account. The IRO also has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. This should include identifying patterns of concerns emerging not just around individual children but also more generally in the collective experience of its children looked after. Where these more general concerns around service delivery are identified, the IRO should immediately alert senior managers to these concerns.

The role of the IRO is a specialist one which stands alone in the local authority. It is a role that involves challenging senior managers and may require the IRO to seek legal remedies for the failures of the local authority.

The independence of the IRO is essential to enable them to effectively challenge poor practice. Therefore, an IRO cannot be somebody who is involved in making or managing a child's care plan. Nor can they be somebody who has control over resources allocated to the child.

Sons or Daughters who foster - Foster Squad

The support group has been set up to provide an environment for birth children, ages 8 to 18yrs, of BFFC: Fostering Service Carers. The group aims to not only show some recognition for what the young people do as Children who Foster but also to build a sense of community with their peers; providing them with their own support network.

The groups are informal, social gatherings and it's hoped that they also provide a safe place for the young people to discuss their experiences of fostering, the impact on them and to also provide them with the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the Fostering process.

As of 2018 the group is led by two Supervising Social Workers with additional support from two Foster Carers. The group meets once during each of the School holidays, with the aim to undertake some indoor / outdoor activities and discussion groups; decided on by the participants. On occasion, the group also provides info sessions as required i.e. on specific topics identified by the young people and or the adults of the group.

For more information about the group please contact your Supervising Social Worker

Training Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Carers

In 2007, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) launched the first set of England-wide Standards to support the training and development of Foster Carers.

The new Training, Support & Development Standards for Foster Care have been designed to support Foster Carers from approval through their first year of fostering. They provide employers with a framework to guide training and professional development for Foster Carers.

The standards

- Provide consistency and quality of training for Foster Carers across England.
- Provide access to the most up-to-date information, advice and guidance for Foster Carers.
- Allow opportunities for career progression and development by providing underpinning knowledge and skills.
- Improve the status of Foster Carers as trained professionals and a valued part of the children's workforce.

The new Standards have been adapted from the CWDC Induction Standards and build on the Common Core and the guidelines set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They use examples of current good practice and provide a comprehensive framework to guide the training and development of Foster Carers.

All newly approved foster carers are required to complete the TSD Standards in the first year of their approval. Foster carers are expected to take responsibility, in conjunction with their Supervising Social Worker, for producing a portfolio of evidence. Upon completion, the portfolio is signed off by the foster carer's Supervising Social Worker and verified by the Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager.

For guidance for how to complete your workbook and the word version of the workbook, please follow the links below.

[Training, support and development standards for foster care: evidence workbook - Word version](#)

[Guide to the training, support and development standards evidence workbook for foster carers](#)

Complaints Which Foster Carers Wish To Raise

From time to time, complaints may arise, either as a result of something BfFC has or has not done, or about a decision it has made.

Most issues can be resolved informally through discussion with either the Supervising Social Worker or the Child's Social Worker, depending on the nature of the problem. Sometimes, the Fostering Team Manager or the Children's Social Work Team Manager may be a more appropriate person to speak to about your concerns. However, if the matter cannot be resolved in this way the formal Complaints Procedure can be used.

Under a Service Level Agreement, complaints about the services provided by Brighter Futures for Children are coordinated by Reading Borough Council's Customer Relations Manager who will provide independent advice and guidance to Children, Young People and parents/carers about the complaints procedure. The Customer Relations Manager will also support Children and Young People through the appointment of an independent advocate if required.

Customer Relations Manager (Complaints & Representations)
Customer Relations Team
Level 2
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU
Tel: 0118 9372905
E-mail: socialcare.complaints@reading.gov.uk

Complaints about the Registered Manager can be sent to the Deputy Director of Children Services and the Customer Relations Manager for review and monitoring using the above contact details. The procedure for dealing with a complaint will depend on what it is about.

Any complaints about services that are being provided to a child in your care would be dealt with under the Statutory Complaints Procedure, whereas complaints relating to your role as a foster carer would be dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Procedure available on request

Confidentiality

When a child comes to live with you, the child's social worker will share with you sufficient information about the child's background to enable you to care for the child. This information may include details of the child and 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.

Information with your own children should be shared on a need to know basis, depending on their age and maturity, use your discretion. The same is true with your family members who have regular contact with the child. It is important to emphasise to your children and family members the need for confidentiality. Your Supervising Social Worker will help you think about this issue and guide you with regards to appropriate information sharing.

Friends and neighbours are not entitled to be party to information regarding the children you look after unless they are named as part of the child/young person's care plan. A firm refusal to talk about the children in your care will usually stop questions.

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's case or their background.

There may be circumstances where it is appropriate to share more information regarding individual children and young people, for instance if another foster carer is providing respite care.

A foster child needs a confidant like any other child. However, if the information they share with you is likely to have an impact on their future, you should encourage the child to share this information with their social worker. If a child will not do this it is essential that you tell the child you will have to tell Children's Services. If a child discloses that they have been abused or ill-treated you have a duty to inform the child's Social Worker.

It is important when a child looked after moves to your home that they are made aware that you will be keeping written records about them and that these will be shared with their social worker and your Supervising Social Worker. If records are to be shared with anyone else the child/young person should again be aware of this.

Children and young people will often test you with less important information before trusting you enough to make an important disclosure. Your ability to handle "trivial" information will significantly affect their willingness to share information of a more important nature.

When having discussions with professionals regarding the child looked after, please be mindful of their 'listening ears!' even when they are not in the room with you or nearby. It might be more appropriate to have discussions when the child is not with you, for example when they are at school.

Always consider the child's feelings and take a moment to consider if the discussions need to take place at that very moment.

Contact

Contact with birth parents and a significant person has a fundamental role in the Care Plans of children and young people who are fostered. The laws under which Children's Services and Foster Carers work, clearly state that local authorities have a duty to promote contact between children who are Looked After, their parents, relatives and other people who are important to the child.

Clear expectations on promoting contact are also outlined in Section 10 of the NMS which provide the basic principles on which services for fostered children are measured and regulated. Although foster carers have a responsibility to promote contact, guidance on good practice clearly states that this is a 'team effort' and Brighter Futures for Children: Fostering Service has a duty to ensure that carers are in the best possible position to make contact as safe and enjoyable as possible.

The role of the child's social worker is essential in terms of providing you with the necessary information including any assessment of risk for those involved. The needs, wishes and feeling of the children are also central to planning contact, which should be coordinated by the child's Social Worker including frequency, location and the supervision required.

Contact is particularly important for children and young people who are at risk of losing their sense of identity with specific aspects of their cultural heritage. Children with dual heritage or who may be placed with carers who are not a cultural match, need to maintain their links with their family, friends and community so that their cultural history is encouraged and valued.

Research suggests that maintaining links between children and their families increases the possibility of the children return to their family successfully.

Where this is not possible or appropriate, research also suggests that contact enhances children's sense of identity as well as avoiding disruptions in foster homes. It is not unusual for children to ask to have contact with relatives or friends they may have lost touch with prior to being Looked After. This is often an expression of loss for children and positive steps should be taken to re-establish

these relationships if it is appropriate for the child. Contact does not have to be face to face and can take the form of phone calls, exchanging letters, photographs or cards from holidays or special occasions.

Challenges with Contact

You will be aware that contact can have its challenges. 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 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 you are often the ones who have to deal with this when a child feels confused or disappointed. This can be emotionally difficult for you as you may feel frustrated that the family are letting the child down, but there are many possible reasons why parents and family members find contact stressful.

They may feel guilty or angry that their children are being looked after in foster care. Children often come into care 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 you and that this may be against their wishes. As a result, they may feel resentful having to comply with plans they don't fully agree with.

Parents and relatives can also worry that you will take their place in the child's life and affection and may have heard in the media about foster carers wanting to keep their fostered children. Parents may also feel they have failed their children which can impact on their motivation and reliability. These reasons and feeling can lead to parents behaving in ways which appear inappropriate during contact. They may be very emotional, give the children unrealistic messages or promise gifts.

Seeing the impact that contact can have for children looked after can make it challenging and result in feelings that are hard to manage. It is important to understand the parents experience and perspective can help to make sense of the situation for the child as well as the family.

Placement planning meetings involving you prior to or shortly after the child moves into your home can help parents manage 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 the carer's 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 you to facilitate contact either in your home or at an agreed venue. This can increase children's sense of security when the people who are important to them are comfortable with each other and are working together. This can also be less threatening for the child, parents and other family members.

County Lines

The UK Government defines county lines as:

Gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other forms of "deal line".

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

Delegated Authority

‘Delegated Authority’ refers to the arrangement for all or some of the responsibilities held by a person with ‘parental responsibility’ (PR) being met, in certain circumstances, by someone else for example you as foster carers.

The delegated authority will be completed at the placement planning meeting and can be reviewed at any given time. This can be changed to reflect changes in the care plan, for example when the child has been matched with you long term.

So what is delegated authority about?

- Normalising the experience of children and young people in foster care
- Reducing the delay in decision-making
- More productive and thoughtful thinking about who is best placed to do what
- Discussion and forward planning regarding agreement and consent issues
- Inclusivity and treating foster carers as part of the team around the child
- Clarity and transparency
- Better use of existing processes and roles

And not about:

- Blanket responses and approaches
- Fashions and fads in foster care
- Foster Carers ‘going it alone’
- Excluding parents and impinging on their rights
- Excluding social workers
- Not adhering to policy and procedures or regulations and standards
- Foster Carers being exposed or punished when things go wrong
- Reducing attention to assessing risk

As the child lives with you 24/7 it is important that you are authorised to make the day to day decisions about the child/ren wherever possible, whenever it is safe to do so, and, within the legal frameworks. We aim to ensure that we have the most appropriate arrangements for the delegation of authority for all children looked after by BFFC: Fostering Service.

You will be given a copy of the delegated authority to refer to.

Dinner Money

Children's school dinner money or the cost of a packed lunch should be paid from the child's allowance. Children and young people living with you are not eligible for free school meals. If a child is receiving free school meals when placed with you, ask the child's social worker to inform the school.

Education of Children Looked After

The improvement of education for all children looked after is essential to increase their life chances and individual personal development. Education is key to success and all children and young people have the right to education.

"No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."
(Article 2 of Protocol 1, the Convention of Human Rights)

BFFC: Fostering Service is committed to improving educational attainment and achievement of children looked after and will promote and support young people with their education. We aim to help our young people to alter their future pattern of life for the better.

Any local authority and BFFC expect those caring for its young people adhere to these principles and will support carers to do so.

"We owe it to all our young people to ensure they get the best possible start in life." (Education of Young People in Public Care, Guidance, 2000)

Tutoring and extra Educational Support

When to seek tutoring:

- child has shown a weakness in a school report or weakness has been highlighted by the school teacher
- child has expressed concern about not being good in a subject
- you notice gaps in knowledge and would like support before it becomes an issue.

How to access tutoring support:

- at the PEP (Personal Educational Plan meeting) and PEP review - Social Worker will complete a referral form for the Care Matters Team (education section) identifying the specific needs
- if a PEP Review is not due for a long time, contact the Social Worker who will contact the Care Matters Team (education) with a referral.

What tutoring Involves:

Tutoring comes in various forms

- short term work - one or two sessions to complete work on a minor issue
- medium session - work that covers a couple of terms and covers a topic area - handwriting or a specific subject topic area, long term support, all year round tutoring to support GCSE students and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, or students with more demanding educational needs.

Who will carry out the tutoring:

- a teacher from the Care Matters Team
- an agency tutor - selected specifically for the task
- a teacher from the student's school.

Where and when tutoring will take place:

- in the placement - with carers present in the house
- in school - during lesson break times or after school
- in public places - libraries etc.
- Children's Services buildings with an available room
- through the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), this is teaching through the computer via web cam and with the use of electronic portfolios where work can be passed back and forth between student and tutor.

All of these can happen during school hours, after school, weekends and school holidays.

Further information regarding the education of children looked after can be found in the section detailing the function of the Virtual School for Children in Care.

Extending 30 hours to Children in Foster Care

All 3 & 4 year old children are entitled to claim a free 15 hours childcare place for 30 weeks of the year. Working carers can apply to double this offer to 30 hours if they are both working.

The Government has recently opened up this additional early years funding offer to 3 and 4 year old children who are officially fostered. This means that you could now claim additional childcare support if you are in paid employment outside of your fostering responsibilities. The welfare of children is at the heart of this entitlement so any additional childcare would only be offered with the approval of the child's social worker as being consistent with the child's care plan.

Please see [Extending 30 hours to Children in Foster Care – Information for Social Workers and Foster Parents](#) for further information.

Personal Education Plans

The Function of the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

Every school-aged child and young person in public care must have a PEP, which ensures access to services and support; contributes to stability, minimises disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs; establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement.

The PEP should be sensitive to diverse needs and focus on the action that is required for children and young people in care to fulfil their potential.

Plans should set clear objectives or targets for young people, which relate to academic achievement as well as other personal and, if appropriate, behavioural targets, and details of who will action the plan with timescales for action and review.

Foster carers are expected to contribute to Personal Education Plans. Areas the PEP covers

- An achievement record (academic or otherwise)

- Identification of developmental and educational needs (short and long term, development of skills, knowledge of subject areas and experiences)
- Short term targets including progress monitoring
- Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations) which can be broken into shorter-term achievable goals.

The PEP should be an integral part of the young person's Care Plan, reflecting any existing education plans, e.g. Individual Education Plan, Statement of Special Needs, Careers Action Plan.

Timescales associated with PEPs

PEPs should be agreed as soon as possible and at least within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school. PEPs will normally be reviewed concurrently with the Care Plan and formally with the school every term (3 times a year).

Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children

BfFC has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require the Local Authority (BfFC) to appoint at least one person, in this case, the Virtual School Head teacher, for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of their children looked after and previously children looked after.

The Virtual School Head teacher has a key role to ensure that children looked after have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential - an important part of why this role was made statutory.

- For children looked after, as part of a BfFC's corporate parent role, the Virtual School Head teacher needs to be the educational advocate that parents are for others.
- For previously children looked after, the Virtual School Head teacher will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible. The Virtual School Head teacher is not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances, but is there to promote the educational achievement of previously children looked after through the provision of advice and information.

What is the Virtual School?

- The Virtual School exists to raise educational attainment and aspiration and narrow the gap between children looked after and their peers. Improving life chances and raising awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities is another key aspect of this work. There is absolute commitment from all members of the Virtual School to support children looked after through strong advocacy and collaborative engagement.
- The Virtual School maintains a school roll of all BfFC children looked after including those out of authority, monitors Personal Education Plans, admissions, attendance and exclusions, and has a duty to promote the educational achievement of all children looked after.
- The Virtual School offers training, support and guidance to Social Workers, Foster Parents, Designated Teachers, Governors and Schools.

- The Virtual School offers a range of support services for children looked after, which includes 1 to 1 tutoring, in class behaviour support, advice and training, advocacy, transition work and placement support. Raising attainment levels, measuring pupil progress and creating bespoke support packages in order to offer life changing opportunities for every child looked after are at the centre of this work.

What are our aims?

- To discharge the statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.
- To support looked-after children to achieve their educational goals and enable them to have more fulfilling careers, higher incomes, greater self-confidence and ultimately a better quality of life through attaining good qualifications and a positive school experience.
- To improve the educational attainment of looked-after children by narrowing the gap, raising expectation and effectively deploying the Pupil Premium Plus Grant.

Virtual School Contacts

Clare Houlton - Virtual School Head teacher

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Email: clare.houlton@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Lisa Palmer – Virtual School Education Support Worker

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Equality & Diversity

It is the intention of BfFC: Fostering Service, at all levels, to provide a service that is reflective of its current local population. In the most recent, census it was found that Reading particularly, has a large population of Polish residents. Almost three-quarters of the population of Reading is White and over 65% of White inhabitants are White British. More than 9% of the population are Asian whilst 6.7% are Black, 4.5% are Chinese and 3.9% are of dual heritage. The last census was extrapolated in 2011, so this picture is always evolving and we are sensitive to those changes, responding appropriately on a micro or macro level. For further information please follow this link to see details of the Reading demographic: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/jsna>

The sections below demonstrate the ways in which we are focusing on Equality & Diversity.

Equality and Diversity cover the following key areas:

HIV – BfFC: Fostering Service recognises that stigma and discrimination, together with concerns about health, can result in high levels of stress for people living with HIV and AIDS. We acknowledge the need to provide good quality support to empower people affected by this. We recognise that if a person is medicated for a chronic illness, it may not impact on them socially and their right to live a full social life as they wish.

Race, ethnicity, culture, religion and heritage – BfFC: Fostering Service has a legal obligation under the Race Relations Act (1976) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) to combat racism in

all its forms. These duties are now incorporated into the Equality Act 2010, 90% of which came into force on 1st October 2010.

Hearing and Visual Impairments - BFFC, as an organisation, welcome applicants with hearing or visual impairments and agree to assessment fairly in line with the Fostering Regulations. If an applicant has specific requirements to aid their assessment, this can be discussed on an individual basis and adjustments are made as needed.

We promote and model effective communication and good relationships with racial, cultural, ethnic and religious groups in the development of policies and practice to meet the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic children in care. This addresses the requirement of us to meet the religious, cultural and heritage needs of children in the care of BFFC: Fostering Service. All staff and carers are expected to understand these areas and to incorporate them into their practice. Discriminatory attitudes and behaviours are challenged and are a standing item at all Team Meetings and during Supervision with you.

The Service provides foster homes for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, some of whom are fully aware and expressive of their sexual orientation but others who are not yet fully aware. You are expected to have the capacity to care for these children and to help them overcome any discrimination they may face. An emerging area is that of gender re-alignment, of which, we currently have several young people in our care.

We encourage you to be effective advocates for all of our Young People and to champion and celebrate their individual differences. Harassment is behaviour which is unwanted by the individual to whom it is directed. The Service does not find sexual, racial or any other form of harassment acceptable and will take appropriate action to deal with it.

All children need a positive identity, therefore, when a child or young person needs substitute family care, their interests are likely to be best served within a foster family that reflects their own in terms of lived experience, ethnicity, culture, religion and language and can therefore help them build a positive sense of their own identity.

Staff seeking to place any child must ensure that there are clear plans for them. When a child is looked after or accommodated the parents must be consulted appropriately. When the needs of the child are in conflict with the wishes of the parents, although the views of the parents will be given due consideration, the needs of the child must be paramount.

As Social Workers of Brighter Futures for Children, we are sensitive about how we undertake assessments recognising diversity and need within a family. An assessing Social Worker can access additional training or additional materials can be purchased, such as books or tool cards to aid the assessment of applicants.

When discussing permanency for a child, under the care of BFFC: Fostering Service, the Social Worker assessing this permanence must take into account the child's lived experience, identity needs, language, cultural needs and the child's wishes. We recognise that a good ethnic and cultural match is an ideal outcome in preserving a child's identity fully and in most instances this is sought for a child. Where this is not possible, for identified reasons, we support you to best meet a Young Person's cultural and ethnic needs.

You are encouraged and supported to gain a full understanding of the child's cultural, ethnic needs, along with their lived experience in order to be able to provide them with a meaningful trajectory.

You are supported to think 'outside of the box' when promoting a child's identity as below:

- Using posters of role models on the wall
- Owning dolls/ toys of different ethnicities
- Visiting cultural restaurants
- Travelling to other countries to experience alternative cultures
- Expanding their own friendship groups to allow their fostered children to have friends of different ethnicities
- Visiting culturally appropriate hairdressers
- Exploring music from different genres
- Attending training to gain a full understanding of why supporting a child's cultural needs is important
- Introducing traditions and marking important calendar events
- Supporting dress which reflects traditions
- Supporting attendance to church/ compliance with Ramadan etc.
- Visiting a range of museums
- Learning and using different languages as a family
- Encouraging the child to join culturally diverse clubs
- Openly discussing prejudice or discrimination issues within the family
- Encouraging contact with birth family, if appropriate

As an organisation, Brighter Future's for Children fostering staff and fostering panel members, are reflective of the Reading demographic cohort.

Equipment

BfFC: Fostering Service may purchase/supply equipment that a foster carer may need to carry out their role.

In certain circumstances the following items can be supplied by the Fostering Team:

- Beds
- Bed linen
- Duvets
- Pillows
- Car seats
- Baby equipment
- Baby monitors
- Sensor monitor (under mattress)
- Pushchairs
- Stairgates
- Fireguards
- Cots etc.

If you require equipment you should contact your Supervising Social Worker, we cannot pay for any expenditure that has not been agreed first.

It is really important that you make sure all equipment purchased meets the relevant safety standards.

Family and Friends Foster Carers - Connected Persons

Where a child is looked after by BFFC, we have a responsibility wherever possible to make arrangements for the child to live with a member of the family who is approved as a foster carer. You will often hear that these carers are referred to as connected carers.

The assessment and approval process for family and friends foster carers who are caring for a specific Child Looked After will be the same as for any other foster carer, except that the timescales for the assessment are different if a child is already living with them and their temporary approval has been agreed.

Once approved as foster carers, they will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker from the fostering service to provide them with support and supervision; and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer.

While the child remains a child looked after, as a family and friends foster carer, you will be expected to cooperate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example, contributing to reviews of the child's Care Plan, cooperating with the child's social worker and promoting the child's education and health needs just as any other foster carers.

Finance for Foster Carers

Generally, foster carers cannot claim benefits for their foster children, except maybe Working Tax Credit. The fostered child may be entitled to benefits in his/her own right. The following are general rules, however you are always advised to seek advice regarding your specific circumstances.

More information regarding tax relief and benefits, please follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is not payable for a child looked after who BFFC or any other local authority has placed and pays an allowance for.

Claiming benefits while fostering

Being paid for fostering does not affect the amount of benefit you get if the payments come from either:

- a local council
- a voluntary organisation
- a private organisation on behalf of the local council

Your benefits may be affected if the payments come from somewhere else. Speak to an adviser from the organisation that pays your benefit to find out more.

Benefits that may be affected

Jobseeker's Allowance

You must be available and actively looking for work (and meet the other criteria) to get [Jobseeker's Allowance](#).

You would usually have to work for at least 40 hours a week. However, you can put restrictions on when you're available, as long as:

- you're available to work for as many hours a week as your caring responsibilities allow (must be at least 16)
- you have reasonable prospects of securing employment

The restrictions can always be changed - speak to your adviser.

You must be available for 40 hours a week if you're waiting for a foster placement and have no children of your own.

Income support

You may be able to claim [Income Support](#), but you'll have to attend work-focused interviews every 6 months or 3 years depending on your situation (for example if you have your own children).

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

You may be able to claim [Employment and Support Allowance](#), but you may have to attend work-focused interviews depending on your circumstances (for example if you're a lone parent).

Tax Credits

You cannot claim Child Tax Credit for a foster child who the local authority has placed and paid an allowance for. You may be able to claim Working Tax Credit. This is because Tax Credits will treat you as self-employed. Of course, you must satisfy the other qualifying rules (e.g. 30 hours a week and aged over 25). The hours you work as a foster carer can be added with any other hours of work. And generally, your fostering allowance which qualifies for tax relief is ignored as income.

Better off claiming Income Support or Working Tax Credit?

Because of the above rules you may need to decide whether you would be better off claiming Income Support or Working Tax Credit (assuming you satisfy the rules). A Benefits Agency advice worker should be able to calculate this.

National Insurance credits

As approved foster carers (from April 2003) you can be credited with National Insurance contributions - which go towards your entitlement to contributory benefits such as Retirement Pension.

Students

If you are a full time student in addition to fostering you can claim Housing Benefit if you are caring for a child looked after who formally lives with you.

The child looked after

The child looked after may be able to get certain benefits in his or her own right. For example, if the child looked after is disabled s/he may get Disability Living Allowance; or if s/he is 16 or over and incapable of work, Employment and Support Allowance can be claimed. Other benefits like Income Support may also be payable in limited circumstances.

Tax relief

The introduction of tax relief in 2003 means that foster carers in the UK do not pay tax on their income from fostering, up to a maximum of £10,000 plus allowances.

First Aid and Medication

Your household should have a basic first aid kit available to deal promptly with minor injuries. The Workforce Development Team run Paediatric First Aid courses. These courses are mandatory and this training must be updated every three years.

If a child you are caring for has particular health or developmental needs the child's social worker or the Designated Nurses for Children in Care should be able to provide information and give specialist advice or sign post you to support groups for parents and carers. Safe storage of medication is essential, ideally in a locked cabinet out of sight and reach of children. This will be looked at as part of your health and safety assessment.

Under no circumstances should medications be left in a place where children can get hold of them.

You must have guidance on the administration of prescribed medication for children and advice on the arrangements by which you can administer medication that is not on prescription. In order for you to accept responsibility to undertake procedures such as injections, administering rectal medication, tube feeding etc. the following criteria should be met:

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

If this is required then a discussion will be had either before or at the placement planning meeting.

You should also be aware of any possible adverse reactions to the medication and the necessary steps to correct such an occurrence.

It is good practice to record in your daily notes and monthly summaries when a child in your care has received first aid.

Foster Carer Files

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 stipulate that Fostering Services maintain records of all approved foster carers, including Family and Friends carers and retain these for specified periods of time.

Please refer to our Privacy Policy for information on retention periods, what information is held and where and how you can access your own records.

Throughout your fostering journey you will contribute to your case records. There will be a number of formal opportunities to do this, including:

- feedback on placements
- annual reviews
- the creation and maintenance of the personal development plan the creation of individual safe caring policies/guidelines

Where a factual error in information held is identified, this will be corrected immediately.

Where there is disagreement between you and a Supervising Social Worker (or others) regarding an opinion or judgment and it is possible to reach agreement on amendments to the record, these will be made. If it is not possible to reach agreement, your views will be recorded alongside those of the Supervising Social Worker.

Foster Carers Personal Development Plan

As a foster carer for BfFC: Fostering Service you provide a vital service to the children, young people and families in our community.

We value your role as foster carers and we are committed to making sure that you have the right support and the right opportunities to help you care for the child/ren to the highest standards. Our commitment to you is to provide the support you need to develop your skills and knowledge.

We ask you to work with us to identify your support and development needs and to make a commitment to your own personal development and learning.

Your plan will help you and your Supervising Social Worker identify and keep track of your development and identify the help you need to improve and update your knowledge and skills for fostering.

Your plan is reviewed every year jointly by yourself and your Supervising Social Worker and at this time you can look at what has gone well and the support and development you need for the following year.

The purpose of the Foster Care Personal Development Plan is to provide a formal and systematic means of:

- Identifying development needs to improve knowledge and skills
- Reviewing your performance in the fostering role against key tasks
- Exploring the changing service needs and the implications for you and fostering service

You will receive a copy of your signed Personal Development Plan (PDP) whilst your Supervising Social Worker will regularly update it when you attend training throughout the year.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) should be used when you complete the PDP with your Supervising Social Worker.

Foster Placement Agreement

The Foster Placement Agreement sets out the agreed arrangements for the care of the individual child placed. It also serves as a confirmation of what is expected from the foster carers and Children's Services and what has been agreed with the child's parent. Different requirements apply when a child is placed in an emergency.

The Foster Placement Agreement will cover:

- Essential information necessary to care for the child, i.e.
 - the arrangements for the child
 - the objectives whilst in your care
 - the child's personal history, religion, cultural and linguistic background and ethnicity
 - the child's state of health and any need for health care
- Arrangements for the financial support of the child during their time with you.

- Arrangements for delegating medical consent for examination and treatment of the child.
- The circumstances on which it is necessary to obtain the approval for the child to live, even temporarily, away from your home.
- The arrangements of the Social Worker visits and reviews of the child's progress.
- The arrangements for the child to have contact with parents and others.
- Compliance by you with the terms of the Foster Care Agreement and the carer's cooperation with any arrangements made by the responsible authority for the child.

Foster Carer Agreement

This is the written agreement made between you and the fostering service when you are approved.

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

You need to:

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

The agreement will contain:

- Terms of approval;
- Support and training;
- The review process;
- The process for making a complaint.

It will also cover your responsibilities:

- To care for the child with at least the same care and concern as you would if they were your own, keep them safe and promote their welfare;
- To keep the fostering service updated on the child's progress and any significant events that affect the child;
- Not to carry out any physical/corporal punishment;
- To keep all information about any child placed with you confidential unless the fostering service says you can share it;
- To attend relevant meetings including Child Protection Conferences and CLA Reviews concerning the child/young person and provide written reports if requested, and help prepare the child/young person where appropriate for meetings;
- To carry out the duties as identified from the child's Placement Plan;
- To work within the fostering service's policies and procedures and guidance;
- To allow inspectors of the fostering service to visit your home, see you or the child/young person by prior arrangement;
- To attend the mandatory training courses as required.

You should inform the fostering service of:

- Any change of address or people living in the household;

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

Fostering Network

Fostering Network is a charity working throughout the United Kingdom to promote and improve quality of the foster care service.

Individual membership of Fostering Network is open to all foster carers, social workers and anyone interested in child care. BfFC automatically fund your membership upon you becoming a foster carer with BfFC: Fostering Service.

Local authorities, voluntary organisations and local foster care associations are also eligible for membership. BfFC: Fostering Service are members of Fostering Network.

Fostering Network provides training on most aspects of foster care. The Association also publish a wide range of books and leaflets for foster carers, and a quarterly magazine. Fostering Network provides advice on practical and legal matters, finance and welfare benefits. There is also an insurance scheme covering legal costs that might be incurred by foster families.

Further information regarding any of their publications or training courses can be found on their website.

Hair Care & Skin Care for Young People of African/Caribbean Descent

The following information was taken from the book: Black Children in Care: Health Hair & Skin by Denise Lewis and Flora Awolaja.

You can purchase this book online for further information.

As every child's hair is different, carers need to consider how to best manage their child's hair. It is important to be aware that African Caribbean hair shrinks when wet. Black children's hair does not need to be washed daily, as this will remove the natural oils in the hair, making it dry. When washing your child's hair, rinse with warm water, and gently comb your fingers through the hair. Use a shampoo specifically for black hair.

Combing the hair after washing

Comb wet hair using a wide tooth comb with round-edged teeth. Comb hair gently, parting sections of the hair one at a time. Add hair moisture to the scalp, distributing it evenly through the hair. Moisture is essential after washing to maintain a healthy sheen, as well as locking in moisturising oils that will prevent the hair from drying and breaking. Comb the moisturiser through, finally plaiting the hair.

Combing products

Keeping a good hair regime requires not only quality products appropriate for black hair, but also the proper tools for styling. Curly hair requires quality brushes and combs that bring out the best in the hair and also avoid unnecessary damage and breakage. Always use a wide-tooth comb.

Hair textures and care tips

Black hair is unique in its structure and appearance and needs to be treated very carefully. It is at its weakest when wet, and can break easily. Black hair can be classified into three basic types:

Wavy: Soft or deep waves and little to no curl. Coarse and stays close to the scalp in long 's' shaped curves.

Care tips for wavy hair.

Invest in a good – 'bristle brush' – to keep the waves smooth. Use a light moisturising hair gel to add definition to the waves. Deep condition regularly and use a moisturising leave-in conditioner.

Curly: Fine and soft. It doesn't have a lot of sheen. It has lots of body. Curly hair straightens when it is wet and curls as it dries.

Care tips for curly hair

Only use wide tooth combs, the wider the better. Use deep conditioner after shampoo. Use moisturiser daily. To reduce frizz, do not brush the hair. Do not use towels to dry curly hair. Use a hair dryer to dry, or blow dry on medium with a diffuser attachment instead.

Kinky: The most highly textured of all black hair types is very tightly curled. It is also the driest and most fragile of all the hair types, especially when wet.

Care tips for kinky hair

Comb and detangle the hair when wet and coat with conditioner. Always use a wide tooth comb, fingers or a hair pick with oil; and moisture daily to keep it healthy and strong. After washing, use a moisturising leave-in conditioner.

Skin Care

Black and mixed heritage children must moisturise their skin to prevent it becoming dry. If this occurs, you will need to apply more moisturiser. Shea butter and cocoa butter are recommended. You should look for unscented and alcohol-free moisturisers that suit the child's skin type in order to avoid irritation. Chlorine in public swimming pools is extremely damaging to both their skin and hair. Moisturisers that are appropriate for the body may not be suitable for the more delicate skin of the face.

Children of all ages should wear swimming caps in the water and shower immediately after with soap to remove the chlorine. Moisturiser should be applied immediately after swimming. The perception that black children do not have to worry about skin cancer is false. Black and mixed heritage children can get skin cancer and should wear sunscreen and a hat when playing outside to prevent sunburn.

Health of Children in Care

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the child/young person's social worker to ensure that all information about a child's health condition is obtained and passed on to you so that you are aware of known health conditions and can take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the child. You have a responsibility to seek medical advice and gather information to enable you to promote the child's health.

Why children looked after have greater health needs

Children looked after are known to have greater health needs than other children. Their early experiences are often in families affected by alcohol, substance misuse or domestic violence. Many have experienced abuse and neglect. As well as the emotional and behavioural problems these children have, they often miss out on routine health screens, have incomplete immunisations or unfinished treatment by specialist health professionals.

Feelings of loss and abandonment may make the child very anxious, fearing further rejection and uncertainty. This can make the child want to control what is happening around them. They may have little regard for rules, be bossy or wind people up. They can be prone to unpredictable outbursts and disruptive behaviour.

These children need calm environments and clear boundaries and routines. It's also a good idea to give them advance notice of upcoming changes.

Designated Nurses

Recognising the greater health needs of Children in Care, the Primary Care Trust has appointed Designated Nurses to work closely with Children's Services. They are Registered Nurses with specialist qualifications and training. It is their job to work both strategically to put into place services to address the needs of this group of children, and also to work closely with social workers and foster carers. The Designated Nurse will undertake some health assessments or organise other health professionals to do this. They are happy to be contacted and you can get their contact details through your Supervising Social Worker.

The Health Assessment

Previously known as the 'medical' this is an in depth look at the child's physical health and emotional well-being. It should be done as soon as a child comes into care. A Designated Nurse will contact you as soon as he/she is given the appropriate paperwork and organise with you to arrange an appointment with the child's GP to have this done. If you don't hear from him/her please feel free to get in touch to see what the delay is. Whenever possible it is best to keep the child registered with his/her own GP until the first health assessment can be completed. Changing GPs straight away can mean the records may be in transit for some weeks before this information can be accessed.

After the health assessment you will receive a copy of the health care plan which gives details of identified needs and who will be responsible for seeing these needs are met. Please let the Designated Nurse know when the child has immunisations or appointments with health professionals so he/she can update records.

Review health assessments can be done by a specialist nurse, Health Visitor or School Nurse. For children under five further health assessments will be done six monthly. For children age five and over these are needed annually.

What carers can do to help

Your role as a carer is essential to ensuring good health for the children in your care.

You need to:

- Accurately record all medicines, doctor and health appointments, and any treatments they may have
- Provide a healthy home that encourages and supports healthy eating and exercise
- Help the child(ren) make the most of school, hobbies, sport and arts
- Understand the need for children to feel worthwhile and good about themselves.

Support children by giving them information, answering questions and helping them to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

As a foster carer you do not have the right to consent to medical treatment for the child in your care, unless otherwise agreed in your delegated authority. This can only be done by the social worker or birth parent, depending on the child's legal status. You should always check with the child's social worker to ensure you understand exactly what you are authorised to do.

Young people aged 16 and over can make their own decisions about treatment and sharing of their health information providing they fully understand the consequences of their decision. In some circumstances younger children have the same rights. This is sometimes referred to as [Gillick competency and Fraser](#)

Promoting Health

You cannot assume the child in your care will have been taught any of the basics of health such as brushing their teeth or washing properly. They may need help with all aspects of living healthily. The child's health visitor or school nurse will always help with any of these aspects of health promotion, or contact the Designated Nurse.

If you feel unsure about answering questions about puberty or sexual health please ask for advice.

Holidays

Holidays/Outings in the UK

It is expected that any child/young person living with you would be treated as a member of your family and would be included in family holidays. In some circumstances permission is required before a child/young person can be away from your home address overnight, even if they are accompanied by you, this could include school trips. Therefore, before you make any arrangements you should contact your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker to discuss your plans.

For example, if you plan on going camping, we would complete a risk assessment concerning sleeping arrangements.

Holidays Abroad

If you are thinking of taking a holiday abroad with a foster child you must give the child's social worker plenty of notice of your plans. The particular legal status of the child/young person can have an effect on whether it is possible for them 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; for example, they might have contact with their parents during this time.

If it is possible 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. Therefore, please make sure that you inform the child's social worker in plenty of time in order to avoid any disappointment.

BFFC or other local authorities will pay the cost of the child's/young person's passport. A signed letter of delegated consent will also be needed when taking a child looked after outside of the U.K.

Many carers and the children placed with them have wonderful foreign holidays, but like most holidays make sure you make your arrangements in plenty of time.

Immunisations

Children living with you must not be given immunisations without prior consultation with the child's social worker.

The following table details the ages at which children and young people should receive their immunisations:

When to immunise	Diseases protected against	Vaccine given
8 weeks	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and Hepatitis B Pneumococcal (13 Serotypes) Meningitis group B (Men B) Rotavirus gastroenteritis	DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) Men B Rotavirus
12 weeks	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and Hepatitis B Rotavirus	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB Rotavirus
16 weeks	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and Hepatitis B Pneumococcal (13 Serotypes) Men B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) Men B
1 year old (on or after the child's first birthday)	Hib and MenC (Meningitis C) Pneumococcal Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) Men B	Hib/MenC PCV MMR MenB booster
3 years and 4 months old or soon after	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio Measles, mumps and rubella	DTaP/IPV MMR
Girls aged 12 to 13 years	Cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) types 16 and 18 (and genital warts caused by types 6 and 11) BOYS ARE NOW INCLUDED INTO THE IMMUNISATION UK SCHEDULE COMMENCING ACADEMIC YEAR 2019/2020	HPV (two doses 6-24 months apart)

14 years old (school year 9)	Tetanus, diphtheria and polio Meningococcal groups A, C, W, Y disease	Td/IPV MenACWY
Regarding flu – the age criteria and dates of birth change each year	<p>Eligible:</p> <p>Next year (2019/20) the cohort for nasal spray vaccine is Reception to Yr 6</p> <p>Children aged 2-17 with long-term health conditions</p> <p>Children aged 2-3 (dates of birth change each year) given at GP surgery</p> <p>Children between the ages of 6 months and 2 years who are at high risk from flu are offered the annual flu jab, usually at GP surgery</p> <p>Children who are home educated are also offered the vaccine, provided they are in an eligible age group</p>	

It is good practice to record when a child in your care has had immunisations in your daily notes and monthly summaries.

If you are experiencing delays when registering/changing GP's then you can contact the school nurse who will have access to the full immunisation record of the child you are looking after.

Injuries and Accidents

It is good practice to record any accident in which a child in your care is involved. The recording should include 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 tell the child's social worker and the person with parental responsibility as soon as you can. If the child looked after has a more serious accident or sudden illness and requires medical or hospital treatment consent to treatment will be required, so always have the relevant medical consent form readily available. Young people sixteen years or over can 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. This issue should be discussed as part of the placement planning process and clearly recorded in the care plan and foster placement agreement.

You must notify the child's social worker as soon as you have organised any medical treatment. If the child's social worker is not available, inform their team manager or your Supervising Social Worker. If the accident occurs outside normal office hours notify the Emergency Duty Team.

This should be recorded on the incident form and in your daily notes. You should immediately contact the office via telephone to discuss and you will then be informed where to send the incident form. The reasons being that depending on the nature of the incident the registered manager may need to notify Ofsted within 24 hours.

Internet Safety

It is important to remember that the internet is a fantastic resource and many young people and adults will use it safely and experience no problems.

Internet users tend to feel less inhibited when on line. The internet provides many people with a false sense of security and a false sense of reality.

- Young people often unknowingly share personal information online
- It is easy to lie online, so you don't always know who you're talking to
- Young people tend to forget that online actions can have offline consequences

Some young people use technology to bully others. This is known as cyberbullying.

Millions of young people are using the internet every day and accessing websites such as:

- Social Networking Sites - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.
- Gaming sites
- Chat rooms
- Instant messenger (IM)
- Download sites - itunes etc.
- And many, many more

Don't be intimidated by the technology and keep talking to young people about their online life.

Things you can do and advise you can give:

- Privacy is a key issue online so remind young people to keep their personal information private
- Help young people to create strong passwords for all of their accounts
- Ask young people to show you or talk to you about the sites that they use
- Install a web safe browser, parental controls and security settings to your computer
- Remind young people not to accept 'friend' requests from anyone they do not know
- Only upload photos that you would be happy to show to a stranger - you never know where it might end up

The most important message to give young people is that it is essential that they talk to you or another appropriate adult if they are worried about something online.

Life Journey Work and Life Story Books

(Taken from "Life Journey Work: Preparing Children for Permanence Berkshire Adoption and Advisory Service)

Life Journey work can be confused with life story book. Life Journey work is the work done with the child (depending on the age of the child) and some of this will inform what goes into a life story book.

Children who live within their birth families have the opportunity to know about their past and to ask questions. For a child in care much of this information can be lost, even when it relates to their time being looked after by BFFC or a local authority.

Life Journey work tries to fill in the gaps and provide children with essential information in a clear, accurate and understandable way. This work can help to enhance the child's sense of identity and self-worth. All children are entitled to this knowledge. It can give the child a structured and understandable way of thinking and talking about themselves. Most of all it provides the child with a realistic picture of their lives discussed in a sensitive way which will help to diminish fantasies.

Many children have an overwhelming sense of guilt; they think their situation is somehow their fault and this work can help them to see that this is not the case. There is great therapeutic value in talking and having someone listen and validate your feelings. This work can also help a child to understand relationships and can also help them develop a better understanding of 'family' and the appropriate roles within.

It also gives the child a sense of continuity and can help them deal with transition.

Life Journey work can also be a model for future work with a child, if this experience is positive and helpful the child may be more responsive in the future to such intervention.

Children must understand their past in order to make sense of the present and to make a healthy move into the future.

Life Journey work should start as soon as possible after a child or young person becomes looked after. Foster carers have an important role to play in life Journey work and in providing materials to be included in life books.

Every child placed for adoption or being placed permanently outside their birth family should have a life book. In its simplest form it is a photo album but with a simple, coherent and honest narrative running through it. The life book is one of the tools that are used to help a child gain an understanding of their past.

The main aims of Life Journey work:

- To give details of the child's history
- To build the child's sense of identity and enhance self-esteem and worth
- To enable the child to explore their past
- To give a realistic account of their life until they have come into care and to dispel fantasies about the birth family
- To link the past to the present and to help the child understand how early life experiences may continue to impact on the child throughout their life
- To acknowledge the issues of separation and loss
- To help the child develop a sense of security

To promote attachment, some things that can be included:

- Birth certificate (older children can be involved in the application process if a birth certificate is not available)
- Family tree
- Genogram
- Ecomap
- Handprints/footprints
- Photo and details of hospital where born
- Cot card/wrist band
- Sequential photos and short narrative of the child's history
- Maps to show where they have lived
- Previous carers - photos and memories
- Information about schools/teachers/reports/certificates
- Friends (permission from parents to use any photos)
- Birthday and Christmas cards/presents

- Favourite colour/toys
- Holidays/outings
- Pets
- Photos of workers involved
- Paintings/drawings they have done
- First teeth
- Baby clothes
- Christening certificates or certificates of other religious welcome
- Details of clubs/organisations they belong to
- Tickets/programmes from outings
- Interests/hobbies
- Talents

More information regarding life journey work can be obtained from your Supervising Social Worker.

Long Term Fostering

Long Term Fostering is an option for children who need to be looked after away from home, but who may have continued involvement with their birth families. It provides a stable and loving family who can commit to a child until they reach adulthood and beyond! It is anticipated that the child will grow up with their Foster Carers and remain there until the time is right to move to independence.

Fostering can be the best Long Term option for a variety of children including: children who are unable to be adopted, older children, and children with certain care needs, ranging from health conditions to learning or physical disabilities and emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Long Term placements are carefully planned. Children will be allocated a Permanency Fostering Social Worker whose role is to find the right Long Term Foster Carer or 'Forever Family' for the child. The Permanency Fostering Social Worker will meet with different Foster Carers and go through the Matching Process to identify the best long term family for the child.

The Matching Process includes a Matching Interview in which the Permanency Fostering Social Worker and Child's Social Worker will meet with the potential Foster Carers and their Supervising Social Worker. These visits usually last approximately two hours and their purpose is to assess the ability of the Foster Carer to meet the child's long term needs. It will include enquiries into their background, character, health and overall family circumstances.

Following the Matching Interview, a Matching Meeting will be held. This is attended by the Permanency Fostering Social Worker; Child's Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and is chaired by a manager within children's services. In this meeting the Social Workers will weigh up the Foster Carers' skills and experience against the needs of the child. This is an evidence based meeting with a scoring system which will identify whether or not the Foster Carers would be a positive match.

Sometimes there can be more than one set of Foster Carers who are a positive long term match for a child. In this case the children's views, Foster Carer's location and whether or not there is a cultural match will be taken into consideration for decision making.

The long term match is taken to our Fostering Panel who make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker then approves the match making it official. The long term match is never confirmed until it has the Agency Decision Maker's approval.

Once a positive long term match is found, both parties are given the time to get to know each other through a period of introductions which will be child led.

Once a child has lived with their long term foster carer for 12 months and settled in their permanent home, there is a possibility for there to be fewer Review Meetings and Social Worker visits. This is to enable the child to feel settled in their home and is in line with the child's individual needs. This would be discussed with the Independent Reviewing Officer and Social Worker to decide if this is appropriate.

There is a great need for local Long Term Foster Carers for our children and therefore, if this interests you, please do not hesitate to contact one of our Permanency Fostering Social Workers for more information on 0118 937 3740.

Men in Fostering

"Adoption and fostering still tends to be a mainly feminised activity. Children looked after will probably have experienced the care, commitment and skills of women, but even, then there may be complications and obstacles." BAAF Practice Note 49

Many of our children and young people looked after lack a positive male role model in their upbringing. This inevitably means that these children may have negative views of men. It is therefore important that consideration is given regarding the future involvement of men in their lives.

Male foster carers have a crucial role to play in the lives of children looked after, particularly in presenting positive role models to children and young people. Traditionally male carers have taken a secondary role in the physical care of children and young people.

BFFC: Fostering Service is committed to ensuring that male foster carers are fully involved in the provision of services.

It is an expectation that both carers in a couple will undertake all core training and will attend supervision sessions with their social worker.

Missing from Foster Care

An individual plan will be drawn up for each child/young person and outlined within the Placement Plan which forms part of the overarching Care Plan. This is drawn up in the first placement planning meeting in conjunction with you. You will be provided with a copy of the Placement Plan for future reference.

When a child/young person in your care goes missing you will be expected to inform all relevant parties as soon as possible. This will normally be their social worker or the social worker's manager if during office hours. Out of hours you will be required to inform the Emergency Duty Team on 01344 786543.

You may also be required to make contact with the child/young person's family. In addition, you will normally also be expected to contact the police to report the child/young person missing. When reporting a child/young person missing to the police ensure you give as much detail regarding the circumstances of their disappearance as possible. Also ensure you request and record the missing person number.

The police should be contacted on 101.

It is good practice to ensure you have the contact details for all known associates, friends and family of your foster child or young person, to pass on to relevant parties if required. You will also be expected to give details such as, time last seen, state of mind and clothes the child/young person was wearing. A recent photograph and details of any mobile phone carried by a young person should be shared with the police. As with all issues relating to the care of children and young people in your care it is important that an accurate, daily record is kept of any episodes where a child/young person is missing from your care.

Further information can be found in our 'My Foster Child is Missing' policy which also makes reference to the missing children's protocol.

Mobile Phones

Increasingly children and young people are using mobile phones to communicate with their family and friends. There are both plusses and minuses to this. Mobile phones are part of everyday life for all now, however there are many risks attached, not least the risk of children and young people developing inappropriate contacts with people whose intentions may not be ones that have a positive impact on them.

You are expected to be vigilant and monitor mobile phone usage closely. You should always discourage the children and young people in your care from entering into any long-term phone contract and never support a child/young person to take out a mobile phone contract.

It may be appropriate to provide them with an additional amount of money to top up the credit, this will be an agreement between you and the young person. This may be attached to adherence to particular boundaries and withdrawal of any such privilege could be used as a sanction for inappropriate mobile phone usage. Any decision made by you should first be discussed with both the child's social worker and your Supervising Social Worker.

In many cases it will be appropriate to limit the numbers stored in a child/young person's contacts and to review these on a regular basis. Any decision made to do this must be clearly communicated and agreed with the child/young person and it is good practice to draw up a written agreement with them. It may also be appropriate for the child/young person to give up their phone at certain times of the day, particularly bedtime. Again, this must be clearly stated in the placement planning meeting and any written agreement.

Schools are likely to have a policy regarding mobile telephone usage and it is your responsibility to ensure they are aware of any such policy and to make every effort to support the child/young person to adhere to it.

Any concerns you have regarding mobile phones should be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker.

Monitoring and Notifications - When I need to tell other people about things

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

Wherever an event listed in the table at the bottom of the page happens, your main priority is to make sure the child is as safe as possible. You must then contact your Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible so they can inform the Designated Manager, who is responsible for sending the notifications to the agencies listed as soon as possible. This is usually the Registered Manager of the fostering service. You might also need to complete BfFC's incident form.

Notifications will be sent as soon as possible after the event has occurred.

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

A copy of the form will be:

1. Sent directly to the relevant Statutory Authority(ies) within 24 hours - including weekends, as per schedule 7;
2. Placed on the relevant child and or your file;
3. Placed in the folder for all critical incidents.

Critical Incidents

Critical Incidents are not always as clear as notifiable events; however, if you have any doubts or are uncertain you should always seek advice from your Supervising Social Worker.

Examples are:

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

All foster carers have a responsibility to report to their Supervising Social Worker or duty worker who will inform the fostering service manager of the incidents. There should be no delay in reporting the incident or event.

Notifications Table

The following table has been reproduced from:
Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011- Events and Notifications

Event	To be notified to:					
	Chief Inspector	Responsible authority	Secretary of State	Area authority	Police	Primary Care Trust

Death of a child placed with foster carers.	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes
Information is provided to the <u>Disclosure and Barring Service</u> under any of sections 35, 36, 39, 41 or 45 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 in respect of an individual working for a Fostering Service.	yes	yes				
Serious illness or serious accident of a child placed with foster carers.	yes	yes				
Outbreak at the home of a foster parent of any infectious disease which in the opinion of a general practitioner attending the home is sufficiently serious to be so notified.	yes	yes				yes
Allegation that a child placed with foster carers has committed a serious offence		yes			yes	
Involvement or suspected involvement of a child placed with foster carers in sexual exploitation.	yes	yes		yes	yes	
Serious incident relating to a child placed with foster carers necessitating calling the police to the foster carers home.	yes	yes				
A child placed with foster carers is		yes		yes	yes	

missing from the placement.						
Any serious complaint about any foster carers approved by the fostering service.	yes	yes				
Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster carers.	yes	yes		yes		

National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services are an integral part of the legal framework in which the fostering provision is regulated and conducted under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Regulations 2011. The National Minimum Standards are mandatory and, as a Fostering Service Provider, Brighter Futures for Children must comply with them.

The Minimum Standards represent the 'basic' requirements rather than 'best' possible practice and are designed to be applicable to a wide variety of Fostering Providers rather than a standardisation of service.

Not only is the service regulated by the NMS, but also your day to day practice. The standards are reflected in your supervision and your annual review as your continued suitability to foster will be measured against the standards.

Further information can be found here: [Fostering services: national minimum standards](#)

Ofsted

The Education and Inspections Act, which established the new Ofsted, specifically requires that in everything we do we should:

- promote service improvement
- ensure services focus on the interests of their users
- see that services are efficient, effective and promote value for money.

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They regulate and inspect to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages.

The purpose of an Ofsted inspection is to ensure that BFFC: Fostering Service continues to meet the National Minimum Standards and the needs of children and young people who use the service.

Foster carers, children and young people are consulted as part of any inspection of the fostering service and their views about the support and services provided are given serious consideration.

Options Therapeutic Team

Launched in September 2015, the Options Therapeutic team's aim is to deliver the KEEPSafe training programme for foster carers and provide a therapeutic service for Bffc's children looked after (CLA). The service was developed to ensure that you and children living with you are supported and to ensure that living arrangements remain stable throughout the child and young person's journey of care.

As a service, we offer:

- Systemic consultations and advice to professionals and the young person's wider network.
- Specialist advice to foster carers and other agencies caring for children looked after.
- Signposting individuals and agencies seeking referrals for children and young people who have complex needs.
- Support training for social workers, Supervising Social Workers, other professionals, foster carers and birth families.

KEEPSafe Programme:

The KEEP program is a skills training and support group designed for foster and kinship carers. KEEP aims to increase the parenting skills of foster and kinship carers, decrease the number of placement disruptions, improve child and teen outcomes, and increase the number of positive permanency outcomes/options (e.g. reunification, adoption).

Overnight Stays

There is no statutory duty for DBS checks to be carried out on adults in a private household where a child may stay overnight. DBS checks should not normally be sought as a precondition of an overnight stay. There may be restrictions for the child in your care to stay overnight with specific people.

Decisions on overnight stays should in most circumstances be delegated to you and arrangements for such decisions written into the Placement Plan, delegated authority and can be reviewed at any time.

Children in Care should as far as possible be granted the same permissions to take part in acceptable age appropriate peer activities as you would do with your own children. This would mean you obtaining all relevant contact details, meeting the parents/care givers of the other child and ideally have visited the home beforehand.

Only where there are exceptional reasons should the permission of the responsible authority be required or restrictions placed on overnight stays.

If you are considering a request from your child to stay overnight with a friend or friends you should base your decision on the following factors:

- Are there any relevant restrictions contained for exceptional reasons in the child's care plan, foster placement agreement, or any court orders, which restrict the child from making particular overnight stays?
- Are there any factors in the child's past experiences or behaviour, which would preclude overnight stays?

- Are there any grounds for concern that the child may be at significant risk in the household concerned?
- Is the child staying in the household with another child or children, rather than staying solely with an adult or adults?
- The age and level of understanding of the child concerned.
- What is known about the purpose of the overnight stay?
- The length of the stay
- The sleeping arrangements

The child and you should always be told of the criteria that will be used to make decisions about overnight stays. In all cases you should be made aware of any individuals, addresses or areas which may place a child at risk.

Participation

'Participation is a term increasingly used by those working with children and young people to mean children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; it means involving children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of their community and the larger society in which they live'.

Although the concept of participation by children and young people has been around for a long time, the actual implementation is a relatively new area of work. However, attitudes are now changing and there is increasing recognition and understanding of the benefits of involvement to children and young people, organisations and to the community. Barriers have had to be overcome in order to move forward.

One example is the cultural change, which includes the recognition that children and young people with disabilities are also capable of making choices and decisions about their lives.

Consultation is a word that is often misinterpreted as participation. Whilst it has a valuable place in engaging children and young people, it should be seen as a first step in promoting participation and empowerment. Generally, when consulting with children and young people power remains with those carrying out the consultation. By contrast, actively involving children and young people suggests a joint ownership. Power is shared, and the children and young people are involved in the entire process. Where children and young people are involved in the processes, understand the issues and have the opportunity to give their views, there will be greater acceptance of the decisions made.

True participation is based on equality and the sharing of power. This is not to say that children and young people will 'take over' or 'get their own way' (a common fear of many adults).

Children and young people's opinions do not have more weight or validity than anyone else's, but they should have the same weight if they are based on equal access to information and resources.

In simple terms, participation means 'taking part', and in the fullest sense.

To promote true participation young people are given the option to take increasing involvement in the processes concerning their care planning including being given the opportunity to chair meetings such as reviews and planning meetings.

Young people who want to become more involved in wider issues relating to participation are encouraged by you to take an active role on the Children in Care Council.

Children and young people will have different experiences of services based upon a number of issues including their gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or ability, religion and living circumstances. These differences will need to be addressed with sensitivity.

It is vital that you actively encourage and enable the children in your care to participate and take steps to include those children and young people who are often overlooked, such as those from black minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities.

Ensuring that all children and young people have the opportunity to participate regardless of their circumstances is a principle of equality upon which effective participation is based.

Placement Checklist

Start of placement checklist

This form is a checklist to confirm that you have received all the relevant paperwork and information about the child/ren. The form also has a belongings checklist. This form will be completed by you when a child comes to live with you and be shared with your Supervising Social Worker at the earliest convenience.

End of placement checklist

This form is a checklist that details the paperwork, information and belongings that go with the child/ren when they leave your care. This form will be completed by you when a child leaves your care and be shared with your Supervising Social Worker at the earliest convenience.

Play and Toys

Play is vitally important to any child's development. It is one of the ways that young children learn and are stimulated to develop their intellectual skills. Play needs objects, space, time and companionship. In a child's early years, they are stimulated and encouraged by their parents and family members. As they grow older they are more reliant on their peer group.

Children will use their imagination to fill many gaps and their creativity is stimulated as they exchange ideas with others.

Some children who come to live with you may not have experienced any positive stimulation or encouragement. Such children may have little incentive to explore or to play, they do not see their world as an interesting place where fun is enjoyed and skills can develop. Their understanding of the physical world is therefore limited compared with their peer group and the child does not know how to relate to people appropriately or conform to expected behaviour.

Children whose early years have been marked by neglect may be of average intelligence but will arrive in the infant school ill-equipped to cope, they are unable to pay attention, they cannot play or interact with other children in a constructive way and their capacity to learn is limited.

However, research has shown that by giving disadvantaged pre-school children a one-to-one relationship for play, affection and conversation, even for short periods every day, can make all the difference to their future performance at school.

Foster carers have an important opportunity to help children in their care by conversation and play. It does not necessarily require expensive toys or equipment to stimulate a child/ren, often simple household items can encourage a child to use their imagination. For many children, what is most

important is that they are given the attention they have previously lacked, and they are encouraged to play and learn and develop through play. If you're unsure or concerned about a child's skills in this area or you feel that a child may need some special toys or equipment then contact your Supervising Social Worker.

Pre-placement information

Remember to ask!

New foster carers often wish they had asked more questions before accepting a child or young person into their home.

Don't overlook.

- ./ Who is making the request?
- ./ Does the child have a specific named worker?
- ./ Who do you contact in the future?
- ./ The child's names (any particular name?), age and sex.
- ./ What is the child's ethnic origin?
- ./ Information about religion and culture. Language(s)?
- ./ Why does she or need to be looked after?
- ./ What is the plan?
- ./ Has a date been set for a planning meeting? (This is required within 7 days of the placement start).
- ./ When will there be a meeting to draw up the Foster Placement Agreement? (Often this will be done at the planning meeting).
- ./ Is there a written risk assessment?
- ./ Is it known if the child or young person has been abused?
- ./ If so, what happened? (who was involved, where and when?)
- ./ How is she or he responding to being away from home?
- ./ What are the child's views about what has happened?
- ./ What is the legal position?
- ./ What is the family situation?
- ./ Where are the child's parents?
- ./ Does the father have parental responsibility?
- ./ Are there brothers or sisters?
- ./ Who else is important in the family?
- ./ What are the provisional arrangements about contact?

- ./ Where will contact take place?
- ./ Are you expected to be involved in contact? (Including any expectations regarding transport).
- ./ Are there any restrictions?
- ./ Is the child or young person in good health?
- ./ Has there been a medical or does one have to be arranged?
- ./ Any medical conditions which require treatment?
- ./ Who needs to give consent to medical treatment? Has this consent been given?
- ./ How is the child doing at school?
- ./ Which school and where is it?
- ./ What are the child's interests?
- ./ Are there any behavioural issues?
- ./ What are the child's current routines/boundaries?
- ./ What are the financial arrangements for the placement?
- ./ Who will bring the child?
- ./ Will the parent(s) come with the social worker?
- ./ Any immediate practical arrangements?
- ./ Is clothing, equipment, transport required?

Before a child comes to live with you, you will receive a copy of the referral and as much information as is available to us at the time of seeking a foster home for a child looked after. When the child comes to live with you, the social worker should provide you with fully signed and completed:

- medical consent form
- Placement agreement form

Reading Carers Link (RCL)

Reading Carers Link is a registered charitable organisation, and known as a Foster Carer Association for BfFC: Fostering Service carers. It is funded by BfFC and with some external funding.

- RCL is run by a committee of approved BfFC foster carers that work voluntarily.
 - Meet regularly for committee meetings and manage financial and constitutional matters in line with the Charity Commission.
 - They organise booking rooms for meetings and coffee mornings and provide a creche which is run by approved carers, that all have a valid DBS.
- RCL runs monthly coffee mornings with workshops and specialist speakers. All foster carers who are approved by BfFC are welcome.
- RCL aims to provide events and activities that support foster carers
 - Social networking with other Carers – peer support and sharing experiences
 - Events such as Zoo trips for the whole Foster Family

- Specific activities, like trampolining and bowling for Foster Kids
- General support and financial support for the Foster Squad – a group set up for Foster Carers Birth Children.
- Fully funded Annual dinner for Foster Carers and their partners/support person.
- Organising Well-being events and support e.g. Lunch and swimming at Reading Lido
- RCL committee members represent the voice of Foster Carers at the RBC Corporate Parenting Panel and the BfFC: Fostering Service Joint Liaison Meetings.
- RCL provides a monthly ring around to offer support and guidance. This applies to those foster carers who are happy to have their contact details shared with RCL

Records and Record Keeping

Foster carers play a central role in the care of children and young people and are placed in a unique position to observe and document their lives. The Children Act 1989 places a duty on fostering agencies to keep detailed records and it is expected that foster carers will play an active role in ensuring comprehensive information is provided so records are kept up to date and are accurate.

For more information see Record Keeping and Memories document.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

Brighter Futures for Children have a designated Recruitment and Assessment team within the Fostering Team. This team is primarily responsible for the recruitment and assessment of all BfFC's foster carers. We recruit and assess carers for short and long term foster care, respite and emergency care, Supported Lodgings, Parent & Baby and the Short Breaks Scheme.

There is a national shortage of foster carers, and in Reading, it is no different. Our Recruitment Team are active in our local community, attending summer events and fetes, presenting to local community groups and places of worship, talking to schools, and having our Recruitment stand in local supermarkets, libraries, colleges and also at local job fairs. We also use social media such as Facebook, and advertise on local radio. Research suggests that the best way to recruit new carers is through word of mouth of existing carers and as such we really welcome and appreciate your help in recruitment.

If you recommend a new foster carer, they are approved and look after a child for BfFC then you will be gifted £500 lump sum which is in line within our 'refer a friend' scheme.

Further information can be found on our website and our social media sites:

LinkedIn: [Brighter Futures for Children](#)

Twitter: [@BfFC_Child](#)

Facebook: [@BfFCChild](#)

Website: www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Retention

Retention is equally important and in order to hear your voice we are running a monthly recruitment and retention group. Your attendance would be very welcome along with your views, please contact your Supervising Social Worker to find out more.

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. You are required to work closely with all the other individuals and agencies providing services to children in care to ensure the safety of the children and young people you look after.

Please familiarise yourself with our safeguarding policy.

Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)

Each Children's Services Authority in England must set up an LSCB. The LSCB is composed of a number of representatives of local agencies with a responsibility for safeguarding children, including education, health, the police and voluntary agencies.

Universal Safeguarding Training is compulsory for all foster carers. The aims and outcomes of the training are as follows:

- To promote a basic understanding of children in need, child protection and family support and to explain how you can contribute effectively towards the process
- To raise awareness of the indicators of abuse and the risk factors
- To develop initial skills in the assessment of risk and how to refer a case
- To enable and encourage professionals to work together and understand each other's roles
- To form a basic understanding of what the DECS role is in Child Protection and Family Support

The following list outlines the course content:

- Definitions and signs of abuse
- Risk factors
- Assessment and Risk Assessment
- Safeguarding Children
- Roles of the Police, Health & Education

You must attend Universal Safeguarding Training in your first year of approval. Refresher training must be attended every two years. If you have not yet attended this training please speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Safer Care Agreement

All Brighter Futures for Children foster carers will be asked to complete and sign a family Safer Care Agreement and an individual Safer Care Agreement.

The purpose of this agreement is a contract set up between you and BFFC: Fostering Service designed to ensure that everyone who lives in the fostering household and those who visit knows what the family rules are.

The aim is to offer protection to you, your children, any child living with you and any other adults in the household.

The agreement includes information about the safeguards that you and your family put in place both for yourselves and the children and young people you look after.

The Individual Safer Care Agreement reflects the needs of the child behaviours and how you can respond to them. This document is a live document and will be reviewed during your supervision.

For further information please review Safe Care policy.

Sexual Health

Research shows us that by the age of 20 a relatively high number of young people who had been in care were young parents. It is therefore essential that we educate and support young people in issues around relationships and sexual health.

Many looked after young people may have missed out on sex and relationship education in school due to non-attendance and/or frequent changing of schools.

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) should focus firstly on relationships, appropriate relationships, love and friendships.

You should also be supporting young people to develop skills and confidence to resist peer pressure, say no, make decisions, and know when they are ready and how to report anything that may happen that they do not like or did not want.

The legal age of consent is 16 therefore, making it illegal for young people under this age to be having sex. However, realistically we know that this does happen.

Whilst we must not condone or encourage under age sex the Sex Offences Act 2003 states that a person is not being unlawful if they provide information, support and treatment (including contraception) to young people under 16 years old, providing they are sure that there are no child protection issues and that the young person's health and/or well-being would be affected otherwise.

This does not apply to children under 13 - these should be referred immediately to your Social Worker.

Short Breaks

Short Break foster carers offer day support and short breaks support to families who have a child/ren living at home with a disability.

These families are also visited by the CYPDT (Children and Young People with Disability Team). A team visit and planning take place before a child is placed with a Short Breaks family/individual.

The care and support take place at the carers house or out and about in the community. It is an opportunity for a young person to grow and learn new skills.

The ethos and principles of Short Breaks are that the young person is a child first and a child with disabilities second. The aim is to promote access to the same range of services that all young people are entitled to. If a family has 2 children, both with disabilities, then they are assessed as individual young people first.

The criteria for Short Breaks are that the accommodation offered is suitable to meet the child's needs and the young person is not in the care of the responsible authority.

Short Break arrangements should not exceed 17 days at any one time and should not exceed 75 days, in total, over any 12 month period. This criteria must be met for it to be called Short Breaks.

Smoking

There is increasingly strong medical evidence to support the view that smoking and passive smoking have a detrimental effect upon the health of children. Only 15% of the smoke from a cigarette is inhaled by the smoker, the rest goes into the surrounding air and other people breathe it in. Babies and children who cannot avoid smoke where they live and play are particularly at risk. Babies whose parents smoke are much more likely to be taken to hospital with chest trouble in their first year of life than non-smokers' children. Children exposed to smoke are more likely to develop breathing problems as adults.

As a result, any child under the age of five years or vulnerable child/young person with learning and/or physical disabilities, chronic respiratory problems (current or historical), heart disease or glue ear who requires a foster placement, will not be placed with you or any members of the household smoke. These vulnerable children are regarded as the high-risk groups in respect of the effects of exposure to second-hand smoke. This policy applies regardless of whether foster carers or other members of the household smoke outside of the property. This is also applicable if you are vaping as the side-effects to date are not known or scientifically proven.

Statement of Purpose

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose contains a range of detailed information about the fostering service. It provides information about the manager, staff and organisational structure. It sets out the recruitment, approval and support of carers, and describes its complaint procedure and types of placements available to children in the fostering service. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed on an annual basis.

A full copy of the Statement of Purpose can be found on the Brighter Futures for Children web site. You can also request a copy from your Supervising Social Worker.

Substance Misuse

Nowadays we cannot prevent young people from coming in to contact with drugs. But by giving them accurate information we can help them to make the right choices. We also need to ensure young people know where they can go to for support and who they can talk to without being judged.

Although many young people nowadays are using drugs only a small minority of them go on to be problem users. Research shows that young people are far more likely to develop a problem with alcohol than with illegal drugs.

Young people will use drugs for different reasons:

- To rebel
- To fit in peer pressure
- Because they enjoy it
- To relax, I chill out
- Curiosity and boredom
- To numb pain (physical and emotional)
- Learnt behaviour, i.e. drug use has been normalised

If you want to talk to a child about drugs you need to approach the subject sensitively as being heavy-handed will often backfire.

Giving a child the facts from reliable and credible sources, and telling them in a reasonable manner about the effects and risks of substance misuse, will make them feel empowered and informed rather than chastised.

Risks associated with substance use:

- Health - physical, emotional and psychological
- Financial
- Social - social isolation, behaviour and personality
- Personal safety

Be sure to talk about specific drugs, rather than lump them all together. Make the distinctions between the different drugs such as cannabis and heroin.

If they see that you have a realistic view of the risks, they'll be more likely to listen to you - and more importantly to come to you if they have a problem.

Training is available to all Foster Carers to provide more information - ask your Supervising Social Worker.

For useful information and contacts please visit [Reading Services Guide](#).

Supervision

BFFC foster carers will have a supervision visit at least monthly by a qualified social worker whose role is to support the foster carers and monitor the standard of care received by a child. In the absence of the Supervising Social Worker and where there is immediate need for support, then this will be provided by another member of the fostering service.

The focus of the visit is twofold. The first part of the visit should concentrate on the foster carer's professional development, family dynamics, safe caring and the tasks required of them by BFFC: Fostering Service.

The second part of the visit should concentrate on the child's plans, achievements and development.

Supervising Social Workers are required to carry out at least one unannounced visit each year and a Health and Safety Check List to be completed annually, prior to review.

The written record of your supervision visit will be given to you in a timely fashion prior to your next supervision visit.

Supervision of respite, short break carers, long term carers and staying put arrangements can be less frequent, but will need to be agreed by the BFFC: Fostering Service Registered Manager.

Support Care

You are encouraged to think about your support network to provide assistance to you and the young people you care for by exploring appropriate support.

Such support provides a more consistent approach to looking after children and young people ensuring their care needs are met by somebody known both to them, and the family who is caring for them.

Working in this way helps to provide consistent and regular support such as babysitting, transport, respite and mentoring. BFFC: Fostering Service expects you to explore such opportunities and will support them to do so.

Back up support carers will be assessed in a similar way to main carers and will undergo a brief assessment. Back up support carers will also be expected to provide references and undergo similar checks. Back up support carers will ideally attend the Skills To Foster preparation training.

More information regarding back up support care can be obtained from your Supervising Social Worker.

Television, Gaming and Media

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.

It is your responsibility to supervise children's access to screen images. There are no legal rules or specific departmental guidelines about what are acceptable levels of violence on the screen, other than age certificated content. 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' which is currently 9pm, and film classification systems. Under no circumstances should a child living with you watch a film with a classification greater than their own. However, remember that the classifications 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.

Termination of approval

When you are approved as a BFFC foster carer your details and information relating to your approval status are kept in the form of a register.

If you subsequently decide that you no longer wish to foster, your name will be removed from the foster carer register. It is important for you to know that once you have handed your notice to us in writing it cannot be withdrawn and your approval will automatically be terminated within 28 days’.

There might be times where BFFC: Fostering Service will terminate your approval as a result of a standard of care review, following panel and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decision. Please refer to our Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers policy.

The Management of Concerns and Allegations Against Foster Carers

This section covers what happens when an allegation is made against a foster carer, how the department deals with it and what support the carer should receive.

All allegations, even if they appear trivial, must be taken seriously by the department and dealt with in a way that provides effective protection for the child and supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

The allegation may require consideration from 4 different perspectives:

1. Child Protection Procedures
2. Criminal investigation
3. Fostering Panel Procedures
4. Complaints Procedure

If dealt with under the complaints procedure please refer to the section on complaints which are made against you as this is a separate process to the allegations procedures.

Being the subject of an allegation is one of the most difficult and traumatic things that can happen to a foster carer and having an awareness of the process that is followed by the department may make it easier for carers to understand what is happening. The Fostering Team pays for all its foster carers to be members of The Fostering Network. They are a specialist source of support and advice for foster carers. You should have received an information pack produced by The Fostering Network from your Supervising Social Worker. In that pack, is a leaflet entitled Allegations against Foster Carers. This gives you further details and contact details of the support that The Fostering Network provides. If you do not have one of these please request one from your Supervising Social Worker.

Where the allegation might originate

An allegation against a foster carer could come from a number of sources: from a child within the placement, a child who has left the placement, a professional involved with the child, the parent of a child, or information arising from a complaint investigation.

What happens next?

When a potential concern about a carer arises, it is the responsibility of the member of staff receiving this information to inform both the Children’s Social Work and Fostering Team Managers about this on that day. Managers will look at whether the carer has harmed the child or possibly committed an offence.

If it is decided that the carer has not harmed the child the Fostering Team should deal with any issues arising. This may trigger a Suitability Evaluation in which case a Joint Evaluation Meeting and/or a Standard of Care Review are initiated as appropriate (see below).

If it is believed that the carer has harmed a child the relevant Service Manager and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed. In this situation the Children's Social Work Team Manager and Service Manager for the children should consider any actions that might need to be taken to ensure the immediate protection of the children in placement. The enquiry could take place under the Child Protection procedures if they reach this threshold.

Child Protection:

If the carer lives within the RBC area, an RBC social worker within a Children's Social Work Team leads on the child protection enquiry. They may not be the allocated social worker, or line manager, to add independence. The Service Manager for Access and Assessment should chair a Strategy Meeting (see below). If the carer lives in another Local Authority, the latter progresses the child protection enquiry.

A Strategy Meeting should be held within 24 hours of receiving the enquiry. Other people invited to this meeting are:

- Police
- Child's Social Worker and Manager
- Supervising Social Worker and Manager
- Social Workers for all children in placement.
- Local Authority Designated Officer
- Relevant Health and Education representatives.

The Foster Carers may not be notified immediately, this can take place at any point in the process.

The meeting will plan the enquiries, agree the conclusions and ensure all required actions are taken.

The conclusions could be:

1. The abuse has taken place (the Crown Prosecution Services may or may not be involved)
2. The alleged abuse has not been proven, but concern may remain.
3. There may be Standards of Care issues which need to be addressed.
4. The allegation of abuse was not founded.

Suitability Evaluation

The allegation may not reach the Child Protection threshold but still raises concerns about the care provided. If the information about a carer's behaviour does not require a Strategy Meeting (as per Section 47 of The Children Act), then a Joint Evaluation Meeting (JEM) should be called to formally evaluate the person's suitability to work with children.

This meeting should be called by the Fostering Team Manager and should include the Fostering Team workers involved, the Child's Social Worker and their manager. Advice is obtained from the Local Authority Designated Officer (who may attend). The meeting is chaired by the Fostering Team Manager.

The Joint Evaluation Meeting should be given a similar priority to a Strategy Meeting and follow an agreed agenda format. If actions are identified to assess the concern, a review meeting should take place within 10 working days to reach a conclusion.

Action by the Fostering Team at the conclusion of the enquiry. If the Child Protection process or Joint Evaluation Meeting indicates a Standards of Care concern, the information should be analysed and a

decision reached as to whether an Independent Review of the carer should take place. Any review would be taken to the Foster Panel and a recommendation made to the Agency Decision Maker (usually the Head of Children's Services) about continued use of the carer.

The outcome of the process and reasons should be recorded by the Fostering Team (and LADO) and shared with the carer.

Support

It is recognised that for foster carers, having an allegation made against them is one of the most stressful things that can happen to them.

When carers are informed of the allegation, the Supervising Social Worker will ensure that support is available and that they have access to legal advice. This may be through The Fostering Network.

The Supervising Social Worker will be unable to provide the carers with unconditional support during this time, as they will be involved in the enquiry. The carers will therefore be provided with details of independent support which they can access.

Foster Panel

Whatever the outcome of the investigation, all Standard of Care Reviews are presented to the fostering panel.

The panel can recommend:

1. Children being placed with the carer again
2. Re-assessment of the carer
3. No children being placed with them pending the outcome of the Crown Prosecution Service
4. Termination of approval where there are significant concerns which are serious enough to warrant this.

The final decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker, based on the panel's recommendations.

Referral to Independent Safeguarding Authority

This is a legal duty to refer all cases to the ISA where a carer has had their approval terminated or has resigned whilst a Child Protection or Suitability Evaluation process has been taking place.

Fostering Network Managing Allegations:

https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/public/resources/good-practice-guidance/managing_allegations_services.pdf

Training

Training and development is an important part of fostering. For all foster carers approved by Brighter Futures for Children there is a clear expectation that they will participate in the training offered by BFFC: Fostering Service as fully as possible. This requirement to engage in ongoing training is contained in the Foster Carer Agreement that is agreed and signed by all approved foster carers.

Additionally, all new and existing foster carers are required to complete the TSDS Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care.

Training is provided at a number of levels from preparation to advanced training targeted at specific care roles. All foster carers must attend a number of compulsory training courses including

Safeguarding Children, Paediatric First Aid, Health and Safety, Communicating with Children, Record Keeping, fire safety, Attachment and loss and Delegated Authority.

You can also access the Research in Practice website. More information around accessing Research in Practice can be obtained by your Supervising Social Worker.

Your Supervising Social Worker will provide you with additional information regarding training.

Types of Foster Care

Emergency

When children need somewhere safe to stay at short notice. This may mean that we will only have limited information about the child and his/her background.

Short-term

When foster carers look after children for a few weeks or months, while their plans are made for their future and until permanency has been achieved for the child. This could be adoption, long term fostering, rehabilitation home or moving to family and friends foster carers or special guardians.

Short Breaks for Disabled Children

When disabled children, children with special needs or children with behavioural difficulties regularly stay for a short time with a family, so that their parents can have a break.

Long-term

Not all children who need to permanently live away from their birth family want to be adopted, instead they will be matched with long term foster carers.

Respite

Carers who offer respite care work closely with the main carers of children looked after to provide as much consistency and continuity as possible for the children and young people. They can offer a variety of support including overnight care, babysitting and transport.

Family and Friends foster carers – connected persons

A child who is the responsibility of BfFC goes to live with someone they already know, which usually means family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers, sisters or family friends. Family and friends foster carers apply the same principles of the Fostering Regulations 2011.

Parent and Baby

When a parent and their baby require a foster home and they parenting may require specific support in looking after their baby. This is to inform the child's social worker assessment.