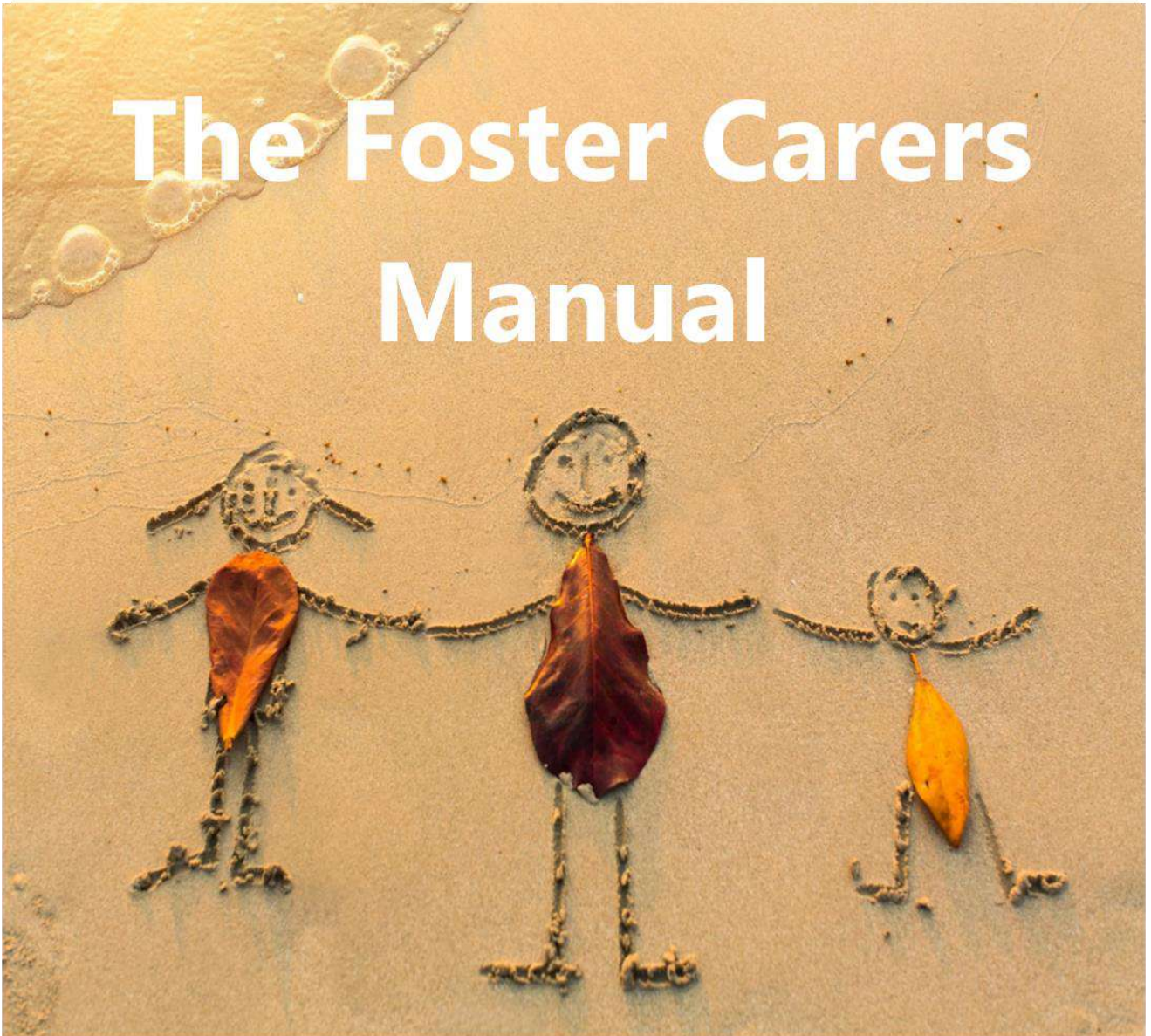




**Suffolk**  
**Fostering & Adoption**

# The Foster Carers Manual



Foster for Suffolk,  
more rewarding than ever

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# SECTION A:

## An Introduction to Fostering



“I enjoy sharing my home and family with incredible young people who have survived”  
- Karen, Foster Carer

.... more rewarding than ever

## An Introduction to Fostering

### **Section A1. Introduction**

Suffolk County Council welcomes you as a foster carer who has been recommended by the County Fostering Panel as suitable to care for children looked after in Suffolk.

To have achieved this, you have demonstrated the necessary personal qualities and commitment and you have satisfied our rigorous vetting and assessment procedures designed to safeguard children.

As a foster carer, you are immensely important and valuable, both within the lives of individual children and within the Suffolk community to providing for the needs of Suffolk's vulnerable children and young people.

You will work as a key member of the team within **Suffolk Fostering Service**.

Other members of the team are: the Head of Service, Practice Managers, Professional Advisors, Consultant Social Workers Supervising Social Workers, Child Care Social Worker and Family Support Workers. A full description of their roles and responsibilities can be found at **Appendix 1**.

The purpose of the Foster Carer Manual is to provide you with information and guidance on fostering issues. The Manual will describe your responsibilities as foster carers and inform you about the policies and procedures you will need to follow.

It will provide you with information about support, training and your own personal development as a foster carer. You will also find some practical advice and guidance for possible situations you may encounter in looking after Suffolk's children and young people.

You should also be familiar with the Foster Carer Charter developed between Suffolk County Council and our foster carers. This Charter makes explicit the roles and responsibilities of both foster carers and Suffolk County Council in providing the best care for the children and young people we look after.

This Manual is intended to provide a framework for your work as a foster carer: it is not in itself an exhaustive account and it is recognised that each child, carer and situation is different. It is intended that this Manual should supplement the advice and support that is available from your Supervising Social Worker, not replace it. It is, therefore, a reference document which you can use to help you provide the best possible care but, if you have any doubts or concerns, please share them with your Supervising Social Worker.

Suffolk County Council Fostering Service is registered under the Fostering Services Regulations (England) 2011 and operates subject to the National Minimum Standards (2011). These are reflected in this handbook of guidance.

Suffolk Fostering Service aims to provide high quality family-based care for children and young people who are unable to live within their own families. The Service

continually strives to be a fostering service that provides quality care for children and young people, so they are able to achieve better outcomes in adult life.

Suffolk Fostering Service is committed to ensuring that anti-discriminatory practice informs all aspects of our work with children, colleagues, foster carers and birth parents, and that placement resources provide equal opportunities of access to all children and young people, irrespective of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality or disability.

The service aims to achieve continuous improvements and deliver best possible outcomes for the widest range of children looked after by our foster carers.

**Suffolk's Promise** for Children in Care sets the standards we expect from everyone working with children and young people who are looked after, or moving on from care to adult life.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/childrens-rights-for-children-and-young-people-in-care/>

We value the work you undertake as foster carers and hope this Manual will help you to provide and maintain a quality service to children and young people.

**Thank you for your hard work, dedication and commitment.**

## Section A2. General Principles

In pursuing the highest standards and quality in the foster care of Suffolk's vulnerable children and young people, it is our view, that there are certain principles that are fundamental. These are expressed in the following list:

- **Safety** - all parties, whether foster carers or professional staff, must be fully vetted to establish their suitability to work safely with children.
- **Matching** - the best placement outcomes will come when the `match` between the child/young person and adult(s) (in terms of readiness to work with particular age groups, ethnicity and presenting difficulty, etc.) has been carefully addressed.
- **Support** - fostering can be an isolating and demanding activity. The need to offer and accept support is essential for the success of the placement and the continued well-being of the foster carers (and, thereby, the young people).
- **Teamwork** - fostering involves a substantial network of people, including family members and professional workers. Everyone needs to be aware of each other's role and how individual roles complement and interact with each other.
- **Liaison** - there needs to be an appropriate flow of communication and information throughout this network.
- **Monitoring** - in the care of Suffolk's vulnerable children and young people, there needs to be, openness to scrutiny, and accountability at each stage in the process.
- **Respect** - All children and adults and young people are entitled to be treated with respect at all times, whatever their differences of culture, gender, religion, race or sexual orientation.
- **Protection** – Children, young people and adults are entitled to be protected from all forms of abuse.

## Section A3. Equal Opportunities

Suffolk County Council's Equal Opportunities Policy informs practice in the areas of child placement, foster carer recruitment and placement supervision. Suffolk's Fostering Service actively opposes any form of discrimination, against any individual or group, on grounds of race, gender, religion disability, age status or sexual orientation. All will be enabled to fulfil their potential as far as is reasonably possible.

In compliance with Suffolk County Council's policy, awareness needs to be taken of the following:

- All children/young people need a positive identity, therefore when a child/young person needs substitute family care, his/her interests may be best served by a placement with a family which promotes his/her own identity in terms of race, culture, religion and language and can therefore help them build a positive sense of their own identify.
- A detailed exploration of applicants' understanding of diversity must be an integral part of the assessment and approval process for foster carers. Foster carers who are unable to demonstrate awareness, understanding and commitment to the needs of children from all racial, cultural and religious backgrounds during the assessment process and throughout their approval with Suffolk's Fostering Service will not be considered appropriate as foster carers for Suffolk County Council.
- All foster carers and staff are expected to attend further training on equality and valuing diversity to up-date their skills and gain knowledge on new legislation and policy. This is part of the continuous, comprehensive training programme offered by Suffolk's Fostering Service and enables its staff and foster carers to value and reflect diversity.

Equality of opportunity and treatment is a core value within Suffolk County Council. Everyone (young people, families, foster carers and staff) is made aware of this core value and required to conduct themselves accordingly. Failure to do so will be met with challenge and the possibility of disciplinary action. Where a matter cannot be resolved `locally` between those individuals directly involved, the matter should be referred to the Head of Adoption & Fostering, who will speak with the parties before determining what further action is required.



## **Section A4. Your Task as a Foster Carer**

As a foster carer you are responsible for the care of a child in care or young person. As a key member of the team, you must ensure that the child or young person's physical and emotional needs are met, that they attend school, college or playgroup, and that their health needs are being addressed.

Fostering is regulated by the Children Act 1989, and by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, which place requirements on both the local authority and individual foster carers. These requirements are covered in the agreements that are signed at the time of your approval (the Foster Carer Agreement) and at the beginning of each placement of a child with you (Placement Plan).

Foster carers are required to renew their Foster Carer Agreement at each Annual Review.

**Included below are some of the many roles and responsibilities you take on as a foster carer.**

- To care for the foster child as outlined in the Foster Carer Agreement and Placement Plan.
- To maintain a safe care environment. This will be discussed and reviewed on a regular basis with your Supervising Social Worker.
- At all times to care for the child/young person with knowledge of, and respect for, that child's racial, cultural, religious and family origins, sexual orientation and disability and to ensure that the child's needs are met in regard to all of these.
- To take the child / young person's views into account in matters of daily living and to ensure that they are able to make choices consistent with your role as a 'reasonable parent'.
- To ensure that you inform Suffolk Fostering Service immediately of any serious illnesses or incidents that involves the child or young person in your care.
- To work with all those involved in the child's life and to contribute to the implementation of the child's/young person's care and placement plans, with due account taken of your delegated authority as a foster carer.
- To attend all meetings concerning the child/young person, as appropriate and to seek to make their views known to the responsible authority.
- To keep records about the child/young person in line with Suffolk Fostering Service recording policy. (See Record Keeping)
- To observe standards of confidentiality concerning any information given or held about the child/young person and his/her family.

- To promote and support contact with the child's/young person's birth family, as agreed in the placement and care plans.
- To work with Suffolk Fostering Service for regular supervision and the Annual Foster Carer Reviews, and to undertake training and development opportunities, where identified as appropriate, in order to develop skills and knowledge.
- To contribute to the child's/young person's 'Life Story' work, by the provision of information and photographs for example.

**With respect to the young person(s) in your care you have a responsibility:-**

- To take a lead role in implementing the young person's care and placement plans.
- To actively promote the young person's healthy growth and development (emotional, social and physical).
- To encourage and support educational progress and achievement.
- To encourage positive understanding of the young person's origins, religion and culture.
- To assist and support the young person to make and maintain appropriate relationships with their birth families.
- To assist in the management of transitions in a positive manner.

**With respect to young people in their environment foster carers have responsibilities:-**

- To keep them safe and free from harm.
- To teach them how to get help in problematic situations.
- To promote their secure attachment to adults capable of offering safe and effective care.
- To act as their advocate.
- To provide them with appropriate friendship and affection.

**Working as Part of a Team**

- To function as an active member of Suffolk Fostering Service team, working with colleagues within the service and beyond, within agency guidelines, policies and procedures.

- To participate fully in all reviews, family meetings, case conferences and court hearings as required.
- To keep accurate written daily records in respect of placements; and contribute to reports.
- To take up appropriate training opportunities and take responsibility for own continuing development.
- To maintain appropriate confidentiality, protecting the privacy of all parties.

This list offers a general overview of your responsibilities. It will be supplemented, on an individual basis, with reference to the specific needs of young people placed with you.

## Section A5. Why Children Become Looked After

There are many reasons why children need to be looked after by foster carers. These reasons do not always mean that the child/young person's family is at fault, or that the child/young person is 'difficult'. These broad categories explain why children need to be cared for by foster carers.

- Some families have periods of instability due to life circumstances: medical conditions, depression, family breakdown, learning difficulties, substance dependency, and families who simply struggle to cope.
- Some children/young people experience harm from family members. Abuse falls into different categories; neglect, physical, sexual, emotional abuse and exposure to domestic violence. In these circumstances, parents have failed to adequately meet the child/young person's basic needs, exposed the child to inappropriate behaviour and/ or risk or have deliberately caused harm to a child/young person.
- Some children/young people with additional needs require foster carers. These children include those who have a severe disability, specific medical needs, learning disabilities or challenging behaviour. Short break care may be for a weekend, a number of weeks or during school holidays to give parents a break from caring.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children who have come to the UK without anyone who has Parental responsibility are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and they do not have the understanding of the complex systems that there are to support them. These young people may have experienced extreme trauma either in their home country or on their journey to the UK, been trafficked or be at risk of being trafficked. While these young people have many similar needs to other children in care, their lack of spoken English and uncertainty about being able to remain in the UK, adds to their vulnerability.

Suffolk County Council offers help and support to children and young people in need and to their families, to enable the child to live happily and safely with their own family. However there are occasions when this is not possible and the local authority must take steps to secure a child's safety.



## **Section A6. The Legal Framework**

Fostering is one of the placement options available to local authorities for looked after children under the Children Act 1989. The act stipulates that the child/young person's welfare is of paramount importance and that wherever possible the child is best cared for within their birth family. However, if a child/young person's welfare has been compromised within the family setting the local authority can move to bring a child or young person into a care setting.

There are two main routes into the 'looked after' system, either on a voluntary basis or through the local authority obtaining a legal order.

### **Accommodation (Children Act 1989, Section 20)**

This is a purely voluntary arrangement between a child's parents and the local authority. Accommodation is a supportive service to help children and families through difficulties; there is no compulsory element to it. Local authorities have a statutory duty to accommodate any child in their area who requires accommodation because:-

- Nobody has parental responsibility (PR) for them, or
- They are lost or abandoned or,
- The people who have been caring for them can no longer do so, temporarily or permanently and for whatever reason.

Accommodation is a service provided by the local authority to help families; it is not intended for the local authority to 'take over' full responsibility for the child. Accommodation only lasts for so long as everyone with PR agrees. As soon as anyone with PR wants the child back, they are entitled to take him/her immediately. This applies even if the parent previously agreed to give notice before removing the child – that agreement is not legally binding. If, however, the removal of the child by his/her parent/s is regarded as being detrimental to the child's welfare, it is possible for the local authority to apply for legal orders as stated below.

### **Power of Police Protection (POPP)**

The Police have powers to provide immediate protection for children for up to 72 hours if they have reason to believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm if they are not removed from home and cared for in a place of safety.

A Power of Police Protection does not remove parental responsibility and the child should have contact with their parents if it is felt to be appropriate and in their interests. The order cannot be extended. In many situations the child's parents will be asked to agree to Section 20 Accommodation if it is thought the child should remain looked after.

If however, Suffolk County Council consider it necessary to secure legal orders in order to protect a child's welfare once a child has been made the subject of Police Protection, the following orders can be pursued:

## **Emergency Protection Orders (EPO)**

Unlike Police, social workers cannot remove children without court authority. To take emergency action, they must apply for an EPO presenting evidence to the court to justify their application. In exceptional circumstances the Court may proceed without the parents even knowing about the application.

EPOs last for up to eight days, with one possible extension of a further seven days. The local authority obtains PR, shared with the parent (s) but with the local authority as 'senior partner'. This means the local authority decides where the child lives for the duration of the order. EPO's are intended for unforeseen emergencies and are not used where there are long standing concerns for a child.

## **Interim Care Orders (ICO)/Care Orders (CO)**

Local authorities have the option of initiating care proceedings within the Family Proceedings Court. The local authority is expected to have completed assessments of the children's needs and capacity of their parent(s) and family to meet these before starting care proceedings. The Courts require care proceedings to be concluded with 26 weeks. The Interim Care Order must be renewed every 28 days.

If on conclusion of the care proceedings the court believes the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm or that their welfare is not being promoted or the child/young person is beyond parental control and through the making of an order it will assist the child/young person, then a Care Order will be granted.

Any order that a court makes needs to consider the welfare checklist –

- The wishes and feelings of the child, appropriate to age and understanding.
- The child/young person's physical, emotional and educational needs.
- The likely effect on the child/young person of any changes of circumstances.
- The child/young person's age, gender, background and any other relevant characteristics.
- Any harm suffered by the child/young person or the likelihood of future harm.
- How capable a parent or any relevant adult is of meeting the child/young person's needs.

A Care Order can last until a young person is 18 years old; or until an Adoption, SGO, Supervision 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.

## Parental Responsibility

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child/young person has by law. People other than the child/young person's birth parents can acquire parental responsibility through: -

- Being granted a Child Arrangement order (formerly Residence Orders)
- Being granted a Special Guardianship Order
- Adoption
- A local authority obtaining a legal order (EPO, ICO or CO)

Within the framework of an EPO/ICO/CO, parental rights and responsibilities for a child are shared to varying degrees, (depending on the agreement, facilitated by the court), between the local authority (and therefore foster carers acting on their behalf ) and the parents.

Parents or other family members are not able to remove a child/young person from the care of the local authority without the local authority's consent. The local authority has a duty to promote contact with those who are deemed to be significant to the child/young person. In the event that contact needs to be terminated in the child/young person's best interest, it can only be stopped with good reason by the local authority for a period of 7 days, before having to return to court for an order which prohibits contact [34 (4)].

## Other Orders

### Section 8 Orders

These orders are normally made in private law proceedings, such as within divorce hearings, but they are available to the courts in considering the welfare of a child/young person.

#### There are 4 aspects of a Section 8 order

- **Child Arrangement Order (formerly Residence Order )** - This determines where the child/young person will live and with whom and gives parental responsibility to those who are named in the order. It does not remove parental responsibility from those who had it prior to the order being made. The child/young person's name cannot be changed without agreement from all parties and the child/young person cannot live outside of the UK for more than one month without the written permission of all those with parental responsibility or the leave of the court.
- **Contact Order** - This names the people with whom the child/young person should have contact. It can stipulate expectations such as the frequency, venue and duration.

- **Prohibited Steps Order** - This specifies the action that cannot be taken without the permission of the court. This could include not allowing arrangements to be made to allow a child to reside outside of the UK.
- **Specific Issues Order** - This order can be made in isolation or in conjunction with a Child Arrangement Order, Contact Order, or SGO. It provides directions in respect to a specific issue that has or could arise, such as a child should attend a particular school.

### **Special Guardianship Order**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced a completely new court order, Special Guardianship, intended to provide another option for legal permanence for children/young people who cannot grow up with their birth families.

A Special Guardianship Order gives the special guardian legal parental responsibility for the child/ young person which is expected to last until the child is 18.

In practice, this means that the child is no longer the responsibility of the local authority, and the special guardian will have clear responsibility for all day-to day decisions about caring for the child or young person, and for taking important decisions about their upbringing, for example their education. Of particular significance is the fact that although birth parents retain their legal parental responsibility, the special guardian only has to consult with them about these decisions in exceptional circumstances.

### **Regulation of the Fostering Service**

Fostering agencies are governed the Fostering Services Regulations (England) 2011. Acts and regulations lay down the law and the Suffolk Fostering Service have a responsibility to keep up to date when new statutes and regulations come into force. Where there are regulatory changes to the way in which the fostering service assesses, approves and reviews foster carers we will let you know through newsletters, e-mails, letters and discussion with your supervisory social worker.

The Department for Education (DfE) in England also sets the National Minimum Standards for fostering. These are not mandatory like the Acts or Regulations but they are authoritative guidance on good practice. Suffolk Fostering Service is inspected against these standards by Ofsted as part of the single inspection of Children and Young People's Services.



## SECTION B:

# The Foster Carer and the Child



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## The Foster Carer and the Child

### **Section B1. Safer Caring**

[Please refer to the **Individual Risk Assessment** and **Safer Caring Policy Forms** at the end of this section; plus **Safer Caring: A New Approach (Fostering Network)**]

As a foster carer you have a duty to provide safety and security for the young person(s) in your care. This refers to both physical safety and emotional security. Fundamental to all of this is the creation and maintenance of a consistent, reliable, predictable and safe environment. Stability and consistency in the individual's external world are precursors to the development of stability and consistency in the individual's internal world and to the development of a stable sense of self.

Safer caring is about protecting the foster child and the foster family in all aspects of day-to-day life. Safer caring aims to ensure that a child/young person is cared for in a way that makes them feel secure and safe in any situation. Safer Caring is about recognising that each child/ young person comes with a different background and life experience and therefore there is a need for foster carers to adapt to each situation as the need arises.

Everything that we do within Suffolk Fostering Service is about providing the highest level of safe care for Suffolk's vulnerable children and young people. To this end Safer Caring will be regularly discussed, reviewed and updated during supervision with your SSW.

The objectives of safer caring practices are to keep everyone in the fostering household safe from abuse. Promoting a healthy balance between the need to keep all members of the foster family safe from abuse or allegations, whilst provide the child or young person with a nurturing, loving environment.

**How to create a safer environment for children and foster carers around the home.**

#### **Bathrooms**

Encourage children/young people to have privacy in the bathroom according to their age and development. Supervise personal bath time tasks only when required. When the foster carer is bathing the child, the bathroom door should never be locked and preferably left slightly open. Ensure your own privacy and that of your own children when using the bathroom.

#### **Bedrooms**

Children/young in our care may have experienced abuse in the bedroom and foster carers will therefore, need to be extra sensitive to their fears. Again what would otherwise be considered as normal bedtime care for this reason may be misconstrued.

Foster carers need to encourage children/young people to respect each other's private space. They should understand that it is not acceptable to wander into someone else's room. Never use your bedroom as a place for discussion or comfort for foster children because of the mixed messages this can create and the possibility of allegations.

### **Dress/Clothing**

Foster carers and their families need to ensure that they dress appropriately in front of foster children at all times. No member of the household should walk around in underwear and foster carers should make sure that all members of the household and foster children have a dressing gown as well as appropriate nightwear.

Children should change their clothing in their bedroom or bathroom.

### **Showing Affection**

People have different ways of showing affection, and you need to be aware not to impose your way on others.

Be aware that touch may have meant something other than affection to a child/young person in the past. Some young people may not understand that when you try to show them physical affection this is not intended as a prelude to sexual activity.

Children/young people need to give and receive affection but special care may need to be taken. A safe rule to follow is that no one touches another person's body without that person's permission. Children/young people therefore need to be taught by a caring adult to say 'no' if they do not want to be touched.

### **Photos, Videos, Films, Mobiles, Electronic Games and Telephones**

Always make sure children and young people watch only age appropriate videos and DVDs, and games. Foster carers should use the watershed guidance and other guidance.

Foster carers need to be aware that some foster children might have been subjected to abuse through photographic and/or video activity. Therefore foster carers should get the child/young person's permission if they wish to take his/her photo. Foster carers should also let the child/ young people know when they are taking photos and who will see them.

Photographs of looked after children should never be posted on social media websites or any other public domain. In all cases foster carers should discuss the taking of photographs and videos with the child/young person's social worker at the start of a placement.

No child/young person should ever be photographed or filmed undressed or in the bath.

Often children and young people will be involved in activities both within the school environment as well as individual activities such as scouts, football etc. Occasionally this generates a level of interest from local media for photographs, write ups and the insertion of names. Request for photos and additional information to be placed in local

papers needs to be addressed by the Supervising Social Worker with the Child/young person's social worker for permission prior to the entry of such information. An appropriate response to these requests could be agreed at a child's Placement Planning Meeting, or Child's Review and delegated to the foster carer.

### **The Internet and social networking sites**

Most families have internet devices and there is increasing use of the Internet. The Internet can be a positive tool for learning and development but there are also threats. Foster carers need to be alert to the fact that some adults do inappropriately access children/young person's websites.

Communicating with your child/young person and setting boundaries is part of keeping them safe on line. If you have a computer in a communal place rather than a bedroom it is much easier for you to know what is going on.

Be aware of what they are doing. Get computer literate. The best teachers are probably the children and young people themselves; that way you will know the sites they visit. It is important to discuss potential dangers with the children and young people you care for in a way that they are able to recognise the dangers. Inform young people of the following points:

- Never give out personal details on line.
- Never meet someone without your permission.
- Never accept e-mails from strangers as these could contain viruses.
- Do not assume people are giving reliable information as people do tell lies on line and may not be who they say they are.
- Always tell their foster carer if someone or something makes them feel uncomfortable.

**If you are concerned about a young person's internet use or a connection they may have made you should discuss this immediately with your Supervision Social Worker.**

Children may be accessing the internet in a variety of ways including via smartphones, tablets and gaming consoles that allow online connections. Foster carers need to manage these new technologies to keep children and young people safe. There are several ways that parental controls can be activated on internet devices and routers.

Suffolk Fostering Service has a contract with an IT company to provide IT support and online safety advice to all foster carers. They can install Parental Controls and anti-virus packages on smart phones, tablets, online gaming consoles and laptops. JC Computers have agreed that they will provide online safety support and advice to any computer device within the fostering household which a looked after child/young person may have access to.



To ensure that any confidential information saved onto the computers that the Fostering Service loans to carers is secure, carers are advised that they should not dispose of the old or unused equipment themselves. JC Computers can be contacted and arrangements made for them to collect and safely dispose of any IT equipment according to SCC policy.

If a carer ceases to be a foster carer, all equipment **MUST** be returned to Suffolk County Council either directly or, in the case of computers, via JC Computers.

### **Computer Contract contact details:**

JC Computer Technologies Ltd, The Old Station, Ashwellthorpe Industrial Estate, Norwich  
NR16 1ER Telephone: 01508 488119

### **Baby / child-sitters**

Foster carers need to discuss with their Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker any people you would like to baby-sit or look after children/young people for you. It is essential that any person who looks after a child that you are fostering on a regular basis has had appropriate checks. This may mean a criminal record check through the DBS system that can take several weeks to arrange.

In the placement plan, issues such as baby sitting may be planned for by using Delegated Authority (see SCC Delegated Authority Policy).

You must never leave a child or young person with **ANYONE**, or **ALONE**, in your home without discussing it with your SSW or Suffolk Fostering Service out of hours, on call, social worker (FOOHAS).

It is suggested that there is a minimum age of 18 for any person babysitting for a child in care and any exceptions to this must be discussed with your supervising social worker.

### **Diversity and Safer Care**

The needs of children, young people and foster carers, arising from diversity within race, religion and culture, require careful consideration.

Respect of individuals' practices and identifying their needs comes through working alongside Supervising Social Workers and others to identify relevant cultural practices. Foster carers need to ensure that they consider their own attitudes to these issues when drawing up their safe caring guidelines and discuss the individual needs of each child/young person placed with the child's social worker.

### **Children with a disability**

Foster carers providing placements for children with disabilities often need to pay particular attention to the personal needs of the child/young person. The possible need

for intimate personal care will have major implications for the child/ young person and the foster carer. The child/ young person may find it hard to distinguish in these situations between different types of touch and the foster carer may consequently be more vulnerable to allegations.

### **Managing Sexually Overt Behaviour**

Children and young people who come into foster care may have been subjected to differing levels of abuse and these may be reflected in their behaviours.

It could be that a child/young person placed with you will behave in a sexualised way either inside or outside your home. For example, a child /young person may rub their body against an adult or another child/young person. Tell the child/young person directly that no-one in your family will want to touch them in ways that are inappropriate or will touch them without permission.

You can explain to a child/young person that it is fine for them to touch their own body but you should go on to discuss boundaries, i.e. that this should be done in private.

### **Car Seats**

Children aged up to and including 11 years are required by law to travel with a child car seat or booster seat/cushion until they are about four feet five

### **Child's Weight and Approximate Age**

Up to 13kgs (approximately birth to 9 to 12 months) A rear facing baby seat that can be used in the front or rear of the car.

**DO NOT** use a passenger seat fitted with an active front airbag. In some vehicles, it may be possible to switch off the airbag – check the handbook.

Keep babies in rear facing baby seat as long as possible. Move the child up to the next car seat when they have reached the weight limit of their baby seat or when the child's head can no longer be contained fully within the baby seat. Don't be tempted to move to a forward facing seat simply because the child's feet are pressing against the adult seat back.

### **9-18kgs (approximately 9 months to 4 years)**

A forward facing child car seat with integral harness that can be used in the front or rear of the car.

### **15-25kgs (approximately 4 to 6 years)**

A forward facing booster seat which can be used in the front or rear of the car and which is designed to raise the child so they can use an adult seat belt safely across both their chest and pelvis.

**22-36kgs (approximately 6 to 11 years inclusive – up to 135cms in height approx. 4'5")**

A forward facing booster cushion which can be used in the front or the rear of the car and which is designed to raise the child so they can use an adult seat belt safely across both their chest and pelvis. In many cases booster seats can be converted to booster cushions as the child develops.

Foster carers will also need to consider the appropriateness of transporting children/young people alone in a car. It can be a good way of giving a child the opportunity to have one-to-one contact because it is often easier to talk without eye contact. However, a child who has, or may have been abused might feel unsafe alone in a car with an adult. A safer rule is if the foster carer has to travel alone with a child/young person then the child/young person should sit in the back of the car, diagonal to the foster carer.

## Example Forms

### Pre-Admission Risk Assessment form:

A pre-admission risk assessment including the current control measures to deal with identified risks **MUST** be completed in all cases before each new child may be introduced to any Placement provided by or on behalf of Suffolk County Council. This accords with National Minimum Care Standards and the associated regulations.

The responsibility for the content and accuracy of the information provided lies, as far as is reasonably practicable, with the **admitting Social Worker**, who is also reminded of their personal and the County Council's responsibility under various legislation including the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work 1999 and County Council's Health & Safety Policy.

**NB** This form is designed to be completed electronically.

The notes column will expand automatically.

Wherever risk is indicated, control measures must be agreed and recorded in the last section of this form.

**Level:** 0 = Shows no sign of this risk

1 = Rarely shows signs of this risk

2 = Sometimes shows signs of this risk

3 = Regularly shows signs of this risk

No	Behaviour	Yes/ No	Level	What action needs to be taken to manage the behaviour / risks?	Who is responsible?	Actions completed	
						By	Date
1	Suicide threats or attempts						
2	Self-harming behaviours						
3	Medical condition which may affect behaviour						
4	High risk medical condition (eg: Asthma)						
5	Eating disorders (eg: Anorexia, Bulimia, etc)						
6	History of violence towards children (inc. triggers)						
7	History of violence towards adults (inc. triggers)						

8	History of violence towards animals (inc. triggers)						
9	Has child had any martial arts training? If yes detail.						
<b>No</b>	<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>What action needs to be taken to manage the behaviour / risks?</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Actions completed</b>	
10	Sexual relationships with others						
11	Sexualised behaviour						
12	Fire setting						
13	Bullying others						
14	Destruction of property						
15	Drugs, solvent and/or alcohol misuse e.g. Does the young person smoke cigarettes.						
16	Criminal behaviour						
17	History of being 'missing from care and/or home						
18	Discriminatory behaviour						
19	Other risk and need for supervision						

Signed: ..... Social Worker  
 Signed: ..... Receiving Carer

Date



Foster Carer Name(s):

**Foster Family Safer Caring Policy (part A)**

The names you use

Language

Bedrooms

Bedtime

Bathroom

The way we dress

Showing affection

Personal space

Playing	
Safety in our home (stair gates / fireguards/ cooking / hot drinks etc.)	
Travelling by car	
Going out: babysitters- child- minders	
Taking photos/videos	
Watching TV/videos/DVD's	
Sorting out differences	
Managing behaviours	
Confidentiality and secrets	
Pets	
Any other things that anyone in the family want to include:	
<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

Foster Carer Name(s):	
<b>Foster Family Safer Caring Policy (part B)</b>	
Intimate relationships: Do you currently have a sexual relationship & if so how do you ensure your privacy to protect any children in placement?	
Does anyone else in the household have sexual relationships & if yes how do you ensure their privacy?	
If you keep erotic materials i.e. magazines, sex toys, DVD's etc. how do you ensure looked after children do not have access to these?	
If you access pornography through TV channels or through the internet how do you ensure that looked after children do not have access to this?	
Are there any young people / other adults in the household who might be accessing pornography or have adult materials? If yes how do you protect looked after children from exposure?	
<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

## **Section B2. Child Protection (CP)**

**CHILD PROTECTION:** *'Process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect'.*

### **All Suffolk County Council foster carers and staff will:**

- Be alert to known and potential vulnerabilities in children/young people.
- Undertake all reasonable steps to safeguard children and young people.
- Take any necessary and reasonable steps to avert preventable harm.
- Be aware of policy and procedures and attend appropriate training when required.

### **Practice**

#### **1) All staff and foster carers must hold in mind at all times:**

- Some children/young people will have been abused. Abuse can occur anywhere, including a foster placement.
- Abuse can be perpetrated by young people or by adult authority figures.
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- Any suspicion must be reported to inform a possible investigation.
- Any allegation must be taken seriously and correct procedures followed at all times.
- Foster carers must be familiar with Suffolk County Council's child protection procedures as well as the relevant legislation, regulations and guidance including *Working Together to Safeguard Children* 2013 and 2015

#### **2) Children and young people must be:**

- Given clear information (and contact details) about whom to approach with any concerns.
- Listened to sensitively and empathically, without recourse to leading` or intrusive questions.
- Advised as to the steps which will follow from disclosure and assured of continuing support.

## Categories of Abuse

*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013* specifies four categories:

- **Sexual abuse** - where a young person is drawn into, or compelled into, sexual behaviour which on grounds of age is inappropriate and where consent cannot reasonably be deemed to have been given.
- **Physical abuse** - where beatings, assaults, poisonings, etc. inflict or may inflict actual bodily harm.
- **Emotional abuse**- where a child/young person self-esteem or sense of self is actively and persistently undermined by psychological means (denigration, humiliation, etc.)
- **Neglect** - where there is failure to nurture and nourish a child/young person; failure to protect them from harm, from hunger or from cold; and these failures result in impaired development.

All forms of abuse incorporate some degree of emotional abuse. Where there is any doubt about whether a young person has or has not been abused, foster carers should talk immediately to their Supervising Social Worker.

## Recognising the Signs of Abuse

### Child Abuse - Signs and Symptoms

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child/young person has been abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

### Sexual Abuse

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child/ young person's age
- Medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals, venereal diseases.
- Extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging
- Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating



- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a babysitter or child minder
- Starting to wet again, day or night/ nightmares
- Become worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; over-reacting to criticism

### **Physical Abuse**

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Refusal to undress for gym
- Bald patches
- Chronic running away
- Fear of medical help or examination
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched
- Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive (such as a child being beaten to 'make him study')
- Fear of suspected abuser being contacted

### **Emotional Abuse**

- Physical, mental and emotional development lags
- Sudden speech disorders

- Continual self-depreciation ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc.')
- Overreaction to mistakes
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Inappropriate response to pain ('I deserve this')
- Neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, self-mutilation)
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

### **Neglect**

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation
- Untreated medical problems
- No social relationships
- Compulsive scavenging
- Destructive tendencies

**Note:** A child may be subjected to a combination of different kinds of abuse. It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone.

### **Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board**

Suffolk's Safeguarding Children Board is an interdisciplinary, inter-agency forum established under the Children Act 2004 to oversee all arrangements for the safety and well-being of children in Suffolk. Suffolk's Safeguarding Children Board has produced child protection policies which all professionals are duty bound to follow.

### **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

LADOs are located within Children's Services and must be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child/young person

- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child/young person
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The LADO role applies to paid, unpaid, volunteers, casual, agency or anyone self-employed and they capture concerns, allegations or offences emanating from outside of work. The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case. The LADO helps co-ordinate information-sharing with the right people and will also monitor and track any investigation, with the aim of resolving it as quickly as possible.

All allegations made against foster carers are notified to the LADO.

Every fostering service has a dedicated person, who is a senior manager, who is responsible for managing allegations. This person has responsibility for liaising with the LADO and for keeping the subject of the allegation informed of progress during and after the investigation.

The Head of Fostering and Adoption Service is the senior manager with this responsibility in Suffolk.

### **Outcomes of LADO meeting(s)**

At the final meeting (which may be the only one held) the LADO will decide upon the outcome of the concern. The outcome will be one of the following:

- **Substantiated** – there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated** – this is not the same as a false allegation. It means there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded** – There is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.
- **Malicious** – There is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.

### **Procedures**

1. Wherever anyone suspects child abuse, it is his or her duty to report the matter. Investigation is the responsibility and duty (where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion) of the local authority where the foster placement is or where the abuse occurred. Where serious abuse is suspected, the Police will be involved in a joint investigation.

2. All Suffolk Fostering Service Staff know the procedures for reporting abuse.

**3. Role of the Supervising Social Worker:**

- to ensure that child protection issues are regularly discussed with foster carers.
- to monitor and supervise the regular recording of day-to-day life by the foster carers.
- to maintain his/her own record of visits/ supervisions, with summary accounts and analysis.
- to respond immediately to allegations or concerns about child abuse.
- to assess the situation and discuss this with the Consultant Social Worker /Practice Manager, recording all steps.
- to attend safeguarding meetings where appropriate

Foster carers receiving an allegation or who become aware of possible abuse will immediately inform their Supervising Social Worker, Duty Social Worker, FOOHAS.

**They will take care to:**

- listen carefully to what the child/young person says, without `leading`, and clarifying as necessary.
- record this accurately and as soon as possible.
- be mindful of the child/young person's needs, including reassurance.
- seek immediate medical attention, where that is required, making explicit to the attending doctor their relationship to the young person and any suspicions held.

**The Supervising Social Worker will inform:**

- The Practice Manager or Head of Adoption & Fostering and decide jointly who is to be informed.
- The child/young person's social worker to agree the process to be followed, including informing the parent(s) if appropriate

Where the abuse has occurred outside of Suffolk, Suffolk and the other local authority concerned will confer to agree who will lead the investigation.

### The lead authority will then:

- collate all information.
- initiate any necessary enquiries.
- decide how and whether to proceed on the above information.
- advise the referring staff of the decision and its rationale.

Where the allegations are against another child/young person in the placement, the above procedures should be followed. However, the Supervising Social Worker will also work closely with the Child Care social workers to:

- agree what immediate action needs to be taken to ensure the safety of all children/young person in the placement and to assess the risk.
- arrange most appropriate interviews for both parties.

### Types of Meeting

- **Strategy Meeting** - This is an early discussion convened by the child care social work team and involving all relevant parties, including the Police to determine the nature and scope of any investigation and each agency's responsibility.
- **Initial Child Protection Conference** - The Initial Child Protection Conference brings together the relevant child protection specialists with those who work closely with the young person and his/her family. It will decide the degree of risk to the child, the necessary child protection plan and whether or not there is need to register the child.
- **Child Protection Review Conference** - The Child Protection Review Conference will review progress of the child protection plan, monitor and assess continuing risk and whether or not there is continuing need for registration.
- **Child Protection Plan** - Where the allegation is against a foster carer or staff member, the above procedure should be followed. However, The Head of Adoption & Fostering will also decide what internal action is required to enable swift and effective investigation, protection of the child and of the foster carer or staff member.

### Possible actions include:

- immediate suspension of foster carer or member of staff.
- removal of member of staff to other duties.
- continuing as is.



- immediate invoking of disciplinary procedures.

Foster carers or members of staff who are suspended, or otherwise implicated in a child protection investigation, will be supported as appropriate, including independent counselling where necessary.

It is possible that a situation might arise where there is insufficient evidence to support criminal proceedings, but there is sufficient evidence to establish that abuse has occurred, or on the balance of probability it is likely to have occurred. In such cases, depending on the nature of the abuse, the foster carer or member of staff may be:

- dismissed or deregistered in line with fostering panel procedures and regulations.
- made subject of disciplinary proceedings.
- given a written warning.
- Supported to make necessary changes to ensure future safety of any placements

Depending on circumstance, disciplinary procedures may or may not run concurrently with a child protection investigation.

The Fostering Panel should be informed of all cases of suspected or actual child abuse involving Suffolk Fostering Service foster carers or children placed with foster carers as soon as possible. Please also see **Section G4**.

### **Safe recruitment practices**

Suffolk Fostering Service carries out enhanced DBS Checks for all foster carers. Additional checks and references are also taken up including local authority & child protection checks; independent personal, ex-partner and employer references; probation and health checks. All referees are contacted directly by the Suffolk Fostering Service Assessing Social Worker.

### **Useful Publications (available from DfE website)**

- “*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015*” at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419595/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf)
- “*What to do if you are worried a Child is being abused*” at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419604/What\\_to\\_do\\_if\\_you\\_re\\_worried\\_a\\_child\\_is\\_being\\_abused.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf)
- “*Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education*” at <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/Safeguarding%20Children%20Guidance.pdf>

**More information about Child Protection procedures and '*what to do if you are concerned about a child*' is available on the Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board website: <http://www.suffolkscb.org.uk/>**

<http://www.suffolkscb.org.uk/procedures/lscb-policies-guidance-and-protocols/>

## **Section B3. Social Networking and Facebook (social media)**

*(Information provided by The Fostering Network)*

### **What is social networking?**

Social networking is a term that is used to describe some of the ways in which people communicate online via their internet devices.

Social networking has become the way in which many teenagers and young adults organise their lives and the way they keep in contact with their friends. Preventing young people from engaging with social networking sites marks them out as different to their peers and leaves them behind, as well as excluding them from social activities and friendship groups.

Facebook and other social media sites like Twitter, Bebo, Whatsapp do not exist independently of young people's 'real' lives. Young people will use it, for example, to share their holiday photos, arrange to meet up at the weekend or to invite friends to a party.

Here is information about Facebook but there are many other similar sites and applications that children and young people may access.

### **Who can use Facebook?**

Anyone with an email address can join. Facebook requires users to be a minimum of 13 years old, if they are under that age it is legitimate to stop them having a profile. However, it is increasingly the case that children under 13 are using Facebook and it is therefore important that all adults understand how it works and what can be done to ensure it is used safely.

### **What about confidentiality?**

Being aware of issues of confidentiality on social networking sites is important. Considering ahead of time the implications of posting photographs of yourself and/or fostered children on Facebook is essential.

### **What can I do to protect our privacy?**

Facebook has a number of privacy settings. These allow you to decide who can see what on your Facebook pages, and they are very easy to set using the privacy button. These are worth reviewing and exploring and setting up.

It is worth remembering that even if you have the strongest privacy settings, once material is published it could be shared by an online friend and be very hard to erase

### **Should I let children and young people I care for use social networks?**

Social networking is now a part of modern life, it will be very difficult to prevent young people from using Facebook – many will be able to access it at friends' houses or even on their mobile phone. Preventing them from taking part in social networking could

lead to them feeling different from their peers. Our task as adults is to help them explore the positive of social networking whilst keeping safe.

Foster carers and social workers need to understand the role of social networking in the same way that parents and others who work with children/young people.

## **Contact**

Social networks such as Facebook can appear to threaten carefully designed contact arrangements. For instance, a child's care plan may state that they are to have no contact at all with particular members of their family or there could be a no contact order. Foster carers and social workers must be clear with the children and young people in care about the possibility of being contacted by unsafe people and what they must do if they are contact via any social networking sites, or in any other way. This needs to be part of the dialogue that you and the social worker has with the child in your care about contact generally. Contact issues should be addressed at every child's review and a comprehensive and detailed safe contact plan, which includes how to manage social networking, put in place for those children for whom this is necessary.

## **Cyber Bullying**

Social network sites can be used as a tool for bullying amongst children and young people. This can involve a number of people sending abusive or intimidating messages to an individual, or posting threats on their wall.

As with any form of bullying, cyber bullying can be traumatic and isolating for the individual.

Encourage those in your care to be open with you about their relationships with their peers and be aware of changes in their behaviour that may suggest they are being bullied. Keeping the computer in a communal area will also help you keep an eye on things.

If a child or young person in your care is being bullied, remind them that can block and 'de-friend' those that are bullying them. If necessary, they can close their account and set up a new one which they keep more private. Encourage them not to respond to abusive messages. Some schools treat cyber-bullying as a school matter, so do contact them to see if they can offer support.

## **Social Networking and 'Grooming'**

Often, adults who want to engage children in sexual acts, or talk to them for sexual gratification will seek out young people who desire friendship. Social networking sites offer a route for them to target young people. They will often use a number of grooming techniques including; building trust with the child through lying; creating different personas and then attempt to engage the child in more intimate forms of communication including compromising a child with the use of images and webcams. Child sex abusers will often use blackmail and guilt as methods of securing a meeting with the child.

Children and young people in foster care may be particularly vulnerable to approaches from strangers or people they hardly know online because of their past experiences. This will be especially true if they feel isolated from their peers. They may lack normal boundaries.

Being open with them about the potential dangers and supportive of attempts to improve their social skills will help and in some cases this will need to be very carefully monitored to prevent a vulnerable child from being 'groomed'

### **The Panic Button**

Recently a 'panic' button' has been developed by the Child Exploitation and on line Protection Centre (CEOP), which can be installed on any Facebook profile. The panic button is an application aimed at children and teenagers that allows them to easily report suspected abuse to the CEOP and Facebook.

The application has to be added by the user themselves, even if they are under 18. Go to <https://apps.facebook.com/clickceop/> to find out more and install the app. You need to be aware of this and to ensure that the application has been installed and set up.

### **Terminology**

There are a number of terms specific to Facebook, including:

- **Poke** - A feature that allows users to attract the attention of another user.
- **Like** - Users can indicate to that they like something, ranging from a friend's status update to a new song.
- **Status** - A short piece of text users have on their profile usually to update their friends as to what they are doing and how they are feeling.
- **Tag** - To tag someone in a photo means to link their name to it, so it will appear on their profile that they are featured in a picture. Users can 'un-tag themselves from photos.
- **Friend Request** - When someone wants to be your online friend, you will be sent an email asking you to confirm you wish to be friends with them. If you do not know them or do not wish to be friends you can reject the request and they are not informed.
- **Block** - Users can block other users, removing them from their online friend list.
- **News Feed** - A service on a user's page that shows updates about their friends' activity.
- **Instant** - This is where you can have conversations over the internet, Messaging with friends and family. These conversations can be typed voice



chats or even video messaging. Instant messaging allows you to talk to more than one person at a time.

**Foster carers also need to give consideration to their own use of social media sites** such as Facebook and Twitter. For example, they should not discuss a child or young person they are caring for on these mediums and should not post photographs that include the child. Foster carers should check that their friends and family also do not do so.

They should also be aware that negative commentary or inappropriate online behaviour could result in an investigation to re-assess their suitability to foster. If there is any uncertainty about what is acceptable use of social media, this should be discussed with the supervising social worker.

### **Help and Information**

**Suffolk County Council has an e-Safety website** that gives practical e-safety advice, information and guidance; helping you make the most of the opportunities and reduce the risks of using the internet. There is also advice about what to do if you if you are worried that a child, young person or adult might be at risk online.  
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/staying-safe-online/e-safer-suffolk/>

**More Information about online security and other social media platforms etc.** can be found at The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) which is the UK's national centre for online child protection.  
<https://ceop.police.uk/>

**Advice and guidance** for foster carers and children can be found on CEOP's 'Thinkuknow' web pages:  
<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

There are specific 'Thinkuknow' webpages for children of different ages:  
5-7 / 8-10 / 11-13/ 14+

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

## Section B4. Dealing with Disclosures

### Dealing with Disclosures

Foster carers will be fully aware that many children and young people who are looked after may have been abused. Be aware that the details, type and frequency of the abuse may not be known to the child's social worker. It is common for looked after children to share their abusive experiences as they become more settled in their placements. Even where previous abuse is known about a young person may make new disclosures of abuse. This highlights the need for safer caring and the importance of listening and giving your foster child/young person opportunities to talk. They may start to talk to you at any time about abuse they have suffered. If this happens there are some important things to remember:

- Listen - Do not ask the child/young person for more information or question or prompt them in any way. Be sensitive to their needs and do not put words into their mouth. Keep listening.
- Let the child/young person know you are taking what they say very seriously. Do not leave them with the impression that you are not interested.
- Do not promise to keep anything secret.
- Explain that you will have to tell your supervising social worker and their social worker about the allegation to make sure they are safe.
- Make it clear to the child/young person that you will support them through what has happened.
- Contact Suffolk Fostering Service - Remember there is help available 24 hours a day from FOOHAS.
- Keep your foster child/young person informed of what's happening and keep listening.
- Record what you have been told as accurately as possible in your daily logbook.
- Do not discuss what the child/young person has told you with anybody else.

You may well need to talk to someone yourself as it can be extremely distressing to hear details of abuse that your foster child has experienced. Ask your Supervising Social Worker for support if you need it.

## **Section B5. Handling Allegations and Suspicions of Harm**

### **How to Deal with Allegations**

Everything we do within Suffolk Fostering Service is about providing the highest level of safe care to Suffolk's vulnerable children and young people. We work as a team to achieve the best outcomes possible for children. Nevertheless, some foster children will make allegations.

A child/young person might make a link between their current foster carers and something that happened in their past, even though the event took place before the child was with the foster carers and involved different people.

Some children/young people make allegations as a way of trying to regain control over their lives.

Children/young people who are unhappy sometimes say they have been abused as a way of getting away from the foster home.

Children/young people can misinterpret an innocent action, such as a comforting arm around their shoulder.

Children/young people are sometimes abused by their foster carer and make disclosures to other professionals.

**Reducing the risk of false allegations.** (Please also see **Section C3**)

### **Foster Carers' Log Sheets**

Part of your work as a foster carer is to keep a daily record of the events in the life of your foster child/ young people. This will help to provide clear and useful information for the child in later life. It might also help to protect children/young person in your care, and help safeguard family members from false allegations.

Your log sheets should identify how you have used and put into place you safer caring practices. Always be open and honest not only when completing your log sheets but also with your Supervising Social Worker, who is also accountable for logging a record of meetings and telephone conversations in your files and that of the child.

### **What to include.....**

You should record any event which has, or could have, an effect on the well-being or safety of any member of the foster family, including the foster child/young person. Make a note of the following:

- Children/young person achievements.
- Any significant changes – good or bad – in the child's behaviour.
- Any significant changes in the child/young person health.

- Medical or dental appointments.
- Any medicine given, prescribed or otherwise.
- Any bruises, scratches, wounds, sores, lumps, infections etc. Note the reason.
- Outside agency or professional contact.
- Absence of family members, except for regular events like going to school or work.
- Visits from babysitters or other care givers, friends, family etc.
- Visits/ telephone calls from the foster child/ young person family

#### **How to record.....**

- Keep all recorded information about each child/young person in one, secure place and filed in date order.
- Make log sheets clear and legible. Language used should be simple and jargon free.
- Provide log sheets for supervising Social Worker at the regular supervision visits or via secure email.
- Avoid personal opinions and judgments. Remember young people and foster carers have the right to access their own records. Bear this in mind when you are recording information. If in doubt ask your Supervising Social Worker.
- Record what you have seen or heard first and, not hearsay.
- Information should not be stored on a computer hard drive but an encrypted data stick where paper copies are not used. Any personal or sensitive information sent from a computer must be sent via Egress.
- Record keeping will be agreed as part of the annual foster carer agreement

#### **IF AN ALLEGATION IS MADE:**

- Keep your Supervising Social Worker fully informed, seek advice from your Supervising Social Worker and supply all relevant information.
- Remember, when an allegation is made, an investigation must take place as soon as possible.
- Remember that an investigation into an allegation is necessary to ensure a child is safe.

You will have the fullest support and advice of Suffolk Fostering Service at such a stressful time.

When an allegation is made it will not always be possible, for safeguarding reasons, to give foster carers that information. The Supervising Social Worker is therefore not able to discuss the specifics of the allegation with the foster carer during the investigation period. However, Suffolk Fostering Service will give foster carers as much support and advice as possible. This can include visits to the fostering household and telephone calls, as the foster carer needs and wishes.

Information about any such situation will be made available to foster carers as soon as it is possible to do so.

Under Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board procedures allegations against foster carers must be notified to the LADO and a meeting will be held to consider how the investigation should be conducted and if there are any immediate safeguarding needs for the looked after child/young person.

Following any allegation against as a Foster Carer, whether substantiated or not, the allegation will be considered as part of a review presented to the fostering panel – see also section G4.

## Section B6. Representations, Complaints & Compliments

If you or the young person that you are looking after have any complaints or worries and concerns it is important that these are discussed with Suffolk Fostering Service and hopefully resolved without recourse to the formal procedure.

If your concerns cannot be resolved in this way they should be put in writing to the Head of Adoption & Fostering Service. However, if they are the subject of the complaint then the matter will be addressed by the Assistant Director. The receipt of a complaint in writing will trigger action according to Suffolk's Complaints Procedure outlined below.

### What happens when a complaint is made?

The Suffolk County Council complaints procedure is open to most people involved in the welfare of a child. The law says that every local authority must have a procedure for complaints about children's care services and it says how these must be dealt with.

We know that most people want something done quickly if they have a complaint. That is why the Customer Rights Team will ask the staff working with you to try to sort out your problem in the first instance. This approach to solving complaints is what we call informal resolution or **Stage 1** of our Complaints Procedure.

They will try to resolve your complaint within 10 working days. However, this can be up to 20 working days if your complaint is complex. You will receive a written response to your complaint or a meeting may be arranged with you to discuss the outcome to your complaint.

If your complaint cannot be resolved informally, you have the right to request that the complaint goes to **Stage 2** of the Complaints Procedure.

This will involve someone independent of the service you are complaining about, investigating the complaint and writing a report containing findings and recommendations to the Director with responsibility for the service you are complaining about. Please contact Customer Rights if you wish to know more about a formal investigation at Stage 2.

Normally Customer Rights can only look at a complaint within 12 months of the events you are complaining about. In exceptional circumstances they may be able to look at complaints about things which happened longer ago than this, but you need to have a good reason for not contacting them sooner. If your complaint is about something that happened more than 12 months ago, please explain why you did not make contact at the time.

The involvement of other agencies might make it difficult to achieve stated timescales for resolving a complaint. A leaflet setting out the procedure is available from your Supervising Social Worker or the Customer Rights Team.



Customer Rights Team Contact details:

Customer Rights  
Suffolk County Council,  
Endeavour House,  
8 Russell Road,  
Ipswich IP1 2BX

Telephone: 01473 260711

Email: [customerrights@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:customerrights@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk)

Note: All complaints are recorded in the Suffolk Fostering Service Complaints Register. The number of complaints made to Suffolk Fostering Service is reported to OFSTED each year.

### **Compliments**

Compliments may be received verbally or in writing. If you receive a compliment relating to your role as a foster carer, please tell your supervising social worker who will record it in your case file and it can be shared with others in the service as part of your annual review. They will also pass a copy of the compliment to the Customer Rights Team who include numbers and details of compliments in all council reports about feedback received from customers.

## **Section B7. Confidentiality and Data Protection**

**As foster carers you will be in possession of personal information in respect of a child or young person placed with you, this information is provided in order for you to carry out your fostering duties.**

Confidential information must be stored securely if it is retained in the foster home.

Confidential information must be returned to the child's social worker or fostering social worker at the end of every placement.

All records are the property of Suffolk County Council and are subject to the Data Protection Act 1998.

No one will disclose confidential information except where the person to whom it is to be disclosed has a need to know the information. This might include a doctor needing to know past medical details, a teacher needing to know educational history or an organisation needing to know a child's date of birth.

Disclosure of confidential information to someone who has a need to know certain information must be restricted to the information they require for their legitimate purpose.

Where there is doubt about a person's need for personal information about a child or young person, advice should be sought from the Supervising Social Worker or the child's social worker, before any information is disclosed.

Discussing the child/young person's personal history, their family connections etc. with foster carer's family members, friends and others who do not need to know of such details is contrary to the Data Protection Act and is illegal. Positive aspects of the child's progress can be shared with friends and family members.

No matter concerning a fostered child/ young person should be discussed in a public place under any circumstances whatsoever. This includes the foyers of Social Care offices, school entrances and doctors' surgeries as members of the public have access.

A foster carer may seek support from another foster carer registered with Suffolk Fostering Service, either through established routes such as Foster Carer Support Groups, or through individual support, which may be provided by a 'buddying' or mentoring system. In this circumstance foster carers should endeavour to access a consistent source of support rather than sharing confidential information with several people. At all times the foster carer should restrict the information shared, to that which is needed for them to receive the advice and support they need.

When a child/young person seeks information about records that are being maintained about them, other than the foster carer's file, they should be referred to their social worker who will arrange for them to have access to their file. The social worker will follow the procedures for access to information in such cases.

A child/young person has the right to see what is being recorded about them in the foster carer's file. This does not necessarily include the right to see other documents, such as care plans, child protection conference reports, review reports etc.

Where such documents are on the foster carer's file, advice should be sought from the child/young person's social worker. Good practice would suggest that foster carer's reports should be discussed with the child/young person at the time they are written and the child/young person's views of the reports recorded.

Where a child/young person has special needs in relation to communication, the fact that records are kept by foster carers, and the content of the records, must be shared with the child/young person in a way they will understand.

There will be times when you need to share certain information with members of your family to enable them to respond positively to the young person or to take steps to ensure they safeguard themselves or the young person.. As a general rule, the "need to know" principle applies - this means that it is ultimately in the child/young person's best interests that certain information is shared. Wherever possible this should be agreed openly in advance with the child/young person's social worker, their parents and, in the case of an older child/young person with his or her agreement. Where this is not possible, any decision to share information should always be defensible if it is later challenged.

If you are told, by a child or another person, something that suggests a child's wellbeing might be at risk or that he or she may have been abused, you should explain that you must tell your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker.

### **How to treat confidential information**

All information about the people and children/young people we work with is sensitive and must be treated with respect and confidentiality

Keep all sensitive records/ information referring to looked after children and young people or their families in a secure manner under lock and key or, for electronic information, on an encrypted data storage device.

Do not give out home addresses and telephone numbers. Refer enquiries from individuals or other agencies to your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker.

When talking to or about your fostered child/young person ensure that you are careful and discreet about sensitive information.

**Remember:** Young people and foster carers have the right of access to their own records and bear this in mind when you are recording information.

## Section B8. Incident Reporting

Any incident involving a child or young person in your care must be immediately reported to Suffolk Fostering Service, either directly to your Supervising Social Worker or the out of hours service FOOHAS. This will enable the necessary documentation to be completed.

Incidents that occur where there has been any physical altercation between a member of the fostering household and a child in care must be reported immediately. All other significant incidents must be discussed with your supervising worker at the first available opportunity, and this may need to be before your next scheduled home visit. By reporting the incidents, not only are you able to talk through what may have been a difficult and occasionally distressing experience but it enables the Supervising Social Worker to build a picture and understanding of a child or young person's behaviours. This reporting also enables the risk assessment paperwork to be updated.

In the event of any of the following you must immediately notify your Supervising Social Working and make appropriate records of events.

### **Under Fostering Regulations 35 & 36:** Schedules 6 & 7 Reporting and Recording

All the below need to be reported immediately to the Supervising Social Worker or FOOHAS service:

- All accidents, illnesses and injuries of children placed with foster carers.
- Complaints in relation to the care given to children and young children/young people placed with foster carers (standard of care concern).
- Any allegations or suspicions of abuse in respect of children/young people placed with foster carers and their outcomes.
- Any disclosures/allegations of abuse/ significant harm.
- Any levels of control and restraint to a young person or child in placement.
- Outcomes of any incidents listed above.
- Notifications of events listed in **schedule 7** below:-
  1. Death of a child placed with foster parents
  2. Information is provided to the Independent Safeguarding Authority under sections 35, 36,39, 41 or 45 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (37) in respect of an individual working for the fostering service
  3. Serious illness or serious accident of a child placed with foster parents

4. 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.
5. Allegation that a child placed with foster parents has committed a serious offence
6. Involvement or suspected involvement of a child placed with foster parents in prostitution.
7. Serious incident relating to a child placed with foster parents, necessitating calling the Police to the foster parent's home.
8. A child placed with foster parents is missing from the placement.
9. Any serious complaint about any foster parent approved by the fostering agency.
10. Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster parents.

**All incidents under schedule 6 and 7 of the Fostering Regulations have to be recorded and disclosed to Ofsted whenever they request the information.**

## Record of Specific Incidents

Child/Young Person:.....

Placement address:.....

.....

.....

Description of incident, including time, date, location & persons known to be involved:

Person Reporting Incident: (*Please print*).....

Signature.....

To whom reported :.....

Date reported: .....

Information only

Advice/Assistance Needed

FS28a Specific Incident Form

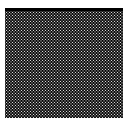


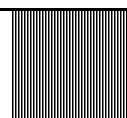


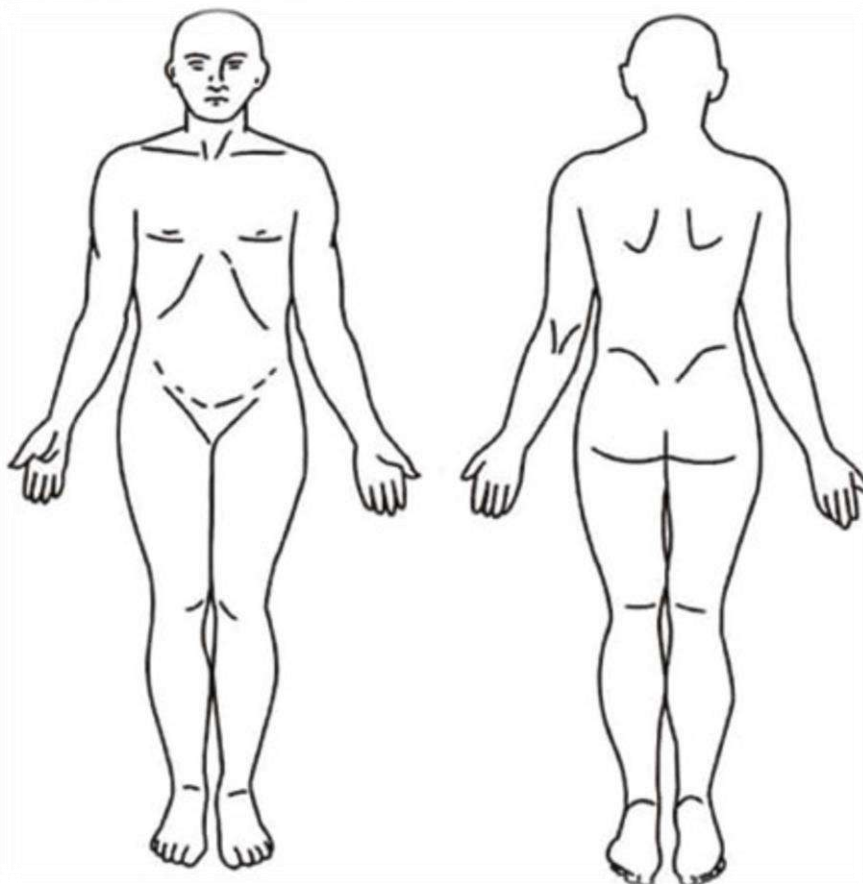
## Body Map Form

to be used to assist in recording incidents involving injuries to looked after children and young people (photographs should not be taken by the foster carer)

Name of Child		Date of Birth	
Name of foster carer			
Date recorded			

Please draw on the body map in black ink, using the following key to indicate the different types of injury (shading or alphabetic code), and provide brief details for each injury, e.g. measurements of wound, colour of bruise, etc. using arrows (use a ruler if possible to assist with measurement):

	B - bruising		C - cuts & wounds		E - scalds, burns		F - other
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## Body Map Notes

Note any other details of incident	
Name of person completing the Body Map Form	
Date and Time Completed	
Once completed please send this form to Suffolk Fostering Service via your supervising social worker	

## **Section B9. Promoting and Supporting Contact**

All arrangements for contact between the foster child/young person and their birth families are the responsibility of the child care social worker and should be discussed with you in the placement planning meeting and during Child in Care (CiC) reviews. It is important that you know what these arrangements are.

Sometimes child care social workers will ask for contact in the foster home. However, depending on what is in the best interest of the young person, foster carers do have the right to request that it takes place elsewhere. The issue should be resolved at the start to the placement.

Where brothers and sisters are looked after in different foster placements it is expected that foster carers work together to arrange regular contact for the children.

### **Questions to ask your foster child/young person' social worker**

Confirm the legal status of the child /young person you are caring for:

1. Are there any restrictions concerning those who can have contact with the child/young person?
2. Where will contact take place, how frequent will it be, and how long will each visit last?
3. Is the contact supervised and if so by whom?
4. What other forms of contact (e.g. phone calls, letter, e-mails) can take place?

### **If an unknown person arrives for contact unannounced:**

- Be polite but do not allow the contact to take place.
- Inform your supervising social worker and the child care social worker immediately
- Advise the person to discuss their wish for contact directly with Suffolk Children and Young People's Service.
- If the person does not respond to your request that they leave, call the Police for assistance.

### **If a person whose visits should normally be supervised arrives unannounced:**

- Be polite, but do not allow the contact to take place.
- Inform your supervising social worker and the child care social worker immediately.

- Advise the person to discuss their wish for contact with the social worker.
- If the person does not respond to your request again call the Police for assistance. (Remember to record details/observations about all contacts, whether in person or by phone etc. and be ready to discuss them with your supervising social worker or the child's social worker.)

### **The impact of contact on the child/young person**

If children/young people become generally unsettled by contact, this may be a reason to adjust arrangements and to check the safety measures, but it is rarely a reason to stop or to reduce contact. After all, most of us get pretty upset when we have to say 'hello' and 'goodbye' to loved ones who we can see only for brief periods because they are in hospital, in prison or live abroad.

However, if a child/young person is distressed for several days after contact, the arrangements may be re-traumatising them and should be reviewed to consider how they can be managed in a more positive way.

If children remain in foster care for some time, the impact of contact will probably change.

- Children/young people will either come to terms with the limitations of contact or, more often, demand more.
- Children and young people may resent not being able to go out with their peers or take part in leisure activities when contact is arranged.
- Keeping children/young people involved in how and why to keep in touch and with whom, helps them to accept contact as part of their routine.
- Children/young people may seek contact arrangements around normal events.

### **The impact of contact on foster carers**

The impact of contact on foster carers and their families can be immense.

- Does everyone in the foster family understand and support the aims?
- Do the contact arrangements disturb the normal routines of the foster family?
- Does the main foster carer have to sacrifice other family activities in order to provide transport or supervise?
- Does one child/young person's contact upset other foster children who have less or none at all?
- It can be difficult to support contact where the foster carer is aware of the impact of abuse on the child and details of disclaimer.

If you appreciate diversity and believe in the value of contact, the impact of it will be more easily absorbed by you and your family. If there are tensions around visits, then contact can eventually put placements at risk.

Please discuss any queries or concerns you may have with your Supervising Social Worker.

## Section B10. Children Missing from Care

Most children and young people who go missing return the same day and some incidents concern children who are late home and for whom there are no other concerns. However, very often running away/ going missing is **an indicator of underlying problems** which need further intervention such as:

- Problems at home / family conflict
- Abuse or neglect
- Mental health problems, bullying
- Pressure from friends/ associates
- Sexual exploitation/ trafficking

Young people who run away may be at risk of **significant harm whilst away** from their care placement e.g. those who remain missing overnight or for several days, sleeping rough and in contact with people posing a risk to them. There is strong evidence that children who go missing are significantly at risk of sexual exploitation even where these young people have an awareness of personal safety and seem to be in control of their actions.

Police will lead efforts to locate children who are missing, working closely with Children's Social Care when children are missing from care placements.

When the child is located the Police will carry out an immediate **safe and well check** to identify any indications that the young person has suffered harm; where and with whom they have been; and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by, or against, them.

Police, Children's Social Care & any agency involved with a child who has run away/ gone missing will share information and where necessary take action to safeguard or offer support to the child and family.

### **Protocol for Reporting a Child or Young Person missing from a foster carer's home**

Following new definitions introduced by the Association of Police Officers (ACPO) there is a distinction between a child who is **missing** or one who is **absent**.

#### **Absent**

Children can very often test the boundaries of authority and may absent themselves for short periods of time and then return and are not necessarily at risk. The 'Absent' category can apply to children living in care as well as those in birth family homes. It is expected that all reasonable steps should be taken by carers to locate the child and to discuss the situation with their supervising social worker or FOOHAS worker prior to making a report to the police.



## Missing

If a child is absent for longer than is reasonable and you do not know where they are and therefore if they are at risk, they should be considered as missing and the police should be contacted by the foster carer. A discussion with your supervising social worker or FOOHAS/Emergency duty social worker should always take place. The child's social worker will also need to be informed promptly of any missing episodes.

Please be aware that foster carers are required to follow the Suffolk County Council Missing Children Procedures for reporting children missing. These protocols will be made available to you by your Supervising Social worker.

### **In accordance with Suffolk County Council's protocol, foster carers will:**

- Inform the Fostering Service or FOOHAS to determine if the child is 'absent' or 'missing' and whether the police need to be involved.
- If required, the foster carer will contact the police to inform them that the child is missing from care and will follow the advice of the police.
- If the police determine that the child is indeed missing, they may visit and ask you to complete a missing person report or they may take the details over the phone.
- If in doubt report them missing sooner rather than later.
- If appropriate inform the young person's parents. If you are unsure, then discuss it with FOOHAS social worker when you inform them that the young person is missing. If there is regular contact between the foster carer & the young person's parents it is appropriate that the foster carer tells the parents. If the relationship is difficult ask the FOOHAS Duty Social Worker to inform them.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that parents are aware if their child is missing from care.

### **Suffolk Fostering Service will: -**

- Offer 24-hour on-call support so a foster carer can receive advice and/or practical help if a young person is missing.
- Monitor the frequency and circumstances of the absconding behaviour of any young person placed. This will assist with identifying patterns or triggers for the behaviour.
- Discuss whether there are safeguarding issues with the childcare social worker when young people are absent without permission on a regular basis.
- Consider whether a young person's absconding behaviour may be motivated by involvement in third party abuse or sexual exploitation.

- Ensure that all relevant agencies are kept informed.
- Ensure that incidents of children missing are recorded under Schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulations.

### **When a young person returns:**

1. Welcome the child/young person home ensuring they know you are pleased to see them and that they are safe
2. Do not 'quiz' them on where they have been or what they have been doing, but listen caringly to anything they may share with you.
3. Inform your Supervising Social Worker or FOOHAS/Emergency duty social worker.
4. Inform the Police.
5. Inform the child care social worker.
6. Inform parents if appropriate.

Don't forget to record the incident in your daily log book and complete an Incident Report Form, which should be given to your Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible.

### **Other useful tips:**

- Keep an up to date list of their friend's contact details.
- Try and remember what they were last wearing have a recent photograph available.
- The child's social worker should interview the child within 72 hours of the young person being located or returning from absence and will be especially important if any risk factors are in evidence e.g. the child has been missing overnight, may have been involved in criminal activities during absence, has mental health issues or may have been hurt or harmed The foster carer may need to advocate and be supportive of this process.

### **More information and guidance:**

Suffolk County Council have published guidance to help those working with or caring for children:

- *Children who go Missing from Care and Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation* is available at visit:  
<http://www.suffolkscb.org.uk/procedures/lscb-policies-guidance-and-protocols/>

- Children Society have produced leaflet about what to do if your child goes missing gives practical advice to foster carers (as well as parents) about why children go and how to respond.  
[http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/runaways\\_parents\\_guide-2014\\_single\\_page.pdf](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/runaways_parents_guide-2014_single_page.pdf)

## Section B11. Behaviour Management

An important part of your task as a foster carer is to help develop the self-esteem and confidence of your foster children/young people. Positive encouragement and praise wherever possible, will help establish a good relationship within which you can develop strategies for dealing with episodes of challenging behaviour.

Children and young people who have come from unsettled, abusive or disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to find consistent discipline confusing at first. Children/young people who have been emotionally, physically or sexually abused may exhibit inappropriate behaviour as a result of their experiences and loss of self-esteem.

Many children/young people will test their foster carers as they may have experienced rejection and they may fear that the foster carers will do the same.

### **DON'T TAKE DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR PERSONALLY!**

#### **Remember:-**

- It is the child/young person's circumstances that are the problem, not the child/young person.
- Never use physical punishment.
- Reinforce positive behaviour, talking, negotiating or diverting attention.
- Remove objects that could cause injury.
- Do not put yourself at undue risk. Remember the use of physical restraint may leave you open to allegations.
- Always contact your supervising social worker or FOOHAS when you need to and call the Police if you are unable to manage a child/young person and you think the situation is dangerous or out of control.
- Record accurately all that has taken place.

#### **Discipline**

As foster carers for Suffolk County Council you agree not to use any forms of corporal punishment, this should be taken to cover any intentional application of force as punishment including slapping, pinching, squeezing, shaking and the throwing of objects, as well as rough handling or punching in the heat of the moment in response to a child or young person's violent behaviours towards you.

However we recognise that you may need to administer sanctions to deal with inappropriate behaviours. These sanctions need to be appropriate, given the age and understanding of the child or young person. Any sanctions imposed need to be proportionate to the misdemeanour, fair, take place as soon after the event as practical and recorded appropriately.

### **Suggested sanctions are –**

- If the behaviour relates to stealing or criminal damage, then the matter should be addressed by accompanying the young person in order to return stolen goods or cleaning or contributing to the cost of any damage they might have caused (e.g. cleaning graffiti)
- Consideration could be given to the loss of privileges, such as extra treats or activities or outings. However this needs to be time limited.
- Giving the child/young person some time out, to allow time to diffuse the situation or to give them time to reflect. This should be used for brief periods of time and they should never be locked in or out of a room.

### **Restraint**

Suffolk Fostering Service has a policy of no restraint unless this approach has been specifically set out in the child's placement plan.

*“Many young people said that often restraint doesn't work very well because it winds you up rather than calms you down”*

(from Children's Views on Restraint, CSCI)

### **Physical intervention and restraint**

Suffolk Fostering Service ensures that foster carers are clear about how to exercise appropriate control over children who are displaying very challenging behaviour. Such means of control must be in the interests of the child/young person's own welfare and/or the protection of others.

Physical restraint is not used, except to prevent likely serious injury or likely serious damage to property. Restraint is never used:

- as a punishment;
- as a means to enforce compliance with instructions; or
- in response to challenging behaviour which does not give rise to reasonable expectation of injury to someone or serious damage to property.

Physical restraint can be defined as a therapeutic physical intervention to prevent a young person hurting themselves, hurting others or causing serious damage to property.

Physical restraint is sometimes used in Children's Homes or group living situations when ratios of young people to staff make it more difficult to manage challenging or confrontational behaviour.

The issue of Physical Restraint is a complex one. In Children's Homes the staff generally receive comprehensive training to keep themselves and young people safe during a restraint. It is nearly always done with at least two members of staff present. There is some protection in the fact that two staff members may have worked together for some years but they do not have the same 'intimate' relationship as a foster couple.

Suffolk Fostering Services do not consider that restraint in foster care is safe for either the young person or the foster carer. It may leave the young person feeling:

- Powerless and angry – wanting to 'get their own back' with no neutral adult to talk to about these experiences or feelings.
- Scared and distant from the very people who are meant to be helping them feel safe.
- Vulnerable to excessive force as foster carers are often dealing with confrontational situations alone.

We believe that restraint leaves a foster carer vulnerable because young people may:-

- be reminded of past abuse.
- become too violent to be handled safely.
- make false allegations of physical/sexual abuse (and the young person may have bruises or marks from the restraint which could leave doubt about the foster carers story).

**And**

- even in a two foster carer household there is no independent witness to the triggers, the young person's state of mind or the adult's behaviour.

### **Suffolk Fostering Service has a policy of 'No Restraint'.**

We understand that there are many occasions when children and young people who are living with our foster carers may become very angry, aggressive and 'out of control'. We provide training and on-going supervision on how to deal with these situations.

Restraint often occurs when adults feel that they have lost control of a situation and try to regain it physically. All of the training we provide is aimed at achieving a win/win situation – so both the foster carers and young people can disagree but no lasting damage is done to the relationship. As a foster carer you will learn more about managing difficulties from your Supervising Social Worker and in training courses.

If you do feel a situation is getting 'out of control' call Suffolk Fostering Service or FOOHAS.

If you ever feel that you need to physically intervene you should be able to justify your actions in relation to the criteria of keeping a young person safe from any immediate



threat of physical injury to themselves, to others or seriously causing damage to property.

Very occasionally we might place a young person from a children's home who has experienced physical restraint being used very regularly to manage their behaviour. In these circumstances, if all parties agree, a specific approach, for a time limited period, may be agreed which involves restraint when absolutely necessary.

## **Section B12. Bullying**

An important part of the foster carer's task is to build a foster child's self-esteem and confidence, develop their abilities to socialise and encourage them to maintain and develop friendships and contact with others.

Looked after children are likely to have had experiences which can make them particularly vulnerable to being bullied or bullying others.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual. Bullying doesn't even have to happen person-to-person, with more and more people using internet devices; silent or threatening phone calls and abusive text messages and emails can be just as distressing as being bullied face to face.

### **Signs indicating a child/young person might be being bullied:**

- Unwillingness to go to school clubs or visit friends; frightened to walk to and from school; deterioration in schoolwork.
- Books or clothes are regularly damaged or destroyed; possessions go missing; money gets 'lost'; the young person starts stealing money.
- The young person becomes withdrawn, distressed or appears frightened to say what is wrong.
- The young person stops eating or has nightmares, cries easily.
- The young person becomes disruptive or aggressive.
- The young person self-harms or goes missing.

### **What to do if your child/young person is being bullied.**

- Be aware of the above signs. Do not ignore, hoping the problem will settle itself. Do not over react - it might frighten the child/young person into silence.
- Inform your Supervising Social Worker and decide who will contact the local authority.
- Make sure the child/young person feels protected.
- Take any threats of self-harm seriously.
- Try to sort out the bullying as constructively as possible.
- Allow some time after this action for the situation to change. If there is no improvement, let your Supervising Social Worker know.

- Encourage the child/young person to develop new interests or activities, which might lead to a supportive group of friends. Sports, drama clubs, martial arts courses can improve self-confidence.
- Praise the child/young person. Tell him/her how much you care for and support them.
- Encourage the child/young person to talk to you assuring them you are always willing to listen.

### **What to do if a child/young person in your care is bullying others.**

- Do not ignore the situation, hoping the problem will go away.
- Inform your Supervising Social Worker who, with other professional colleagues, will help address this.
- Ask the child/young person if they can explain what has happened and why.
- Talk to the child/young person and find out if there are any ways you can work together to stop this behaviour.
- Explain that the bullying must stop and that the situation could become worse leading to school exclusion or Police involvement.
- Criticise the bullying behaviour, but do not reject the child.
- Look for and praise good behaviour, even if it is something relatively small.
- Give the child/young person the confidence to change the behaviour.
- Help the child/young person develop new interests and friends especially if he/she is involved with a bullying gang.
- Work on improving the child/young person's social skills, anger management.
- Spend time with the child/young person, especially listening to his/her concerns. The behaviour could be a cry for attention and help.

**Note:** More information on the issue of bullying is available from the charity Kidscape. For advice and a list of publications see website: <http://www.kidscape.org.uk>

## Section B13. Offending Behaviour

### Dealing with children and young people who break the law

Sometimes children/young people will have come from a difficult background where offending behaviour is tolerated or they will have experience law breaking and contempt for rules of acceptable behaviour within their peer group. Situations in which foster carers find children/young people breaking the law cover such things as: possession of drugs, drug taking and supplying drugs, stealing, shop lifting or damaging property as well as activities such as prostitution.

- Discuss with your Supervising Social Worker and decide on a course of action, which will need to be agreed by the child social worker.
- Remember guidance set out under **Behaviour Management** and apply where possible.
- Apply the advice in drugs guidance section where relevant.
- Tell the young person of the legal implications if found in possession of or supplying drugs.
- Make sure the young person knows how seriously the activity is regarded.
- Remove any dangerous or suspected stolen items to a safe place until you have spoken with your Supervising Social Worker or another member of Suffolk Fostering Service which you should do without delay in most cases.
- Explore ways of making restitution, apology to shop keeper, neighbour, or school staff.
- Record accurately all that has taken place (see record keeping)
- Be aware that there are resources available within local authorities to assist and support with any level of offending behaviours.

### Useful websites for further advice and information

- [www.youthnet.org](http://www.youthnet.org) - **The Mix(Formerly YouthNet)** state “We provide information and emotional support for young people in the UK, enabling our users to make the right choices for them.”
- <http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com>

**Coram Children’s Legal Centre**  
Riverside Office Centre  
Century House North  
North Station Road  
Colchester, CO1 1RE

- [Child Law Advice](#)
- <http://childlawadvice.org.uk/> from here a call back service can be accessed.

## Section B14. Diversity

Children and young people in foster care come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. This is reflected not only in their race, religion and language - but also in the way they have been brought up.

Foster carers need to recognise, respect and celebrate all these differences. Children and young people may also need help from their foster carers in feeling positive about themselves and being proud of their heritage. This should be discussed as part of the creation of the placement plan and at each child's Review to ensure their needs in relation to their identity are being met.

Sometimes children and young people may suffer harassment because of their skin colour or religion, or simply because they are 'in care'. They need help and guidance on how to tackle these situations. Where foster carers find themselves caring for a child/young person from a different cultural background, the Supervising Social Worker will attempt to locate and link up with appropriate people of similar culture.

Diversity is really about how we understand and deal with difference; whether it is about culture, religion, class, sexuality or ethnicity. As foster carers you could be welcoming children/young people from other cultures and religions into your home. These children/young people may also have a different sexual orientation or life experience from you and your family.

Here are a few suggestions to help you understand and consider the needs of each child:

- Speak with the child/young person's social worker about what they understand about the child/young person's background and their needs and identify with the social worker if there are any current religious practices that may be relevant.
- Identify local resources that will enable the child/young person to be assisted effectively and meet their needs.
- Check what the wishes of the birth family are and how they celebrate important events on their cultural calendar.
- Discuss with the child/young person their views, what they want to happen during festivals or on special occasions.
- Do some research - learn more about the differences between yourself, your family and the young person.
- Encourage the child/young person to be positive about themselves and their family.
- Speak with your Supervising Social Worker as to the best course of action in situations where you are not sure.

- Contact other foster carers or your local priest, vicar, Rabbi, Imam or religious leader for further advice on religious and cultural matters.

Sometimes, a child/young person with additional needs has become too difficult for the parents to cope with, and that is the reason why he or she is being looked after. Foster carers can help by obtaining as much information as possible about the disability.

General training on diversity is provided through Suffolk CPD online website and available on distance learning courses. Please ask your Supervising Social Worker about these.

Training on specific difficulties, for example Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (A.D.H.D.), may be available to Foster carers looking after these children. Whilst caring for disabled children can have its own challenges, it can also bring its own rewards in helping children/young people to realise and achieve their potential.

### Useful Websites

- <https://www.access-unlimited.co.uk/> - Access Unlimited website is where you can find information about the full range of services that Suffolk County Council provides for families and carers who support children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.
- <http://www.autism.org.uk/autismsuffolk> - Autism Suffolk support the parents and carers of children in Suffolk who have a confirmed diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder. The age range they cover is from diagnosis up to a child's 14th birthday. They state: "Parents and carers can contact us themselves. Our services are free of charge and include:
  - support from one of our specialist family support workers
  - an information pack
  - NAS seminars for parents and carers
  - monthly parent drop-in sessions across Suffolk
  - help to make and use visual supports
  - a well-stocked lending library
  - a Facebook group for families registered with us - search for Autism Suffolk (NAS)
- <http://www.iscre.org.uk/> - Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality state that "Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it



recognises that their needs are met in different ways.” They can give advice and guidance on all issues around diversity and discrimination.

- <http://www.suffolqlgbtnetwork.org.uk/> - Set up in 1988, we are a registered charity and support organisation that aims to promote equality and diversity in Suffolk, and combat sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination and prejudice for all. They provide advice and support to anyone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or someone who identifies as a transgender person. They also offer support to carers, friends or relatives of someone and who want to find out more about LGB&T issues.
- <http://www.sifre.org.uk/> - Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource is a voluntary charitable company which runs faith based seminars, meetings for people from the faiths and arranges informal gatherings. They provide information and resources to help understanding about the beliefs and practices of people from different faiths and cultures.

## **Section B15. Children's personal belongings**

### **How to deal with a foster child's belongings**

When a young person is placed with you, he/she may have some of their own clothes and personal effects. The child/young person's personal belongings should be safeguarded and looked after. This could be problematic if the child/young person destroys his or her own belongings. In such cases, try to identify the cause of this behaviour and support your foster child/young person and build their self-esteem.

- Remember foster children's belongings are their life possessions.
- Do not wash all of the child/young person's clothing when they first arrive. The scent of home / previous place can give a child a sense of security. If the child/young person arrives with inappropriate clothing, wash it and put it away. Discuss the issue with your Supervising Social Worker. Do not throw clothing from the child's home away.
- Inform your Supervising Social Worker if the child/young person's possessions are in bin liners. Suffolk Children and Young People's Service expect all children looked after to have suitable suitcases/holdalls to transport their belongings. This is not always possible when young people become looked after in an emergency. It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to provide or agree to fund the purchase of luggage.
- Keep a record of what belongings the child brings with them.
- Consider very carefully what a child/young person's possessions mean to them before disposing of anything e.g. outgrown clothes may be their only link with home. Discuss with the child/young person and/or your Supervising Social Worker, as appropriate.
- Use a suitcase or a large holdall for packing a foster child's clothes. Please supply as necessary. Never use a bin liner even if the child/young person arrived with one.
- Store any belongings left behind by a child/young person who leaves in a hurry or absconds, until alternative arrangements can be made. Make a list of all items left behind by a child/young person leaving placement.
- Let your Supervising Social Worker know if belongings are left so that they can be removed for safe storage.

## **Section B16. Travelling away from home with children/young people**

### **General Information**

If a child/young person is looked-after, but not the subject of a care order, the only people who can give consent to travelling, particularly abroad, are those with parental responsibility. If they refuse, and this is seen as unreasonable, it may be possible to consider a Section 8 Order (see Legal Section).

If a child/young person is subject to Care Order the local authority may give consent, but wherever possible written consent should be sought from all those with parental responsibility.

Permission to travel maybe an area for discussion at the Placement Planning meeting and noted within the Delegated Authority section. Children in Care should not be taken on holiday during term time.

Children and young people accommodated may already possess a passport, but where this is not the case the child care social worker may initiate application together with a formal letter on behalf of the Director of Children's Services stating the legal status of the child/young person. Trips abroad must be discussed with the Social Worker to ensure all is in order, including necessary travel insurance.

### **What you need to do when taking children on holiday**

#### **Holidays/Outings in the UK**

It is expected that any child/young person placed with foster carers is treated as a member of the foster carers' family and that they would be included in family holidays. To help with this Suffolk Fostering Service make 2 weeks additional allowance payments as well as a weekly element of the fostering allowance which can be saved for holidays.

There may be circumstances in which permission is required before a child/young person can be away from the foster carer's address overnight, even if they are accompanied by the foster carers. This could include school trips. These decisions should be discussed and recorded on the Delegated Authority section of the child's placement plan.

Before foster carers make any arrangements they should contact their Supervising Social Worker for advice/clarification.

#### **Holidays Abroad**

If foster carers are thinking of taking a holiday abroad with a foster child/young person the foster carer must give the Supervising Social Worker and the child/young person's Social Worker plenty of notice of their plans.

The particular legal status of the child/ young person may have an effect on whether it is possible for a child/ young person to leave the country. There may also be other reasons why a holiday abroad might not be in the best interest of the young person. If it is possible for the young person to leave the country, obtaining a passport is a lengthy process, as is obtaining the permissions and agreements required under some looked after child court orders. Therefore, please make sure that you inform your Supervising Social Worker and the child/young person's social worker in plenty of time in order to avoid any disappointment.

The Child Care Social Worker for the child / young person will pay the cost of the child's/young person's passport. A letter of delegated consent will also be needed when taking a foster child/ young person outside of the UK. Do not be put off by this list of apparent difficulties. Many foster 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.

### **General Guidelines**

The following guidelines are to help ensure that any last minute problems do not arise for when you are travelling at home or abroad. Everyday travel in the family car or on public transport is an acceptable necessity of daily life {see also safer caring and insurance section}.

- Discuss with your Supervising Social Worker any plans for longer journeys involving a stopover somewhere other than in the normal family home.
- Contact Suffolk Fostering Service before a foster child /young person travels out of the country and decide who will obtain the permission of the placing authority.
- Take the letter confirming permission to travel from either Social care or a child/ young person's parents and dates of travel with you.
- Make sure that the child/young person has a valid passport, only obtainable via the child care social worker and that it has been handed over by their representative or the birth parent. This may take several weeks. If the passport is not available then the journey cannot take place.
- Check with the child's social worker whether, or not, the child or young person has any court orders or warrants outstanding which could prevent them being taken out of the country.
- Check the child/young person's immigration status to avoid problems of re-entry into the United Kingdom with children / young people from all non-EU countries. This is especially important if you are caring for unaccompanied minors. Also check on rights of entry into non-EC destination countries. Please always ensure that when travelling abroad you obtain the EHIC - European Health Insurance Card

- Discuss arrangements for safer care with your Supervising Social Worker while you are away. This will involve discussing where all members of your family will be sleeping and issues that will arise from being in a new country or environment. It may be necessary to complete a specific risk assessment for the holiday so that the young person and foster family are clear about the safer caring arrangements. This includes if you use a family caravan or tent.
- Leave details of your holiday and all addresses known, itinerary and travel arrangements with Suffolk Fostering Service before departure. This applies whether you are travelling in the UK or abroad.

### **If the child/young person has a medical condition**

- Check that sufficient amounts of any required medication for the child/young person's health is packed safely.
- For some medical conditions it may be useful to obtain a letter from your G.P giving the details of the medication or an additional prescription.
- Obtain a written medical consent letter from the child care service manager before leaving the country to allow you to arrange treatment in any case of a medical emergency.
- Inform your supervising social worker and child care social worker before permitting a child/young person to go on a school outing. Unless this matter has been decided within the Delegated Authority section of the placement plan.

### **Some other points before you start your travels**

- Supervise the packing of the child/young person's luggage to ensure that no illegal substances are carried in or out of the country and that electrical equipment, spray cans etc. are not included.
- Check that you have arranged adequate travel insurance. It is the responsibility of foster carers to arrange such cover to meet the everyday contingencies of travelling abroad.
- Do not allow children or young people to travel on their own. Be aware that it is not always possible for the family to travel in adjacent seats or even on the same flight. Flight delays and confusion in terminals can leave a child or young person unsupervised and vulnerable.
- Be extra vigilant while you are abroad with the child/young person. This is necessary simply because they are in a strange country with different expectations and cultures.
- Make sure you have a note of Suffolk Fostering Service's office phone number. Our 24- hour foster carer support is still available via the telephone while foster

carers are abroad or out of the immediate area. If you are far away from home, it will only be possible for Suffolk Fostering Service to give advice and guidance.

### **Immunisation**

Children and young people must have been appropriately vaccinated for the country they are visiting. This will require consent from the child/young person's parents or Child Care Social Worker.

Children and young people placed with foster carers must not be given inoculations without prior consultations with the child/young person's social worker.

## **Section B17. Overnight stays**

### **What to do if your child/young person wants to stay overnight**

An important aspect of fostering is to give your foster child/young person as normal a life experience as possible. Staying overnight with friends is a part of this process. However, it remains the local authority's responsibility to give permission for a foster child/young person to stay out over-night. It is important that your foster child/young person is fully aware of this.

Suffolk County Council actively encourage delegation of decisions about such matters as overnight stays to foster carers. These decisions must be recorded in the Delegated Authority section of the child's placement plan.

Foster carers who have been delegated responsibility for such decision making will need to make a judgement similar to one they would make for their own child. Foster carers should specifically consider:

- How well the friend's family is known to the child and / or the foster carers?
- Have the arrangements been confirmed with the parent(s) of the friend?
- What are the arrangements for the child/ young person returning to the placement?
- Are the foster carers confident that the child/ young person concerned is aware and able to keep themselves from harm, and knows what to do if they feel uncomfortable and want to return home earlier than planned?
- Will the adult(s) looking after the child / young person during the visit ensure that if the child/young person wants to return to the placement earlier than planned, they will contact the foster carers?
- Have the foster carers ensured that they have left a contact telephone number where they can be reached if they are not going to be at home for the entire period the child / young person is away?
- If the foster carers are not satisfied with the arrangements, then they should refuse the child / young person's request in the same way they would for their own child.
- Any risks the young person may pose to other household members.
- Any additional needs or behaviours the young person exhibits which would require an agreed response from the friend's parents.
- Foster carers should inform the child / young person's Social Worker and their Supervising Social Worker of visits that have taken place. Foster carers should record these visits on their recording sheets



- Regular overnight stays with the same friend, or longer planned periods away from the placement, may require a criminal records check.
- Always make sure that you have the necessary permission or delegated authority before going ahead.

**Note:** There is no statutory duty for Disclosure and Baring Service [DBS] checks to be carried out when a child/young person wishes to stay overnight with a friend, nevertheless, permission cannot be taken for granted.

In some circumstances Suffolk Fostering Service still require a DBS check to be undertaken where a fostered child/young person stays anywhere other than with the foster carers. Even where Suffolk Fostering Service do not require a DBS check, they nevertheless still need to know at all times where children are staying.

As part of encouraging the development of friendships you may want to encourage your foster child to bring friends home to stay, using your judgment to assess their suitability.

Make sure the Fostering Service and the child care social worker know what is happening.

## **Section B18. Using the Emergency Duty Service and the Fostering Out-of-Hours Call Service (FOOHAS)**

As a foster carer for Suffolk Fostering Service you have the reassurance of support from an experienced social worker from the fostering and adoption service worker at all times.

While genuine emergencies are covered for 24 hours a day, 52 weeks of the year, non-emergency business should be dealt with during normal office hours when your supervising social worker or other team member who knows you and the young person placed with you well is better placed to assist and advise you.

The following check list could help you to decide your actions:

1. Is there an immediate concern regarding the child's / young person's health and safety or welfare? If yes contact the FOOHAS service, following making any immediate calls to the emergency services.
2. Does the situation threaten the immediate health and safety or welfare of the foster carer's family? If yes, contact the FOOHAS service, following making any immediate calls to the emergency services.
3. Is this about sharing information of a non-safeguarding nature that can wait until the next working day? If yes, wait until the next working day.
4. Are you worried or concerned about the situation, and will not be able to rest until it is reported? If yes, contact the FOOHAS service.
5. Have you thought the situation through and already made a decision for which you just want support? If yes, will it wait until office hours - if in doubt phone for support.
6. Are you in any doubt? If yes, contact the FOOHAS service.
7. If the child has made a disclosure of historic abuse and there is no current risk of harm to the young person this can be reported to your supervising social worker and child care social worker on the next working day.

**Note:** If the child /young person needs emergency medical treatment which requires permission from the birth parents or local authority contact your supervising social worker, the duty social worker or FOOHAS who will arrange for the necessary permissions to be obtained.

If the issue relates directly to the child then the Emergency Duty Service worker, who is a qualified social worker or manager, may be able to help in the first instance.

To contact EDS/FOOHAS telephone: **0808 800 4005**

This number will take you through to a call centre, at busy times you may need to leave a message and the call handler will get back to you or pass your details on to the FOOHAS worker.

## Section B19. Savings and Pocket Money

### Introduction

Foster carers registered with Suffolk County Council receive a weekly allowance for all children and young people in placement. As part of this allowance foster carers must use a proportion towards the costs of weekly pocket money and savings for each child in placement.

### Pocket Money

Pocket money is provided to fostered children/young people at a set rate published each year by Suffolk Fostering Service.

The table below provides minimum levels of pocket money that must be provided to children in placement, dependant on age. Whilst it is recognised that foster carers will have different views about pocket money for their own children, all fostered children/young people are entitled to receive their agreed amount of pocket money. If any differences in pocket money arrangements between birth children and foster children become an issue within a household this should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker.

Age of child or young person	Pocket Money (£)
0-5	1.50-2.00
6-10	2.00-4.00
11-15	5.00-10.00
16+	£10.00+**

*\* Very young children may not receive money directly, but toys, books or treats may be purchased in place of the weekly pocket money allowance or the money may be deposited in a savings account or junior ISA in the child's name.*

*\*\* See section below on young people aged 16 +*

### Savings

It is important that children and young people know the value of saving. It is also important that foster carers provide children and young people with opportunities to develop financial capability skills through children managing their savings in line with their age and capability.

### Short term savings

In addition to the above arrangements for weekly pocket money, all children in care should have a short term savings account which should be set up in the child's name by the child's foster carer/ placement as soon as practically possible following the child's second Child in Care review meeting which confirmed that the child is to remain looked after and there are no plans for an imminent return home. However, the foster carer is expected to make savings for the child as soon as the child has become looked after with the funds being kept safely until the savings account has been opened.

If a child that is already looked after moves to a placement that is planned to be short term (i.e. up to six months) savings account should not be opened but there is an expectation that savings continue to be made and kept safely until child moves to a placement that is intended to last for more than 6 months. For placements that are intended to last for more than 6 months the expectation will be that the savings account is being transferred to the new carer as soon as practically possible following the start of the placement.

The short term account is to enable the child/ young person to save for their current and future short term needs. This may be for a particular item they want e.g. game console, contribution towards a laptop, driving lessons etc.

All foster carers are expected to save into the short term savings account a minimum of £5 per week for each looked after child, in addition to providing the child/ young person with the agreed amount of pocket money..

### **Long Term Savings Accounts**

All children looked after continuously for more than 12 months will have either a Child Trust Fund (CFT) (if born between 01/09/2002 and 02/01/2011) or a Junior ISA (JISA) administered by the Share Foundation. These are government backed accounts which are opened with an initial payment of £200 from the government. The child cannot remove the money from these accounts until they are aged 18.

Additional amounts can be paid into these accounts. This may include transfers of money from the child's short term savings account if the money reaches a significant level and where this was agreed through consultation between the foster carer, the child's Social Worker and the child (if of sufficient age and understanding). Information on how additional payments can be made to JISA can be found on the Share Foundation website: <http://www.sharefound.org/home>

The supervising social worker and child care social worker have a responsibility to safeguard looked after children's finances and will ask to see the child's savings book/statements. Foster carers are required to record the purpose of any withdrawals.

### **Respite /holiday placements**

Prior to any period of respite care the child or young person's long term foster carer/s must ensure that respite foster carers are aware of pocket money and savings arrangements so that the child or young person continues to receive their weekly pocket money and savings are made.

### **Issues around pocket money**

Where there is a belief that unsupervised spending of pocket money might lead to an element of risk to a young person (e.g. absconding, purchase of solvents, drugs or alcohol) foster carers must discuss these concerns with their Supervising Social Worker and Child Care Social Worker.

It is not appropriate for a child/young person's pocket money to be stopped as a form of punishment without any outstanding money being paid into the child's/young person's saving account. Temporarily withholding a proportion of a child/young person's pocket money is permitted where a child or young person can earn this back.

Children and young people should be made aware of the conditions surrounding the issuing of pocket money and savings and of any sanction imposed involving pocket money. Children and young people who are unhappy about any issue should be encouraged to raise these with the foster carer, their social worker or the Supervising Social Worker. The Complaints Procedure may also be used as a last resort if the child / young person is still not satisfied with the responses that they receive.

### **Young People aged 16+**

Foster carers play an important role in the education of children and young people about the responsible use of money. This is particularly important for looked after children who often move to independence earlier than their peers.

As young people reach the age of 16 some foster carers provide them with a higher allowance each week so that rather than their foster carer, they can purchase essential items such as toiletries, mobile phone cards and clothing. This allows for greater independence on the part of the young person and assists with the development of budgeting skills. Payment of higher allowances should be agreed with the supervising social worker in advance.

Foster carers should provide support and encouragement to the young person on how to manage money and how to claim any benefits to which they may be entitled. Care leavers have enhanced benefit entitlements. Supporting young people to access their entitlement, complete satisfactory paperwork and navigate central government agencies is a key aspect of the Fostering role to prepare young people for independence.

Taking responsibility for a child or young person's money is serious and foster carers must be very careful to record how this money is allocated or banked. Any complaint from a child/young person or from the local authority on the misuse of money will be investigated by Suffolk Fostering Service under the Disciplinary Code.

## **Section B20. First Aid and Medication**

Fostering households should have a basic first aid kit available to deal promptly with minor injuries. Suffolk Fostering Service offers first aid courses on a regular basis and you should book via the CPD online training facility. Ask your Supervising Social Worker if you need help accessing this resource.

This course will also need to be updated every 3 years. If a child/young person who is placed with you has particular health or developmental needs, the child/young person's social worker should be able to provide information and give advice on specialist advisory or support groups for parents and foster carers.

Safe storage of medication is essential, it should be stored in a locked cabinet out of sight and reach of children/young people. Carers must ensure that all medicines kept in the home are accessible only by those for whom they are intended. Where medication needs to be kept in a fridge, carers should take advice about providing a lockable box that can be kept in the fridge. In some cases, a separate small fridge may be appropriate. If there is any special equipment required for the medication, for example needles, then advice must be sought about storage. SSWs should regularly monitor these arrangements in supervision and on unannounced visits.

Foster carers must have guidance on the administration of prescribed drugs for children/ young people and advice on the arrangements by which they can administer drugs not on prescription. Foster carers are expected to complete records when they administer any medication or when there has been a medical incident i.e. hospital admission, consultant/GP appointment.

In order for a foster carer to accept responsibility to undertake procedures such as injections, administering rectal medication, tube feeding etc. the following criteria should be met:

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

It is perfectly acceptable for a district nurse to train a foster carer to give medical treatment. The nurse has the responsibility of ensuring that the foster carer is competent, confident and willing to give the treatment. The foster carer should also be aware of any possible adverse reactions to the medication and the necessary steps to correct such an occurrence.

Any health related issues should always be discussed in supervision.

Arrangements for a foster carer to administer specialist or over-the-counter medication should be discussed and agreed as part of the child's Placement Plan.



# SECTION C:

## Reviews and Record keeping



.... more rewarding than ever

## Reviews and Record keeping

### **Section C1. Children in Care Paperwork**

#### **The Children in Care Plan**

The child's care plan is the fundamental document which analyses all the information, the needs of a child in care and then sets out the actions to be taken to meet these needs. The care plan records the person responsible for taking each identified action and the Local Authority is responsible for ensuring that the identified actions happen.

Care Plans should be made before the child comes into care, or, in the case of an emergency placement, within 10 days of becoming looked after. All children in care must have a CiC Care Plan. The care plan is informed by other relevant plans and assessments such as the statutory assessment, health plan, personal education plan and any other specialist assessments.

National guidance Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (paragraph 2.2) summarises the importance and essential elements of the care plan and provides detail of the processes with which all involved in care planning must be familiar:

*“The care plan will contain information about how the child's current developmental needs will be met, as well as the arrangements for the current and longer term care of the child. It ensures that there is a long term plan for the child's upbringing (referred to as the “permanence plan”) to which everyone is working, including the team around the child, the child, and (where appropriate) the family. There should be clarity in the care plan, particularly about the desired outcomes for the child, and those expected from services and other actions identified. This clarity will support effective views of the child's case to monitor the progress made towards meeting the short-and-long-term goals for the child and his/her family and the child's carers.”*

The child/young person should be involved in the care planning process and any decisions made about their future care and should be given copies of the care plan. This applies to all children and young people. Where appropriate, this may be information held on their behalf until they are old enough to understand it. It may be appropriate to involve an advocate to work with the child/young person to ensure their wishes and views are understood.

Parents should be involved in the drawing up of the care plan as far as it is practical. This may require translators, interpreters or different ways of communicating. Prospective and current carers of the child should also be asked for their views.

The Care Plan sets out the local authority's overall plan for the child/young person – the longer-term aims and outcomes for the child being looked after. The Care Plan can only be changed via a statutory Review. It must make sure that plans for permanence are considered and recorded. The Care Plan is recorded on Care First 6 . Suffolk has a policy on Permanence Strategy and Permanence Procedures that can be provided to foster carers upon request. The Care Plan also details how the child's needs will be met during the time they are looked after. This can act as a coordinating inter-agency plan for the child. Care Plans should also consider who the looked after child needs contact with and how often this should happen. The care

plan should include full contingency plans which may be required in the event of an unplanned end to a placement.

When children become looked after, there are specific pieces of information that will be made available to you, as their foster carer, just prior to and when a child or young person is placed. You should receive a copy of the Placement Information Record from the child/young person's social worker before or as the child is placed e.g. in an emergency.

If the placement is planned then a placement planning meeting will be held (to discuss how the placement will proceed) prior to placement commencing; if not, then as soon as possible after the child is placed.

### **The Placement Plan**

The Placement Plan is an integral part of the care plan for the child or young person and should be developed in partnership with the child (where appropriate), the child's carer and the parent as well as the child and foster carer's social workers to ensure that the contribution required from all parties is clearly recorded. It should include the reasons why the placement has been chosen.

The Placement Plan should provide clarity for the child and the child's carer about how the day to day parenting tasks will be shared between the parent(s), carer and the responsibility authority.

Wherever possible, the Placement Plan should be completed prior to the child being placed. If this is not possible then it must be made within five working days of the start of the placement.

The essential information for providing safe, child centred care to the child must be available to the carer at the start of the placement.

For more information on this see document: [Regulation 9 and Schedule 2 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Guidance and Regulations \(2010\)](#).

The Placement Plan should make clear who has authority to make decisions in key areas of the child's day to day life. The arrangements for delegating responsibilities to foster carers must be specific for each child, as their circumstances and care/placement plan will be unique.

**Delegated Authority** - should be determined by the responsible authority, but in consultation with foster carers, the Fostering Service, parents and children themselves. The plan must make the level of delegated authority clear – see Suffolk Policy for *Delegating authority to foster carers and children's homes*.

The Statutory Guidance Delegation of Authority amends the Volume 2 Care Planning, placement and Case Review and aims to ensure that authority for day to day decision making about a child in care should be delegated to the child's foster carer unless there is a valid reason not to do so and that the child's view should also be taken into account in decisions about delegation of authority.

**Review of Arrangements Report** – this report is completed by the child/young person's social worker prior to every Children in Care review. They may ask you for some information to help complete it. See section C2 for more information.

## **Pathway Plans**

Pathway Plans are completed within 3 months of a young person's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and set out the arrangements for supporting the young person through to independence. A pathway plan is about the young person's immediate and long term future which follows from a needs assessment. This should cover:

- accommodation arrangement
- education/training and employment
- family and social relationship
- practical skills
- leisure activities
- health
- finances such as personal allowances, training money
- life skills
- transitional skills

A personal advisor or social worker from the Leaving Care Service will establish a good relationship with the young person and will work alongside them to help achieve their goals.

In Suffolk, we encourage all foster carers to offer a Staying Put arrangement to the young people they are fostering immediately prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **Eligible young person**

An eligible young person is a person who is still looked after. He or she will have a pathway plan and a statutory review.

## **Relevant young person**

A relevant young person (no longer looked after) who is between the ages of 16 to 18 will have a pathway plan. This will end at age 21, unless the young person is in higher education, in which case this can continue until the age of 24. A relevant young person will be paid allowances from the 16+ Service.



## **Personal Education Plan**

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a document describing a course of action to help a child or young person reach his/her full academic and life potential.

The PEP should be put together and be completed at a meeting in which the designated teacher, social worker and foster carers for the young person in public care are present. The child or young person should also be part of their education planning, either at the PEP meeting itself or through discussions outside that meeting.

## Section C2. Children and Young People Reviews

### Children in Care [CiC] - Review and Meetings.

CiC Reviews are held by the local authority to monitor a foster child's care plan, to assess how the placement is progressing and to decide on whether the care plan needs updating or changing. You will be invited to attend and to provide a report on your foster child's progress throughout their stay with you. Your Supervising Social Worker will also be present.

- Be prepared to attend a review within the first month of placement, then after three months and thereafter every six months.
- Before each CiC review you should receive a consultation form from the local authority for you to complete. This form asks you to provide information regarding the child/young person in terms of their education, health, leisure activities, hobbies, eating and sleeping patterns, personal relationships, etc. and of course any significant incidents and/or disclosures. It is also useful to identify any additional help you think your foster child/young person requires.
- Remember, the child /young person has a right to attend a review or have somebody to represent them. Other interested professionals can also attend reviews.
- Often birth parents are invited to attend their child's review.

Your home is often the place where reviews are held, but they can also be held at Suffolk County Council premises, or an alternative venue. Meetings other than reviews can be held to discuss particular problems or just to allow the child/young person access to their social worker.

### How can children and young people have their say?

- **Suffolk Children's Rights Team** - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/childrens-rights-for-children-and-young-people-in-care/> - The Children's Rights Team works with groups of children and young people who are in care, care leavers or receiving support from social care, to ensure they are able to have their say in all matters affecting their lives. Call FREE: **0800 917 1119**
- **The Source** - is managed by the [Youth Support Service](#) within Children and Young People's Services at Suffolk County Council. "We are part of a much bigger service that works to support to children, young people and families. The Source website is a key part of that support and it's *accessible to everyone*. <http://www.thesource.me.uk/>  
The Source have webpages specifically for children in care in Suffolk, full of advice and guidance, with links to the Children's Rights Team.  
<http://www.thesource.me.uk/home/in-care-or-going-into-care/>

- **Brighter Futures** - is an activity group for children in care, up to 12 to give their views while having fun.
- **The Children in Care Council (C2C)** - is where looked-after children and care leavers can give their views, have their say, challenge and even change the way local authorities run children's services and children's lives.

To get involved with Brighter Futures or the C2C, contact the Children's Rights Team.

- **Advocacy** - This means helping young people to stand up for themselves and make their voices heard. In Suffolk, two organisations provide independent advocates and work with children, young people and care leavers on an individual basis.
  - **Anglia Care Trust (ACT)** - can support children and young people to speak up:
    - At review meetings
    - At child protection conferences (if you are over 12)
    - If you want to make a complaint or have a concern.

If a child/young person would like an advocate to support them with a particular area of life to ensure their views are heard, please contact ACT Helpline number on 01473 622888.

- **Access Unlimited Advocacy** - assist children and young people with a disability to have their say. Contact them on 01473 260026 or email [info@activities-unlimited.co.uk](mailto:info@activities-unlimited.co.uk)

Information on all the advocacy and participation services provided in Suffolk can be found at: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/childrens-rights-for-children-and-young-people-in-care/>



## Section C3. Record Keeping

### What is good record keeping?

As a foster carer for Suffolk Fostering Service you are uniquely placed to make observations about the children placed with you. You are asked to keep written log sheets and record relevant events to enable a child or young person to have an accurate record of their time with you and to contribute to any assessments of the young person's needs. They are also significant in recording and monitoring a young person's behaviour.

### By keeping accurate records you will:

- **Protect a child or young person in placement:** Accurate records are crucial in helping to keep foster children safe and in contributing to making the best plans for their care.
- **Protect yourself:** Accurate records are crucial in helping to keep you and your family safe. There are concerns about the number of complaints made against foster carers and by keeping an accurate record of your fostering experience you will be able to produce reliable information when necessary. Allegations can be made some time after the young person has moved and you may need to provide evidence some years after an alleged incident.
- **Support the Fostering Service:** Accurate records are essential to Suffolk Fostering Service's ability to support foster carers and to promote working in partnership. Your Supervising Social Worker will read and copy your log sheets regularly and offer support and guidance about the records that you keep. This will assist your development as a foster carer and enable your Supervising Social Worker to better understand your strengths and limitations for future matching considerations.

Please also see **Section B7** Confidentiality & Data Protection

# SECTION D:

## Health



.... more rewarding than ever

## Health

### Section D1. Health and Wellbeing

It is a vital part of the fostering task that a foster child/young person is supported to lead as healthy a lifestyle as possible.

All children in care are legally required to have a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) completed on an annual basis by their foster carer. These forms are sent out for **you** To complete and return.

#### Promoting a healthy lifestyle

- Provide a healthy, balanced diet.
- Encourage your foster child/young person to take regular exercise walking rather than being driven, take part in sports, cycling and so on.
- Give your foster child/young person age appropriate information to encourage their understanding of their own physical development.
- Teach children from the earliest age to practice good hygiene-e.g. washing their hands after using the toilet and before meals.

The *Change for Life* website <http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/> can provide more information.

#### Medical requirements and consents

- Once a child or young person is placed with a foster carer, the Foster carer has a duty to ensure that all health appointments are maintained and health issues are dealt with **immediately**. The child's health and welfare is ultimately the responsibility of their Child Care Social Worker. All health and medical issues will be discussed and recorded at each Children in Care [CiC] Review.
- Children in care should receive good medical and appropriate health care treatment at all times. Research tells us that these children are more likely to present additional health needs.
- A child/young person should have a health assessment when first arriving in placement and every year thereafter or 6 monthly if 0-5. It is **vital** that these assessments occur and that foster carers cooperate with arrangements for these. This may include taking the child out of school for the appointment and this should be recorded by the school as an authorised absence. Where young people refuse to attend a health assessment they should be encouraged to meet with a CiC nurse. Your Supervising Social Worker can assist with these arrangements.

- Ask for clarification as to who gives consent for medical treatment. This must be agreed at the placement meeting and will include any treatments for which you will need to ask permission.
- Make sure you are given the child's medical history from the outset, including any special needs and any pending health appointments.
- The child/young person will need to have access to a G.P, dentist and an optician. Check the arrangements already in place with the Childcare Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker. If you are needed to register the child/young person at a new G.P, dentist or optician you must inform the Childcare Social Worker and Fostering Social Worker of their details .
- Check before going ahead with invasive treatments-e.g. inoculations, injections and examinations. Young people over 16, with sufficient mental capacity can give their own consent.
- In an emergency, call FOOHAS, who will call the child/young person's social worker to obtain permission for medical treatment.
- Always notify Suffolk Fostering Service and the child's social worker of any accident or emergency.
- All accidents, illnesses and injuries must be recorded and Suffolk Fostering Service must be notified. This is in addition to any medication, medical treatment or first aid which may be given.
- Make sure your foster child/young person's school has your details, so that you can be contacted if they become ill at school.
- Ensure the child/young person's health needs are being met. Children under five must have six monthly review health assessments; over fives must have an annual review health assessment. The health assessments are completed by a Health Visitor or Doctor for the under 5's and by a Children in Care nurse or Doctor for 5-18 year olds. Following the health assessment a Health Care Plan is produced identifying health needs and how, when, and by whom these will be met.
- All health and medical issues will be discussed and recorded at each Children in Care [CiC] Review
- Children/young people should have dental checks every six months or year depending on the child's age. You may require permission for dental treatment. [See above]
- Keep information on your child/young person's health care up to date; including referrals to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

Foster carers should ensure that they have all health related information including dates of appointments (dentist, optician etc.) and dates of the child's immunisations available for the Initial and Review Health Assessments.

All children including those in care should have a yearly check with an optician and you will need to arrange this.

**Remember:** children who have been sexually abused may find any kind of examination very frightening. If you have any concerns, please contact Suffolk Fostering Service.



## Section D2. Smoking

### Foster carers and smoking

**NB** throughout this policy document 'smoking' means any cigarette, cigar, pipe or similar tobacco product; any herbal tobacco or tobacco substitute and vaping / use of electronic cigarettes.

Research highlights the negative impact that both active and passive smoking can have on health, particularly on that of children and young people. Research on the impact of electronic cigarettes is less conclusive but indications are that major health risks are associated with the use of electronic cigarettes.

Suffolk Fostering Service have a duty under childcare legalisation to promote the health of all Children in Care / young people. It is therefore important that foster carers consider promoting a healthy, active lifestyle and consider the negative impact of smoking on themselves, their families, and the children in their care.

Suffolk will not approve foster carers for children between the age of 0-5 years if anybody living in the household smokes.

Where foster carers are already approved for this age range and a member of the household starts to smoke or a new person moves into the family who smokes, including a child in care, discussions will take place to confirm if the child should remain in placement. No future placements of children 0-5 years can be made. An exception to this is placements for 'parent and child' where the parent of the child smokes.

Suffolk does approve foster carers who smoke but will only approve them for children over the age of 5. This approval is on the understanding that they and any other smokers in the household **MUST** smoke outside the house and take all precautions to ensure any child in care is not exposed to their smoking. Suffolk Fostering Service will also actively encourage all their foster carers who smoke to seek help and support from their GP surgery to consider giving up smoking.

Foster carers must ensure that a child's exposure to second hand smoke is minimised in all environments the child inhabits. They must provide a smoke free home and smoking must be banned, at all times, in any car used for transporting children and young people. Foster carers should be aware that it is illegal to smoke in a car or other vehicle when someone under the age of 18 is present.

Foster carers who smoke should be aware that their own smoking may influence the behaviour of children in their care and be sure that children/young people are well informed regarding the risks associated with smoking and the dangers of addiction.

Foster carers must consider carefully alongside their supervising social worker and the child's social worker how children/young people can be safeguarded when they spend long periods of time with anyone who smokes. For example, if birth relatives smoke heavily during contact time, or when being cared for in a 'parent and child' placement when the parent smokes.



Foster carers should actively encourage any child or young person placed with them who smokes to give up smoking. Foster carers should explain to children in care that smoking is not allowed in the foster home or the foster carer's car and that smoking **MUST** take place outside the house. If a child is struggling to comply with this policy the child's social worker and supervising social worker will do all they can to reinforce this with the child.

Foster carers should not supply young people with cigarettes or any smoking materials. Nor should they provide money specifically for smoking. Foster carers should be aware that it is illegal for adults to buy or attempt to buy tobacco or e-cigarettes for someone under 18

Foster carers should not smoke alongside children or young people as this will be interpreted, by the child, as active encouragement of their smoking.

## **Section D3. Guidance on Substance Misuse**

Use of alcohol and/or experimentation with drugs is part of normal growing up for many young people. Young people in care may be particularly vulnerable to problematic drug and alcohol use.

In order to help minimise the risks to young people's health and welfare, foster carers need to feel informed about the facts and supported by other people working with the child in their care.

### **Expectations of foster carers**

If you feel comfortable in discussing substance use and misuse you could be really effective in meeting some of the particular needs of the young people placed with you. With training and the support of other professionals you can play a key role in:

- encouraging young people to behave sensibly in relation to drugs and other substances
- identifying when a young person's substance use is becoming a problem and that s/he may need more specialist help
- helping young people access medical assistance in an emergency and providing a safe, understanding home for young people suffering the effects of substance use
- providing opportunities for young people to talk about negative experiences of drug use within their birth families/peer groups
- discussing substance misuse at key meetings such as CiC reviews
- establishing ground rules and open communication with the young people in your care
- liaising with school and ensuring a consistent approach is adopted.

### **Health issues**

Smoking is the biggest single cause of bad health and early death in the UK. Alcohol has no real safe limits for under 18 year olds. Binge drinking is the most dangerous. It can potentially lead to accidents, unsafe sex and violence and can cause acute alcohol poisoning.

Similarly Cannabis is more harmful than most young people realise. It harms the lungs and heart and can cause poor mental health in some young people. The more often it is smoked and the stronger the mix, the more harmful it becomes.

Hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, barbiturates and Temazepam cause serious health problems which require help. Solvents can cause sudden death through asphyxiation.

People use drugs for different reasons, in different ways in different situations:

- **EXPERIMENTATION** - because they are curious about the effects
- **RECREATIONAL** - for pleasure or social reasons (when going to a club or a party)
- **PROBLEMATIC DRUG USE** - has a harmful effect on a person's life. ONLY A SMALL PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WHO EVER TAKE DRUGS WILL BECOME PROBLEMATIC USERS.

### Definition of Use/Misuse

- **Use:** "Any substance use that does not dramatically alter a person's lifestyle or place them at particular risk".
- **Misuse:** "Substance use where a person's lifestyle is detrimentally altered by that use. This phrase 'detrimentally altered' can be used in a very broad sense and could equally refer to adverse financial consequences as to medical and social problems".

### Dealing with substance misuse

There are so many reasons why young people misuse drugs or alcohol. For some young people drugs or alcohol can seem to offer a means of escape from unhappy situations or from problems. Others may feel the need to be behaving in the same way as their drug-taking friends. Some may just be curious and want to find out what a user's experience is like, while others like the affect that drugs give. Some start using because they are bored, others because they need to keep awake or get to sleep. Some will become addicted.

### Dealing with Emergencies within substance misuse

If the child or young person is unconscious, has difficulty in breathing, is seriously confused or disorientated or has taken a harmful toxic substance, send for an ambulance.

#### Before assistance arrives:

#### If conscious:

- ask the person what has happened and what has been taken
- do not induce vomiting
- keep the person under observation, warm, calm and quiet

- walk and talk to them to keep them conscious. If this is not practical, place them in the recovery position
- do not give tea or coffee - the caffeine may speed up the effect of the drug

**If unconscious:**

- ensure the person can breathe and place in the recovery position
- loosen tight clothing
- do not move the person if a fall is likely to have led to spinal injury
- do not give anything by mouth
- do not attempt to make the person sit or stand
- do not leave the person unattended or in the charge of another child

**When medical assistance arrives:**

- pass on information available, including any substances.

**When the incident has been safely managed:**

- inform your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker
- if the incident has occurred out of office hours, inform FOOHAS out of-hours duty social worker
- record what has happened and what action you have taken

**Dealing with intoxication**

When you believe a young person is intoxicated, they may appear lightheaded, unsteady, detached or aggressive - consider the need for:

- medical attention.
- separating from other children.
- supervision and monitoring.
- moving him or her to a quiet, calm and safe place.

**Do not:**

- allow him or her to wander.

- give tea or coffee - the caffeine may speed up the drugs.
- lecture or discipline him or her at this point in time.

**Always:**

- remain calm, speaking clearly and without displaying any anger or fear.
- ask them what has been taken in case the situation requires medical involvement.
- keep stimulation, sound and vision to a minimum.
- reassure them as they may be scared, distressed or paranoid.

**When the incident has been safely managed:**

- record what has happened and what action you have taken.
- inform your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker as soon as possible.

**Disposal of substances**

Do not assume that any unfamiliar substance is necessarily illegal- it could be a prescribed medication that is in the child's lawful possession.

**Taking possession of an illegal or controlled drug**

Taking possession of an illegal or controlled drug is not an offence if it is to prevent a young person having possession of it. You are not legally required to inform the Police but, once in your possession, it must be disposed of properly.

If emergency medical help has been called for, pass the substances to ambulance/medical staff to assist with diagnosis of a young person. Otherwise, contact your Supervising Social Worker for advice and record your actions.

**Disposal of injecting equipment**

If you discover syringes, remember they may carry blood borne viruses from your foster child or their associates and need to be handled with extreme care:

- use protective gloves
- place them in a rigid container, e.g. a biscuit tin, and clearly label it
- take the rigid container to a hospital, doctor's surgery or drugs service

- Seek immediate medical attention for yourself if you injure yourself on a syringe.

### **If your foster child brings drugs into your home:**

- Speak to your Supervising Social Worker.
- Inform the child's social worker and ask advice on how to dispose of the drugs. [It is important that the social worker authority knows and shares a plan to manage this situation].
- Make clear to the child /young person that your home is a drug free zone.
- Encourage the young person to get involved with a legal activity that gives them an alternative sense of excitement or release.
- Decide what information concerning the effects and danger of drug use to give to the young person. This should be done after discussion with your Supervising Social Worker and the child's social worker.
- Help the young person to prepare and make plans for their own safety before attending parties, going clubbing etc.
- Teach the young person what to do in an emergency if either they or one of their friends is taken seriously ill.

### **Useful Website**

- [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) - This is a website that provides lots of advice on drugs and the effects they can have. They have a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year telephone advice line - 0300 123 6600. They also have live chat 2pm to 6pm every day of the week and a 'quick answer' text service on 82111. Email is [frank@talktofrank.com](mailto:frank@talktofrank.com)



## **Section D4. Sex Education, Sexual Health and Young People**

Looking after children and young people involves encouraging them to look after not only their physical and emotional health, but also their sexual health.

“Sexual health” includes a wide range of issues, such as sexuality, self-esteem, relationships, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Supporting a young person means acknowledging their right to receive sound, age-appropriate information, giving opportunities to discuss their worries about personal relationships and protecting them from harmful situations yet allowing them to learn for themselves.

children in care are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse from older people. Often their lack of an emotionally warm and safe attachment experiences makes them prey to those who seem to offer affection and attention. In addition to this a diminished awareness of danger makes young people more prone to taking risks and this may lead them into behaviours that can lead to them becoming unsafe.

### **Provision of sex and relationship education by foster carers**

In consultation with a young person placed with you, their social worker and your Supervising Social Worker, you have a responsibility to provide appropriate information and support to promote their positive sexual health.

You should support young people to develop their assertiveness and negotiating skills to help them resist any pressure to have early and unwanted sex. A young person’s parents may express wishes about their child’s sex education, which should be taken into account, but your over-riding concern must be to safeguard a young person’s health and welfare.

You can take young people to sexual health services as part of a wider sex education programme and accompany them to a clinic if you consider the young person to be at risk of unprotected sex and is concerned about visiting the clinic.

You can provide information on contraception options but as you are not a health professional you should not give advice. The health professionals will provide advice directly to a young person. Arrangements can be made through your Supervising Social Worker or the Child Care Social Worker for the CiC Nurse to advise the young person.

You should be aware that schools are required to provide sexual health education as part of the curriculum for all children and young people. School programmes on sexual health are based on national and local guidelines and take place both at primary and secondary level. If not automatically notified by a child’s school, you should try to find out when sexual health programmes are being introduced so that children and young people attend.

Information regarding sexual health education in schools can be obtained from the Head Teacher or the Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) Coordinator at school.

children in care have a dedicated teacher within schools and you should link with that person to explore the sex and relationships education provided. Arrangements can be made, in agreement with the Child Care Social Worker, for the school nurse to offer additional advice to the young person.

### **Contraception advice and information**

You should explain to young people that they have the right to confidential contraception and sexual health advice and services, even if they are under 16 years old or on a Care Order.

If a young person asks, you should encourage them to seek sexual health and contraception advice. This includes under 16s, gay, lesbian, transgender and bi-sexual and young people who may be unsure about their sexual orientation or preferences.

You may direct them to local services if it appears that the young people are, or are thinking about becoming sexually active or if you feel that by doing so you are protecting them from unplanned pregnancies. Ensure they are aware of how and where to access Emergency Contraception.

You should provide information about the sexual health clinics where young people can get advice and or treatment for sexually transmitted infections if you feel that by doing so you are protecting them from infections.

If considered necessary, you should provide details of free pregnancy testing and pregnancy counselling services. These services will also provide confidential support to young women in the decisions they may need to make as a result of the test.

You can accompany them to appointments or drop in clinics if that is helpful.

You can provide leaflets and posters about local services alongside information about other relevant community services.

If you would like to provide condoms and arrange or carry out a pregnancy test, you should consult your Supervising Social Worker.

A disclosure by a young person of underage sex is not necessarily a reason to breach confidentiality, but you should clarify the confidentiality situation with your Supervising Social Worker before any education, support or referral to services is provided.

You must remain alert to the possibility that the young person may be subject to sexual exploitation if associating with an older peer group or older males.

### **Some basic principles to remember:**

The welfare of the child/young person is the most important issue and must be at the forefront of all actions taken.

- Young people should be kept safe and must be protected from abuse.

- The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that children under the age of 13 years do not have the capacity to consent to sex and anyone involved in sexual activity with a child under 13 is liable to prosecution – presumed consent cannot be a defence. Sexual intercourse with a child aged 12 or younger is classified as rape.
- Young people have the right to education about sex and relationships which informs them when their behaviour is risky, as well as how to access sexual health and contraception.
- Young people in care have the same right to confidentiality from services as other young people unless it compromises the rights of others or themselves or places others or themselves at risk of harm.
- Disability does not necessarily preclude sexual young people from sexually fulfilling relationships or risk taking behaviours.

#### **FOSTER CARERS SHOULD NOT:**

- Talk freely about their own sexual activity – this can leave the child and sometimes the foster carers feeling unsafe and can blur boundaries. It is best to discuss your intentions with your Supervising Social Worker if you feel a limited amount of self-disclosure may aid your support of the young person
- Give advice to young women on which form of contraception to use – you can provide information but the type of contraception has to be based on individual health profile and implications and should only be undertaken by a family planning trained nurse or doctor.
- Break the young person's right to confidentiality if there is no good reason to do so.
- Keep information confidential if the young person's behaviour puts themselves or others at risk of serious harm.
- Condone young peoples' relationships with older adults.

A foster carer's role is vital in assisting young people to find out accurate, relevant information that will enable them to see sexuality as something positive in their lives.

You do not have to be a medical expert to have a conversation with a foster child about sexuality and sexual health. Seek advice from your own networks of family and friends; investigate local sources of information such as your GP, clinics and health centres.

#### **Useful Websites**

- **The Source** - <http://www.thesource.me.uk/health/> - this website covers all health related subjects including 'understanding your sexuality' and 'sex and sexual health services'. It states "*This section is all about helping you, your*

*friends or someone you care for live a healthy, safe and happy lifestyle. Remember it is your body and your choice; but whatever you decide, it is important to have the facts and take responsibility.”*

- [www.teenagehealthfreak.org](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.org) - This is a site for teenagers about the changes they have going on in their body. It also answers any health related questions they might want to ask.

## Section D5. Special Needs/Disabilities

Children and young people with disabilities, ranging from babies to teenagers, may be placed with foster carers. Sometimes their parents may feel unable to care for them and these children often need to be placed in long-term foster care. For other families of children with disabilities there might be a need for the child /young person to be placed regularly with foster carers for a few days each week, or each month, to help support them. Supporting both the family of a disabled child as well as the child can be hugely rewarding and is often referred to as short break or LINK foster care.

Some of these children/young people have learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, whilst others may have been physically disabled from birth or have suffered an accident or injury that has resulted in them being disabled. A child/young person with disabilities is therefore a broad term which does not capture the abilities of children who also have additional needs.

If you are fostering a child/young person with a disability, you may require specific training about the particular needs of the individual child. You may, for instance, need to learn sign language or how to use other forms of communication, or how to manage any particular medical or behavioural needs the child may have.

It could also be helpful for you to join a local support group or voluntary organisation relevant to the child's particular impairment.

You may be required to undertake additional tasks in caring for a child/young person with significant impairments, such as personal care for older children, attending hospital or clinic appointments more frequently, helping with physiotherapy exercises, for example.

There may be occasions when a foster carer might wish to ask for support in the form of short breaks from caring which can sometimes be provided by another foster carer.

Children/young people with disabilities may need additional space especially if they are physically disabled and have equipment such as a wheelchair, special seating, hoisting equipment etc. You should ensure that as well as having their own private space, the child has easy access to all family rooms.

Speak to your Supervising Social Worker if you have any questions or training needs in this area.

### Useful Websites

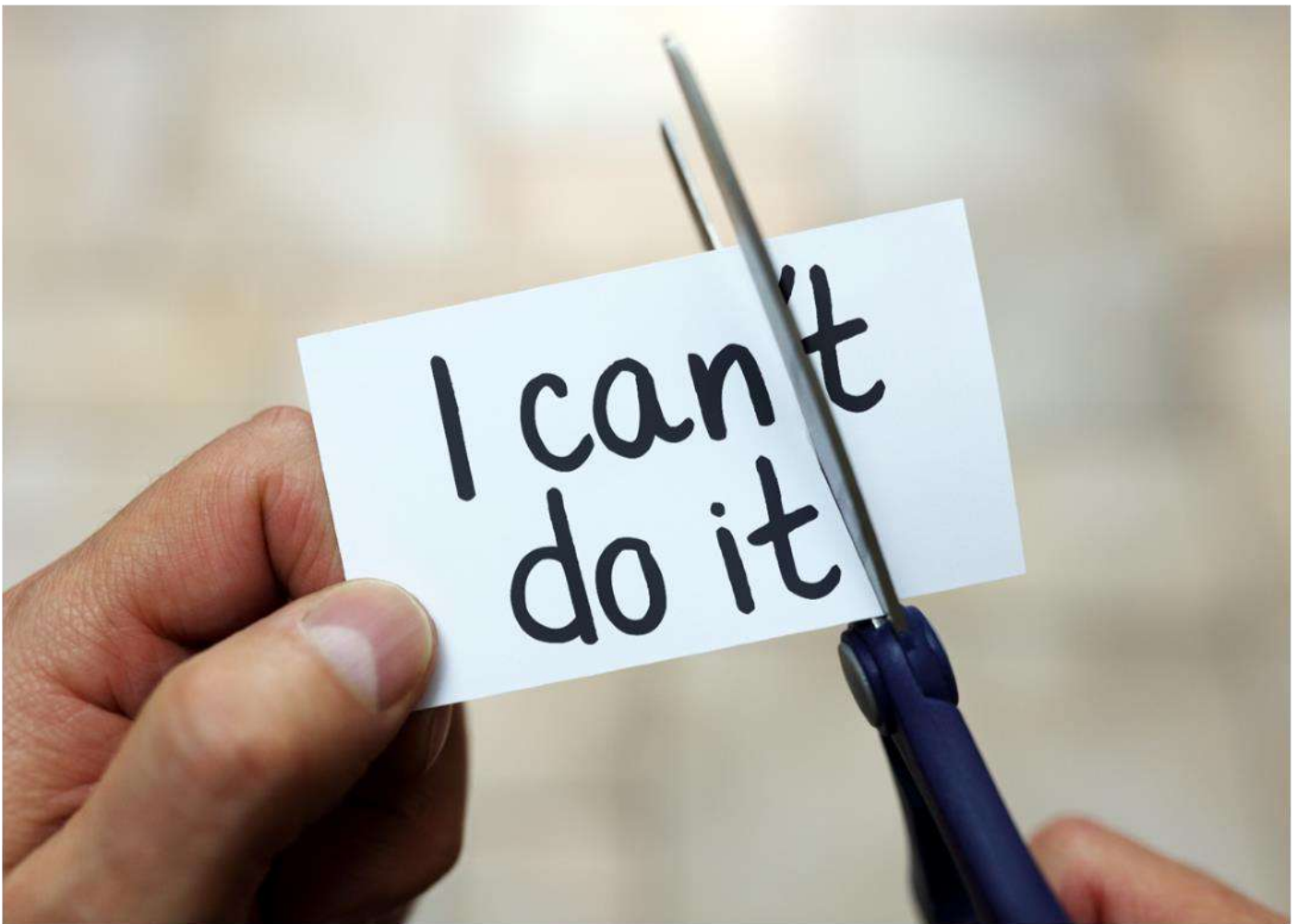
- Free E learning about disability support <https://www.disabilitymatters.org.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=3>
- Suffolk Local Offer <http://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/localoffer.page;jsessionid=CE457F82E01038312D4EB0688F1D7934?localofferchannelnew=0>

- The Makaton Charity - some free resources and advice available to support alternative communication <https://www.makaton.org/>
- Autism Suffolk <http://www.autism-anglia.org.uk/>
- Parents' and carer's guide to the SEND CoP 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>
- Early Years resources for settings – helps carers/adopters understand the early years approach to SEND <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>



# SECTION E:

## Education



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## Education

### **Section E1. Education**

Foster carers are well placed to be the positive advocates that so many children and young people need. As you provide the day-to-day care to children and young people you are regularly dealing with their education issues, problems and achievements. You provide the link with teachers, birth parents and other professionals. The role of the parent in education legislation is very broad and you will fulfil a parental role in working with schools and other education providers.

There is a network of support to help you carry out your crucial role in promoting positive educational outcomes for children and young people, including:

- Advice and assistance from your Supervising Social Worker.
- Advice and assistance from the child/young person's social worker.
- Training programmes for foster carers.
- Suffolk's Education Champions for Children in Care
- Support groups and support from other foster carers
- Suffolk's Virtual School Team

### **Responsibility of foster carers**

Foster carers should:

- Contact the school that the child will be attending and give/ gather relevant information as soon as the child/young person school placement is confirmed.
- Go to the school and introduce yourself to the class teacher and designated teacher for Children in Care (see below).
- Ensure that the child/young person attends school every day unless they are unwell. *Children in Care may not take holidays in term time unless there is approval from the Assistant Director to request authorisation from the head teacher – speak to your supervising social worker and the child's social worker if you think there is a good reason to ask for this.*
- Seek support from your Supervising Social Worker or the child/young person's social worker if educational problems occur. Experienced foster carers with an Educational background are available to offer support through the Education Champions scheme. You can also ask for advice directly from the Virtual School team. Contact details are below.

- Accompany the child/young person to and from school, according to their age and ability. Remember that Children in Care may need more support and for longer than their peers.
- Maintain regular contact with the school and attend parents' evenings and school functions, such as school plays, sports days and awards ceremonies.
- Ensure that the child/young person has somewhere quiet to study and do homework, encourage them to do it and offer help where appropriate. Recent research has shown that completing homework regularly can add around 5 months of additional academic progress.
- Encourage all children/young people to develop their own talents, interests, and hobbies.
- Ensure that all children/young people join a library.
- Build up a supply of children's books, including those that deal with anti-discriminatory issues and relate to the experience of being Looked After.
- Read to or with the child/young person as appropriate to their stage of development. Find as many opportunities as you can and be creative to increase the amount of reading your child is exposed to.
- Children in Care will receive a letterbox package containing age appropriate books and activities for you to share with them throughout their time at school, usually when they are in years 1,3,5,7 and 9.
- Encourage children/young person to watch educational programmes and videos and go on outings to places of interest. Foster carers can use everyday situations to promote learning.
- Encourage and facilitate children/young people to participate in after school / extra-curricular activities.
- Keep information on the child/young person's educational circumstances and attainments and discuss these with the child/ young person.
- Encourage children/young people to be aspirational and reach their potential. To do well educationally, to consider going on to further or higher education and achieve their dream career.
- Attend and contribute to the young person's PEP meeting and reviews. Ask for copies of the documents after each term's PEP meeting.

Note that there are two documents which form the completed PEP on each occasion:

- **The Progress and Pupil Premium Grant form** which the designated teacher should complete beforehand so that those attending the meeting can see how well young people are doing against expected levels and what the school is doing to support them. This will include details on how the school are spending the Pupil Premium Grant which is additional funding for schools to raise the attainment of Children in Care.
- **The PEP meeting record** which is a record of the meeting itself., this should include the views of all present, including the child.

At your annual foster carer review and during CiC reviews, for the children/young people placed with you, educational issues will be fully discussed.

### **The Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

All looked after children and young people in school should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). This should be initiated by the social worker before the child becomes looked after or within 10 working days if the child becomes looked after in an emergency. PEP review meetings should be held termly and never more than six months apart. An up to date PEP must be scrutinised by the Independent Reviewing Officer at each statutory review of the care plan.

The PEP is an important document which ensures that children and young people can express their views about their education, what they most like and dislike about school. The PEP records the young person's achievements, strengths, abilities, and areas for improvement. It considers how the school and other relevant personnel can help the young person achieve their best and specifies targets and strategies that will help raise levels of achievement.

This extract from "*Promoting the education of looked after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities*" (DfE July 2014) explains what a PEP involves:

#### *The Personal Education Plan (PEP)*

*31. All looked after children must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part.*

*32. All of those involved in the process of developing the PEP should use it to support the personalised learning of the child.*

*33. The PEP (pre-school to age 18) is an evolving record of what needs to happen for looked after children to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the identified educational needs of the child, raises aspirations, and builds life chances.*

*34. The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority that looks after the child and the school. Social workers, carers, VSH (Virtual School Head), designated teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals will need to work closely together. All those involved in the PEP process should involve the child at all stages (according to understanding and ability) and, as appropriate, the child's parent or relevant family member.*

### PEP content

35. *The range of education and development needs that should be covered in a PEP includes:*

- *access to a nursery or other high quality early years' provision that is appropriate to the child's age (e.g. pre-school playgroups) and meets their identified developmental needs*
- *on-going catch-up support for those who have fallen behind with school work (including use of effective intervention strategies)*
- *provision of immediate suitable education where a child is not in school (e.g. because of temporary or permanent exclusion)*
- *transition support needs where needed, such as when a child begins to attend a new school or returns to school (e.g. moving from pre-school, primary to secondary school or following illness or exclusion) or when a child has a plan for permanence (e.g. placed for adoption) and may change schools as part of that plan;*
- *support needed to help the child realise their short and long-term academic achievements and aspirations. This includes:*
  - *support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national curriculum key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications*
  - *careers advice and guidance and financial information about further and higher education, training, and employment*
  - *out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests*
  - *school attendance and, where appropriate, behaviour support*

*PEP meetings generally take place at the school and as a foster carer you should be invited, as your views and input into the child's educational progress are very important.*

PEP meetings generally take place at the school and as a foster carer you should be invited, as your views and input into the child's educational progress are very important.

### **Safeguarding roles in schools**

All staff in school have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children attending their school. However, there are additional requirements for Children in Care.

The governing body of every maintained school, academy and free school must appoint:

- A designated teacher for looked after children
- A designated senior lead (DSL) for safeguarding

These are two separate roles but they can be undertaken by one person. The designated teacher must be a qualified teacher and the senior lead should have a leadership role in the school. All schools **MUST** make sure they have a DSL on site at all times.

The designated teacher has overall responsibility within a school for the welfare and educational achievement of all Children in Care. They are responsible for the school's



contribution to a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and for liaison with other professionals and agencies.

### **The Virtual School**

The Virtual School tracks the attainment and attendance of Suffolk's Children in Care, wherever they are placed. The Virtual School team can offer advice and support on:

- Ensuring children make good progress
- Changing school, both at times of normal transition and when there are good reasons to change school out of the normal round of admissions
- Supporting education

### **Special Educational Needs**

Many Children in Care have special educational needs for which they require additional support to ensure they can learn.

The Virtual School team can provide initial advice or direct carers to other professionals.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice substantially changed previous legislation and processes with effect from 1st September 2014.

It can be found here:

- [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398815/SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_January\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

Some Children in Care with significant Special Educational Needs may have an Education, Health, and Care Plan, it is a replacement for the 'statement' system and sets out the needs of the child / young person and the provision the school and local authority must make for them.

### **Contact Details**

- Up to date contact details for the Virtual School can be found at:  
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/the-virtual-school-for-children-looked-after/>
- For the Education Champion's service please contact Heidi Austin on 01473 264404 or [Heidi.Austin@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Heidi.Austin@suffolk.gov.uk)



## **Section E2. Life Story Work**

Most children/young people coming into care face disruption, anxiety, separation and loss (on many levels) and all at a time when they are most vulnerable. They often do not know or struggle to understand the reasons why they are being placed into care. Some are too young, others deliberately or subconsciously block painful memories from their minds. For others, memories become confused, forgotten or distorted.

They may hear conflicting stories from all the people involved. They may well need advice and support about how they will explain their situation to others, especially their friends and peers. It can be useful to help them think through what is appropriate and when to share the details of their situation.

This is particularly important for school age children who may have to explain to peers about the change in circumstances, that they are not living in the family home and may even have to change schools as a result of becoming looked after.

### **The Importance of Life Story work**

Life Story Work can help children to understand how they have come to be looked after and to know about their birth families and others who they may have become separated from as a result of being in care.

Many adults who have been through the care system do not even possess a single photograph of themselves as a child/young person. Life story work will make sure that this does not happen to your foster child/young person.

Life story work is the overall responsibility of the child/young person's social worker, but foster carers have an important part to play when a child/young person comes into the home.

Here are some tasks that will help:

- Begin to collate life work information on each child/young person from the date the placement was made.
- Include photographs and memorabilia such as certificates obtained through school or through out-of-school activities. Include items such as school reports, exam results, holiday souvenirs, theatre programmes, competitions and sport contests entered.
- Give the children/young person any photos that are taken of them, including school photos, which you are required to purchase on behalf of each child/young person. All these costs are included in the fostering fee.
- Encourage a child/young person to reflect on and understand his/her history as appropriate to age and ability.
- Ensure all information about a child/young person and collected items are safe in a box, scrapbook or photo albums.

- Hand over the 'life book' along with any other possessions when a child leaves their placement.

The child's social worker can provide more information about Life Story Work and how you can be involved as a foster carer.

## SECTION F:

# Transition to Adulthood

## Preparing for Independence and Staying Put



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## Transition to Adulthood

### **Section F1. Preparation for Independence**

#### **Introduction**

Preparation for adulthood starts at an early age. In effect it is a lifelong process, which needs to begin a long time before a young person becomes 16 years old. Foster carers and Staying Put providers will be expected to play a significant part in the process of preparing a young person to make the transition into adulthood and living more independently.

Suffolk Fostering Service expect all foster carers to consider offering a Staying Put arrangement to looked after children they foster immediately prior to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. See Section F2 (**Staying Put**) for more information.

Responsibility for looked after young people usually transfers to the Leaving Care Team on or around their 16th birthday. In order to make that transfer easier, the designated social worker from the new team will start to get to know the young person at around age 15 ½ and will start to prepare a Needs Assessment. This will be completed before the young person's 16th birthday, and foster carers, as the people who often know them best, should play a significant role in preparing this.

In conjunction with your Supervising Social Worker, the leaving care team ensures that foster carers and Staying Put providers help to develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

#### **Expectations**

All young people aged 16 years and above will have a Pathway Plan that will be completed by the time they are 16 years of age. While it is the responsibility of the designated worker to see that this is completed at the right time, foster carers and Staying Put providers will be expected to help with devising and drawing up that plan. They will be expected to support the young person in achieving the objectives in that plan and to be involved in a review of the plan, taking place every 6 months.

Foster carers and Staying Put providers will receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to a young person who is preparing to move into independent or semi-independent living. Foster carers will be expected to attend training courses that are available.

Foster carers and Staying Put providers will be expected to provide all young people with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills. These objectives will form part of the Pathway Plan.

All young people should be consulted about plans for their future and encouraged, by foster carers, to be actively involved in decision-making processes and implementation of the Pathway Plan.

Foster carers and Staying Put providers will be expected to support the young person in fulfilling their plans for education, employment and vocational training. They will need to encourage the young person to achieve their full potential in these aspects of their personal development.

### **Implementation of the Pathway Plan**

The purpose of the Pathway Plan is to consider the needs of each young person in relation to preparing for adult living. It is structured in a way that gives consideration to various aspects of a young person's development.

Detailed below are some examples of what a foster carer or Staying Put provider might be expected to do by way of supporting a young person who is living in their household.

#### **Accommodation**

- Helping a young person to understand about the responsibility of having their own accommodation, including money management and consideration of neighbours.
- Helping a young person to consider where they might like to live.
- Showing a young person how to do household tasks e.g. cleaning, maintenance.

#### **Finance**

- Helping a young person to budget.
- Supporting a young person to open a bank account.
- Assisting a young person to make a benefit claim.

#### **Employment**

- Motivating and helping a young person to find employment
- Support with preparing for and attending a job interview
- Support in attending job-related appointments e.g.

#### **Education and Training**

- Encouraging and motivating young people to pursue post-16 learning and development opportunities.
- Assisting young people to identify the most suitable course
- Attending interviews and meetings at school/ college



- Liaising with staff in school/ college

### **Health and Leisure**

- Encourage young people to attend health services such as the GP, Dentist, Optician, Hospital, and Sexual Health Clinic.
- Assist a young person in developing a healthy and affordable diet
- Encourage and support a young person to develop affordable leisure activities

### **Personal Support, Family and Social Relationships**

- Promote positive contact with a young person's family
- Support a young person in developing and maintaining friendships
- Support a young person to access information and services

### **Personal Care**

- Helping a young person to develop a sense of personal safety
- Supporting and encouraging a young person to care for themselves
- Helping a young person to travel independently

### **Summary**

Each looked after young person needs to be treated as an individual. Foster carers will be provided with the support and guidance to enable them to assist the young person to develop their potential and make the transition into adulthood a positive experience in spite of some of the difficulties that will be experienced along the way.

### **Steps needed for successful independence**

It is very important that looked after children, who often have no back up from their own birth family, are thoroughly prepared for independent living. Preparation for adulthood is a key aspect of the fostering task and begins whenever a child is placed with you. Suffolk Fostering Service offers foster carers training in this area.

Much of the work of preparing young people for adulthood will occur naturally in the day-to-day care of your foster child by:

- Building self-esteem, confidence and independence. This is vital for the child's development as an independent adult.



- Identifying areas where there will be the need for extra support or work to prepare a child for adulthood and by regular discussion with your Supervising Social Worker.
- Encouraging the young person to take full advantage of further education opportunities.
- Encouraging the young person to take up work experience opportunities.
- Giving guidance to the young person on questions concerning relationships.
- Making sure the young person has a basic understanding of nutrition and knows how to shop for food and cook for themselves.
- Setting expectations for children and young people around household tasks i.e. drawing curtains, laying the table, keeping room tidy.
- Giving financial guidance i.e. saving regularly, paying bills, using credit cards etc.
- Involving children and young people in daily domestic activities.

**Note:** Also be willing to act as an advisor when your opinion is sought, even after independence. As with any young person becoming independent, a foster child may look to you for on-going support and guidance.

Remember Suffolk Fostering Service has a strong belief that former foster children should not feel they are on their own and offer you continued support should you require it to fulfil this part of your role.

## Section F2. Staying Put

From the age of 18 young people are no longer legally 'in care' and, therefore, fostering arrangements and legislation relating to children placed with foster carers no longer apply. In circumstances, where a young person remains with their former foster carer after their 18th birthday, the arrangement must therefore be deemed a '**Staying Put arrangement**' and should be referred to as such.

The term **Staying Put** is used to define the following arrangements where:

1. A young person who was looked after immediately prior to their 18th birthday (as an eligible child) continues to reside with their former foster carer;
2. The carers were acting as foster carers to the child immediately prior to the young person's 18th birthday. That is, the carers were approved as foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 (amended July 2013) and the child had been placed with them by the local authority, or via an Independent Fostering Agency;
3. A young person is deemed an eligible child, within the meaning of paragraph 19B(2) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989, immediately before he/she reached 18;
4. The Staying Put arrangement is set out in the young person's Pathway Plan;

The **primary aim of Staying Put** is to promote a gradual transition from care to adulthood and independent living. It is recognised that many young people in care often experience delayed maturity and that their 18th birthday may be an arbitrary and inappropriate point to leave a familial and foster care household. The **Suffolk Staying Put scheme** is designed to ensure young people do not experience a sudden disruption to their living arrangements, that educational and training achievement and continuity is promoted and that all young people can make gradual steps from care to independence or to an Adult Service. This is particularly important for young people with additional needs where there may be a joint Children's and Adult's Services approach to transition. Where there is any difficulty in planning, the process undertaken should ensure that neither the young person nor carer is disadvantaged during the transition.

The **Staying Put arrangement** extends until:

- the young person first leaves the Staying Put arrangement;
- the young person reaches their 21st birthday, if continuously, and still living in the arrangement;
- the young person completes the agreed programme of education or training being undertaken on their 21st birthday, if continuously living in the arrangement since their 18th birthday e.g. attending college or university locally.

The foster carer's supervising social worker will provide information, advice and guidance to the foster carer about the arrangement and the social worker or leaving care worker (Catch 22 worker) will provide this to the young person from the age of 15, in advance of their first pathway planning meeting. The option of entering into a staying put arrangement should be discussed in the young person's first pathway planning meeting. If the former foster carer is going to continue as a foster carer for other children, the young person Staying Put will need to have a DBS check in the same way as any other adult household member. Staying put arrangements should be reviewed as part of the Pathway Plan at a minimum of every 6 months.

**The Suffolk Staying Put** scheme has two steps to ensure that young people and carers are supported and Staying Put Carers are remunerated appropriately.

### **Staying Put – Step 1**

A foster care placement can be 'extended' from the young person's 18th birthday as a Staying Put Step 1 arrangement for up to one year for all eligible young people. This is to allow the young person to settle into adulthood and to complete any educational course they may be attending. Following best practice in Suffolk, all foster carers will be expected to consider Staying Put Step 1 arrangements as part of the planning for their looked after child/young person. This will be seen as an 'opt out' rather than an 'opt in' approach. During this period, the Staying Put carer will receive a Staying Put allowance to support the arrangement. This is made up of the amount of fostering allowance that the former foster carer was receiving prior to the young person's 18th birthday, minus the benefit support amount the young person is entitled to receive. In addition, the young person is expected to claim housing benefit or pay rent, which is paid directly to the Staying Put carer as part of the Staying Put allowance. The young person will also pay a fixed contribution to the utilities and an amount towards food that should be negotiated with the carer and set out in the Staying Put Agreement.

### **Staying Put – Step 2**

Where a Staying Put carer and young person wish to extend the arrangement and it is assessed that the young person would continue to benefit from remaining with their Staying Put carer, a Staying Put Step 1 arrangement can be extended for up to a further two years to a Staying Put Step 2 arrangement. The same level of financial support and expectations associated with a Staying Put Step 1 arrangement apply although any fee element that was being paid under Step 1 would cease to apply unless there are exceptional circumstances for continuing, at a reduced rate. The Staying Put Step 2 arrangement can continue until the young person first leaves the placement (if before 21), reaches the age of 21 or completes the programme of education or training being undertaken on the young person's 21st birthday. Any extension beyond the 21st birthday must be agreed by Head of Corporate Parenting via an application to the County Resource Panel.

The arrangement can be ended by either the young person or the former foster carer giving notice, in most circumstances a minimum of 28 days. It is possible to end the arrangement with 7 days' notice in the event of exceptional circumstances leading to a breach of the agreement. This could, for example, be an act of verbal or physical violence by the young person, which could put other members of the household at risk, or substance misuse, or an offence which would prohibit the young person remaining in the foster household.

Where the young person wishes to Stay Put in a foster family arrangement but does not have the agreement of the foster carer to do so the Suffolk Fostering Service will try and identify an alternative foster family for the young person to move to prior to their 18th birthday to enable the young person to achieve their Staying Put entitlement.

More information about this arrangement is detailed in the Suffolk Staying Put Policy, available on [www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk).

# SECTION G:

## Carer Support and Training



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## **Carer Support and Training**

### **Section G1. Foster carer supervision and support**

Suffolk Fostering Service strongly endorses a professional partnership between foster carers and staff. We shall do all in our power to enable you to accomplish your task to the highest standards.

Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year.

#### **Supervision and Consultation**

There will be regular telephone and face-to-face contact with your Supervising Social Worker. The frequency will vary according to need and circumstances. For example, an experienced carer with a settled, long term placement may require less frequent visits than a foster carer providing very short term placements or a new foster carer who has a challenging placement such as a child with high level, complex needs. The frequency of meetings for short break foster carers should be proportionate to the amount of care provided.

Meetings must have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills.

Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings.

#### **What is the purpose of supervision?**

Supervision sessions offer support and provide an opportunity for a two-way discussion about your task as a foster carer. Each supervision session should be considered in the context of safer caring for both foster children and foster carers and your support and development needs.

#### **The Purpose of Supervision is to:**

- Identify and review key tasks.
- Agree action plans.
- Provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences and feelings about fostering.
- Give and receive constructive feedback.
- Examine the development of skills, knowledge and an appropriate value base.



- Identify appropriate ways to achieve your developmental needs.
- Discuss ideas for service improvements and developments.

**Note:** All appropriate documentation should be kept up to date and be available for inspection and discussion. Suffolk Fostering Service keeps copies of all supervision notes on file. Supervision records remain the property of Suffolk Fostering Service.

### **Foster Carer Support Groups**

Suffolk Fostering Service encourages and facilitates regular support groups for foster carers. The groups enable you to meet other foster carers and staff from Suffolk Fostering Service in order to discuss issues that arise in your role as foster carer.

The groups are a great way of meeting other foster carers, sharing knowledge, experience and forming networks. The meetings also provide us with an opportunity to listen to your views. We want to hear about your thoughts on improving the Service and how we can support you caring for children some of whom have complex needs.

Attendance at support groups is an essential requirement and an expectation of approved Suffolk Fostering Service foster carers. A list of the support groups is available on request. Meeting details are also published in the monthly Foster Carers Newsletter.

### **On-Call FOOHAS**

In the event of an emergency, 24 hour telephone access is available. Through this service you will be able to discuss how a particular situation may be managed with an experienced social worker.

## Section G2. Training

Suffolk Fostering Service provides a training and support programme designed to meet the needs and expectations of our foster carers in line with the National Minimum Standards. Your training and development record will be taken into account before placing a child with you.

In Suffolk, we expect foster carers to undertake a continuous training and development throughout their fostering careers. This includes courses you can attend for a day or over many weeks, speakers at support groups, reading, online and distance learning you can do alone at home and also accredited training such as the Diploma in Childcare.

Foster carers are required to complete a minimum of three training courses or learning activities a year, four in their first year. You will complete a Personal and Professional Development Plan (PPDP) in assessment which outlines your learning needs and which should be reviewed regularly in supervision and updated for your annual review. Training and learning that can be completed at home should supplement and not completely replace the need to attend courses with other carers or workers where learning can be from the discussions and debate with others. Your attendance or non-attendance at training will be placed before the Fostering Panel and considered as part of all foster carers' annual reviews. The training requirement applies to both carers in a joint household.

Fostering is continually changing and developing. Suffolk Fostering Service make sure that all our foster carers are kept up to date regarding current policies and legalisation through their Supervising Social Worker, Newsletter, or specific training.

OFSTED expects all foster carers to attend training and all foster carers training records may be inspected as part of the registration and inspection process.

A full training programme is provided for all foster carers which addresses, amongst other topics, child development, caring for children, child protection, child abuse, bullying, developing a safe environment, managing allegations, health promotion, legal and administrative requirements.

In Suffolk Fostering Service we acknowledge the important role that foster carers' birth children play when a child is placed with the family. We offer support and training for children.

Training can also be available at support groups. Suffolk Fostering Service expects foster carers to use these opportunities to increase their knowledge and develop their skills.

To find out more about some of the training courses available and to use the on line booking system (CPD online) please go to:

<http://www.suffolkcpd.co.uk/cpd/default.asp?ssid>

## **Diploma in Child Care Level 3**

In certain instances and in negotiation with the Head of Adoption and Fostering, Suffolk Fostering Service offers foster carers the opportunity to undertake accredited training as part of their professional development. The Diploma is a nationally recognised qualification that bases its assessment on a national set of standards and is awarded on evidence that is presented by the foster carer to demonstrate their competence.

All Foster carers will be allocated an assessor who will work alongside you to plan how evidence will be gathered; this can be in relation to direct observation of you fulfilling the role of being a foster carer, providing written work, or from witness testimonies.

If you are interested in finding out more then please speak to your Supervising Social Worker who will be able to give you more information.

## **Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers (Formerly CWDC)**

### **Introduction to the Standards**

The Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards form part of the foster carer's induction to the role. They provide a national minimum benchmark that sets out what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do within the first 12 months of being approved. The Standards were developed by the sector and were first introduced in 2007 and apply to all approved foster carers in England.

Suffolk Fostering Service will support you to achieve these standards. This support will ensure that the standards are delivered in a way which allows carers to understand how the standards support them in their caring role, encouraging them to build on any areas for development identified in their Form F assessment.

The TSD Standards, are designed to equip all foster carers with the skills and knowledge to provide high quality care to the children they look after. They are a requirement of the National Minimum Standards (Fostering)

Completion of these standards is a requirement for all approved carers in England and is referred within the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

Fostering Panel require newly approved foster carers to have completed the TSD Standards when being presented to Panel for the first Annual Foster Carer Review.

### **Post Approval**

Once panel is completed and you have been successful in your approval as Foster Carers for Suffolk County Council your Supervising Social Worker will contact you to arrange a date to commence your TSD portfolio and explain the process and continue to support you through the completion of the standards.

There are seven standards, and under these standards there are a number of topics that you will need to know about. Within the time frame of 12 months you need to evidence that you have met all these standards, many of which will be covered through

work you will be undertaking within your fostering role as well as with the additional training that you will be attending.

Your Supervising Social Worker or Support Worker will help you complete the evidence workbook or portfolio and will sign off each standard when you have provided sufficient evidence to meet the standard. At the end the Head of Adoption and Fostering or an appropriate person in the service will check to ensure that evidence work book or portfolio has been completed satisfactorily and will issue you with the certificate of successful completion.

## **Section G3. Foster Carer Peer support**

### **Peer Support**

In Suffolk, peer support, 'mentoring', 'self-help' support groups and foster care associations for foster carers are encouraged and supported.

Suffolk Fostering Service is able to offer 'foster carer support groups' as a formal part of our support structures for foster carers. Through these groups many foster carers have developed their own informal links with other foster carers for support and encouragement. This reflects more the idea of 'befriending'.

In mentoring or peer support there is no hierarchical relationship or significant difference in status or authority between the foster carers. The purpose is to offer foster carers support and advice from someone who has relevant fostering experience and who can pass on their expertise. This is especially useful for new foster carers or foster carers who are caring for children with a particular disability or behavioural need. Some experienced foster carers who have specialist knowledge may make themselves available to other foster carers for telephone support.

Prospective foster carers can also meet existing foster carers during the assessment process. This gives them a 'first hand' opportunity to learn more about the fostering role from those who currently undertake the fostering task and who understand the rewards and challenges. It is a chance to have any questions answered and to gain a greater insight into what fostering involves on a daily basis.

Experienced foster carers often take part in training activities including delivering the preparation to foster training and ongoing development opportunities for others.

### **Suffolk Foster Care Association (Suffolk FCA)**

Suffolk Foster Care Association is run by Suffolk foster carers FOR Suffolk foster carers. They represent the interests of Suffolk foster carers and the children they care for. Their committee is made up of Suffolk foster carers; the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer are all Suffolk foster carers.

### **Aims**

The website states that Suffolk Foster Care Association aims to:

- provide effective supportive for foster carers, to represent the views of foster carers as a group and to assist foster carers to advocate effectively for the children in their care.
- promote and develop partnership working with the local authority and all relevant agencies in order to ensure that looked after children in Suffolk receive the best service possible and achieve good life outcomes.
- develop awareness and knowledge among foster carers and those agencies working with looked after children.

Suffolk Foster Care Association are active on the Fostering Network's East of England Regional Forum and the National Forum. They are also represented on Suffolk County Council's Corporate Parenting Board.

Their website with contact details can be found at: <http://www.suffolkfca.org.uk/>



## **Section G4. Foster Carer Annual Reviews**

It is required that foster carers are reviewed regularly but as a minimum once every twelve months. This is undertaken to ensure the continuing suitability of the foster carer to carry out the fostering task. The review provides the foster carer with an opportunity to give feedback and contributes to essential information on the quality and range of service provided by the agency and informs recruitment, assessment and training strategies.

The review will be completed by the foster carers Supervising Social Worker and will comprise a report from the Supervising Social Worker, written comments from social workers responsible for any child placed in the foster home since the last review, views of the young people fostered and the foster carers' children (either in writing or by discussion) and written comments from the foster carers. The views of the relevant Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for the child's case will also be sought as part of the foster carer annual review.

The review will be signed by the foster carer and their Supervising Social Worker.

All newly approved foster carers have their first annual foster carer review presented to the fostering panel.

Regulations say that the fostering panel will recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to be a foster parent and whether or not their terms of approval remain appropriate at the first review and on the occasion of any other review if requested to do so by the fostering service.

It is Suffolk's policy that subsequent Annual Foster Carer reviews are authorised by a Consultant Social Worker or Practice Manager from the service, and presented to the Head of Adoption and Fostering as Agency Decision Maker, for a decision regarding ongoing suitability for approval.

Where it is proposed to change a carers terms of approval, and the changes reflect a reduction in the current approval or offer and the carer agrees with these changes the ADM (Head of Service) will write to the carer and the foster carer can provide written agreement to the change. Fostering Panel will be notified of this change at the next panel. Where such cases intend to be revert back to their original approval (and this is known at the time of reduction) the ADM can choose to advise that this can be heard at a later date without the need to return to the fostering panel. Where there is not agreement about a reduction in approval, a review will be presented to the fostering panel.

In cases where proposed changes represent an increase in a carers approval terms or whether there is a significant change in the foster carers household or suitability then it is Suffolk's policy such cases will normally be referred to panel under a review of the foster carers for their recommendation.

The Fostering Panel is required by the Fostering Regulations to monitor the effectiveness of the Fostering Services' annual review procedures. To support this requirement foster carers annual review will be presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration on a 5 yearly basis..

Where an allegation is made about a foster carer, a record of the allegation investigation will be held on the foster carer's file. The Head of Fostering to inform foster carer in writing about the outcome of the investigation and any follow up actions.

Where the allegation is substantiated or unsubstantiated the matter will be referred back to panel for their recommendation regarding suitability. If an allegation is substantiated it is Suffolk's policy that it return to panel within 27 working days, on conclusion of the investigation. The report to Panel must include the relevant sections of minutes from strategy meetings, including outcomes, the letters sent to carers by the Social Care Manager, Fostering and the Head of Fostering and the notification to Ofsted.

If a foster carer is deregistered, the Head of Fostering will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service if conditions for referral are met and following **consultation** with the LADO.

The Head of Fostering to inform Foster/Link Carers in writing if a referral to the DBS is to be made.

Where investigations are concluded as unsubstantiated a post-investigation plan should be formulated by the Fostering Service to address the impact the investigation has had on the foster carers, any children placed or removed and their future intentions regarding fostering. This will be recorded as a supervision record. It is Suffolk's policy that the report and post-investigation plan forms part of a review report that is presented to the Fostering Panel within 3 months of the conclusion of an unsubstantiated investigation.

Where allegations are concluded as unfounded or deemed malicious, the impact will be discussed in a supervision record. This will be reported as part of the foster carers next annual review.

The Agency Decision Maker will write to foster carers with a decision having considered the foster panel's recommendation. Where the foster carer does not agree with the decision they will be invited to submit any written representations within 28 days of the date of the notice The letter will contain details of the appeal/complaints procedure and the Independent Reviewing Mechanism process.

## **Section G5. Special Guardianship**

### **Introduction**

The Adoption & Children Act 2002 amended the Children Act 1989 to provide for a new Order, Special Guardianship. Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) are intended to meet the needs of children who cannot live with their birth parents but for whom adoption is not appropriate. The need for an alternative legal status for children, which offered greater security than long term fostering but without the absolute legal severance from the birth family that stems from an Adoption Order.

An SGO is intended to offer more than a Child Arrangement Order in terms of the security it brings and the support services that may be made available to the child and Special Guardians.

SGO's are an order which should be of particular relevance to foster carers offering a permanent home to a child where adoption is not a suitable or desired plan. It can be a positive outcome for children in settled long term placements as it provides security for them and reinforces the commitment the foster carer has made to them as a permanent member of their family. Once a Special Guardianship Order is made the child is no longer 'looked after' and the foster carers have parental responsibility for the child or young person. For permanently placed young people this removes the requirement for regular child in care visits and meetings. The local authority still has responsibility to provide special guardianship support services so that a range of support services including financial support will be available to support such placements.

In Suffolk, permanent foster carers are actively encouraged to seek SGO's and a designated SGO Support Team is available to provide ongoing support.

### **Parental responsibility**

A Special Guardianship Order confers parental responsibility on the Special Guardian to the exclusion of any others with parental responsibility.

The Special Guardian has responsibility for all the day-to-day decisions in relation to that child. The aim is to provide legal stability for the child whilst the parents remain the child's legal birth parents.

The Special Guardian can make all the decisions for that child except:

- Where the law requires the consent of more than one person with parental responsibility
- Agreement to adoption
- Removal of the child/young person from the U.K. for more than 3 months without leave of the court
- Change the child/young person's name without the leave of the court.

The Special Guardianship Order remains in force until the child/young person is 18 years old and should provide for a strong foundation for a lifelong relationship between the child and the Special Guardian.

### **The legal framework**

Most applications will be private law applications but the court may also make a Special Guardianship Order in any family proceedings concerning the welfare of the child if they consider an Order should be made. This applies even where no application has been made and includes adoption proceedings.

When considering whether to make a Special Guardianship Order the welfare of the child will be the court's paramount consideration and the welfare checklist in Section 1 of the Children Act 1989 is applied.

Applications can be made individually or jointly by 2 or more people, and applicants have to be over 18 years old. The parent of a child cannot become a Special Guardian. The court may make a Special Guardianship Order in respect of the child on application from:

- Any guardian of the child
- A foster carer with whom the child has lived for 1 year immediately preceding the application
- Anyone who holds a Child Arrangement Order/Residence Order or who has the consent of all those with a Residence Order (except a birth Parent)
- Anyone with whom the child has lived for 3 years out of the last 5 years
- Where the child/young person is in the care of the local authority, anyone who has the consent of the local authority
- Anyone with consent of all those with parental responsibility
- Anyone else including the child/young person with leave of the court.

### **Application process**

Any person who wishes to apply for a Special Guardianship Order must give 3 months' written notice to the local authority. On receipt of such a notice, or if the court makes a request, the local authority must investigate and prepare a report to the court about the suitability of the applicants. The court should not make an Order unless it has received such a report. The reports will need to include details of any Special Guardianship support that will be provided to the family.

### **Applications in respect of looked after children/ young people**

For most looked after children the decision for foster carers to apply to become Special Guardians would have been discussed and made at the CiC review. Foster carers

should discuss such a plan fully with their supervising social worker and worker for the child/young person. The preparation of the Special Guardianship report will need to be undertaken jointly by the social worker for the child/young person and the supervising social worker for the foster carers.

A meeting should be convened by the Practice Manager to plan for the preparation of the report and consider the Special Guardianship support plan. There is a format for the Special Guardianship support plan, which is similar to that completed in relation to adoption support. It is important that foster carers are fully in agreement with the proposed special guardianship support plan.

If the plan for Special Guardianship is supported by the local authority, foster carers will be supported financially with the cost of the application and potential legal fees. It is important to ensure that foster carers have full information about Special Guardianship and are supported through their application process. It is the responsibility of the social worker for the child to discuss such a plan with the birth parents and advise them fully about special guardianship and the need to access legal advice.

### **Special Guardianship support services**

The legislation in respect of Special Guardianship also requires the local authority to make provision for Special Guardianship support services. These are defined as:

- Financial support
- Services to enable Special Guardians, children subject to SGOs or parents of children/ young people subject to SGOs to meet to discuss issues relating to Special Guardianship
- Assistance including mediation in relation to contact
- Therapeutic services for the child /young person
- Support services for the Special Guardian including training
- Counselling, advice and information.

The guidance states that Special Guardianship support services should not be seen in isolation from mainstream services and these families should be supported and encouraged to access these services or claim any state benefits that they may be entitled to.

In Suffolk, foster carers obtaining a SGO are able to access support from a designated SGO Support Team.

### **Eligibility for leaving care services**

Children/young people who were looked after immediately prior to becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order will also still be eligible for leaving care services in

that they will qualify for advice and assistance under section 24(1) of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Adoption & Children Act 2002.

This is providing that the child:

1. Has reached the age of 16 but not the age of 21
2. If less than eighteen years old, has a Special Guardianship Order in force.
3. If eighteen years old or above, had a Special Guardianship Order in force when they reached that age, and
4. Had been looked after by a local authority immediately before the making of the Special Guardianship Order.

### **Special Guardianship Support Plan**

A Special Guardianship Support Plan will need to be considered and drawn up for all children/ young people who are looked after and subject to a Special Guardianship Order application.

Regulation 11 provides that the following people must receive an assessment at their request for situations where the child/young person involved is currently looked after or was looked after immediately prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order:

- The child/young person
- The Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian
- The parent.

The process involved in drawing up a Special Guardianship support plan is similar to that involved with an adoption support plan. The Special Guardianship support plan document mirrors the adoption support plan and will need to be completed with the prospective Special Guardians providing written confirmation to Adoption and Fostering Service that they accept the plan prior to the court hearing in respect of their application. The regulations suggest that a period of up to 28 days should be provided to the prospective Special Guardians to make any representation in relation to the plan.

Details of sources of independent advice and advocacy should also be provided to the Special Guardianship with the plan. The plan will detail the outcome of the assessment, the services to be provided, the time-scales for the provision of the services and the procedure for review. It will be essential to identify within the plan who will be the named worker to monitor the provision of the services as detailed in the plan.



## **Financial support**

The prospective Special Guardians will need to complete a financial assessment in the same way that prospective adopters do in relation to an adoption allowance or those applying for a Child Arrangement Order allowance. The social worker for the child/young person or foster carer will need to liaise with the Head of Corporate Parenting.

The rates for Special Guardianship allowances in relation to children who were looked after will reflect the foster care basic allowance. Special Guardians will also be entitled to claim Child Benefit when the child is no longer looked after.

There may be circumstances that would also warrant a single payment to support a placement, and agreement to such a payment needs to be made by the Head of Corporate Parenting. The plan needs to detail the basis upon which financial support is determined, whether the financial support will be paid in the form of a regular allowance, how much the financial support will be and for what period it covers.

The Special Guardian will need to complete a financial statement on an annual basis and agree to inform Suffolk County Council immediately if she/he changes her address or the child/young person dies or there are any changes in the circumstances of the child/young person as laid out in the Special Guardianship regulations.

## **Other support services**

The plan highlights the key dimensions to consider in relation to the child/young person and their Special Guardians. It will need to focus on, for example, support in relation to any health or educational needs the child/young person may have as well as on support in relation to contact arrangements. It will be important to consider at that stage who will continue to have responsibility for the support and supervision of future contact arrangements and this may need to remain the responsibility of Suffolk's Children and Young People Service. The plan will also need to detail the ongoing support that will be made available from the SGO Support Team. This could include regular contact with a social worker from the team, access to support groups and training available to foster carers and adopters.

It will be necessary to liaise with the appropriate health or education services during the assessment of the need for support services as the plan may need to contain details of services provided by agencies other than Suffolk's Children and Young Peoples Services and CAMHS.

## **Reviews of Special Guardianship Support Plan**

Financial allowances are required to be reviewed annually unless there is any relevant change in circumstances sooner or if support plan specifically identifies an alternative review date. The recipients of the SG allowance must notify financial services immediately if their circumstances change at any time.

The local authority is required to regularly review the Special Guardianship support plan. This should take place at least annually or more frequently if there is a change

in the person's circumstances. Any change to the plan must be notified in writing to the Special Guardian who is given opportunity to make any representations about the change to the plan.

More information about Special Guardianship can be found in the documents: *Suffolk Special Guardianship Order Policy and Guidance* and the *Special Guardianship Support Plan*.

# SECTION H:

## The Carer and Suffolk Fostering Service



.... more rewarding than ever

## The Carer and Suffolk Fostering Service

### **Section H1. Allowances**

#### **What do your fees cover?**

You are paid an allowance on a per child/young person per night basis when a child or young person is actually in residence. The payment covers all normal expenses for looking after a child / young person, as well as:

- General wear and tear in the home.
- Child/young person's pocket money and savings.
- Telephone calls to family members or significant others, including a small amount for calls to local friends. The cost of mobile phones is included in the fee and this should be paid from pocket money if the placement plan allows for a young person to have access to a mobile phone.
- General clothing, including school/college uniforms. (Exceptional expenses may be negotiated from the Child Care Social Worker, for example if a child arrives in placement with no suitable clothing).
- Toiletries and cosmetics.
- Glasses and contact lenses if required.
- Leisure and any other out of school activities including sports equipment and mileage (exceptional circumstances may be negotiated from the Child Care Social Worker)
- Subscription to clubs and activities [e.g. scouts and brownies] including any special clothing.
- School books and stationary.
- School trips (day trips only).
- Transport to and from local educational establishments (within 3 miles, each way)
- All local mileage to local medical appointments and outings. Individual circumstances such as reason for travel, frequency of travel, long distances etc. may vary and will be discussed with you by your Supervising Social Worker.

## **Additional payments and benefits**

**In addition to an allowance a fee may also be paid in line with Suffolk's' Tier Alignment scheme, reflecting the carers skills and the type of placement they are able to offer. Please visit the Suffolk County Council website and talk to your supervising social worker for details of this scheme.**

As a Suffolk Foster Carer, you are also entitled to the following benefits:

- 4 additional weekly allowances per year made up of: 2 weeks allowances to cover for holidays or holiday activities; 1 week for birthday and 1 week for religious celebrations
- Mileage at 45p per mile for contact/meetings
- Mileage of 37.1p per mile for training
- Loan of essential equipment
- Insurance against damage to your property or belongings caused by the foster child
- Up to 21 days paid respite
- Regular placements
- Choice of placements
- Career/income 'progression' based upon increased placement offer
- Membership to the Fostering Network which includes two 24 hour helplines (legal advice and stress counselling), legal assistance and legal protection insurance
- Membership to the Foster Carer Association

## **Additional costs and other financial matters**

If additional costs arise or you face any exceptional expenditure this should be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker prior to incurring this cost.

If you are too unwell to foster, you are self-employed, so are paid only when you have a child/young person in placement. No payment will be made for periods of sickness that prevent continuation of a placement. You are strongly advised to take out insurance to cover loss of income due to sickness [see insurance section].

Notice on a placement: Periods of notice will vary according to the length of time a child has been in placement (see the Foster Carer Agreement). Any period of notice is a very important time because it allows a young person, their social worker and



Suffolk Fostering Service to plan their next placement. This helps maintain stability and continuity for a young person.

### **Dinner Money**

School dinners or the cost of a packed lunch should be met from the foster carer allowance. Children and young people placed with foster carers are not eligible for free school meals. If a child is receiving free school meals when placed with you, ask the child/young person's social worker to inform the school (or you can inform the school) that you will be paying dinner money or supplying a packed lunch for the child in future.

### **Pocket Money**

This will be discussed and agreed between the foster carer, foster child, local authority social worker and your Supervising Social Worker. Please also see **Section B 19**.

### **Fostering and Tax**

Foster carers are classified as self-employed. You are therefore responsible for your own tax and national insurance payments. ALL carers MUST register as self-employed with HMRC whether you currently have a placement or not, and irrespective of whether you have any tax to pay or not.

The Inland Revenue website which has an on-line training course about registering as self-employed

<http://www.hmrc.go.uk/courses/syob2/fc/index.htm>

There is a specific tax scheme for foster carers, with a high threshold for both the allowances and fee components of payments you receive and the vast majority of carers do not pay tax on their fostering payment. However we would strongly advise foster carers to discuss this matter with the Inland Revenue and download and the HMRC Help-sheet 236 - **Qualifying care relief: Foster carers, adult placement carers, family and friend / connected person carers and staying put carers (2014)**.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifying-care-relief-foster-carers-adult-placement-carers-kinship-carers-and-staying-put-carers-hs236-self-assessment-helpsheet>

As Fostering is counted as work by the Inland revenue, foster carers may be eligible to apply for Working Tax Credits. If you have your own children you may also be entitled to child tax credits (CTC) but fostered children DO NOT count for CTC and you cannot claim for them.

Foster carers cannot claim child benefit, DWP benefits or free school meals for fostered children or young people in their care. However, a child or young person with a disability might be entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

DLA is a benefit that has a mobility and care component. The care component consists of an allowance payable to a child who needs extra care due to a disability, but the care needed must be more than is normally given to an able bodied child/young person



of the same age. There are two payment levels either higher or lower and there are restrictions as to which one someone would be eligible for.

Any DLA benefit would be paid in addition to any fostering allowances and a detailed record must be kept to show how this allowance is being used for the direct benefit of the child / young person.

If you feel a child or young person could be entitled to DLA, you should discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker and the child's or young person's social worker.

### **Overpayments**

In the event of an overpayment of allowances, Suffolk Fostering Service will make arrangements to recover the overpayment. This will be done as promptly as possible and in discussion with the foster carer to ensure there are no unforeseen difficulties.

## **Section H2. Insurance**

### **Which Insurances Are Needed**

#### **Household insurance**

Foster carers must advise their insurers that they foster. Theft or damage including malicious damage may not be covered by your household policy if you are a foster carer. Please check this with your insurer and make any necessary arrangements.

You must provide Suffolk Fostering Service with a written report of any claim not covered by your household insurance, within two weeks of the incident. Do not dispose of any damaged items that are the subject of a claim, until that claim is agreed. Receipts for any replaced items or repair work should be kept and produced upon request.

All claims for damage to property that may have been caused by the child in care will be considered on a case by case basis.

Please be aware that Suffolk Fostering Service has limited capacity to claim against insurance due to a significant excess on their policy.

Mobile phones belonging to the looked after child/young person are not covered by the Fostering Service and insurance should be purchased with the mobile if desired.

#### **Car Insurance**

Let your insurers know that you transport children as part of your work. It is recommended that you obtain their agreement in writing. You should have Accident Insurance / Business Cover for looked after children.

#### **Legal Insurance**

Once you have been approved as a foster carer, we will fund the membership costs on your behalf to The Fostering Network, a national charitable organisation for everyone who is involved in fostering.

Your membership of The Fostering Network provides legal insurances. This gives limited cover for legal expenses associated with your foster care work.

**The Fostering Network:** [ [www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net) ]

- Acts as the first port of call for anyone needing reliable, up-to-date information or advice on fostering in the UK
- Provides practical support, publications and training for foster carers, social workers and other professionals, so they can give the best and broadest possible care to the children and young people they foster.

- Lobbies the UK government for support and investment in foster care, ensuring fostered children and young people have the stability and the life opportunities they deserve.
- Improves public understanding of foster caring.
- Develops policies and models of practice that define the gold standard of care and which young people should be able to expect as well as the value that should be placed on those who provide that care.

### **Loss Of Earnings**

You are advised, as a self-employed person, to take out insurance to cover loss of earnings should you be unable to fulfil your role as a foster carer due to ill health or allegations/ investigations.

### **Section H3. Placement Disruption**

All placements are made in partnership between the young person, the foster carer and Suffolk Fostering Service. All decisions about the young person's care are taken in the context of responsibility set out in the Suffolk's Children and Young People Service planning process.

It is vital that any problems within the placement are communicated as early as possible between all those involved. This will allow everyone involved the opportunity to resolve any issues before they threaten the stability of the placement.

Placements can end unexpectedly for a variety of reasons. It is often upsetting and unsettling when this happens. However, whatever the circumstances, it is essential that all the adults involved try to make the ending as positive as possible.

Periods of notice may vary according to the length of time a child has been in placement (see the Foster Carer Agreement). Any period of notice is a very important time because it allows a young person, their social worker and Suffolk Fostering Service to plan their next placement. This helps maintain stability and continuity for a young person.

It is only in exceptional circumstances that we would not honour the notice period commitment and this is usually as result of a young person's behaviour being deemed too dangerous to remain in placement.

When a placement is breaking down , Suffolk Fostering Service will:

- Negotiate possible solutions that may include short break care, enhanced support work or moving a young person to an alternative placement.
- Provide information and advice to foster carers and young people.
- Convene a Placement Support Meeting.

**The foster carer will be expected to:**

- Keep their Supervising Social Worker informed of any concerns or worries.
- Provide advice and support to the young person.
- Liaise with the young person's next placement to ensure consistency and stability.
- Keep up to date with diary recording and written reports.

## **Disruption Meetings**

If the placement breaks down, Suffolk Fostering Service may need to convene a Disruption Meeting. This is to help everyone involved identify factors leading to the breakdown, to learn from the experience, and to plan for the future.

### **Where the situation becomes untenable:**

- The foster carer will immediately notify the Supervising Social Worker
- The Supervising Social Worker will assess the most appropriate intervention, consulting with the Head of Adoption & Fostering and the Child Care Team Manager.
- The Supervising Social Worker will convene a Disruption Meeting involving the Child Care Social Worker to be chaired by an appropriate senior person in Suffolk Fostering Service (usually the Practice Manager)

### **The purpose of such a meeting is:**

- to attend to the immediate placement needs of the young person and identify any additional needs of the young person in an alternative placement.
- to establish the facts of `breakdown` on a no-fault basis
- to identify any possible learning from the process for the service or foster carer and any training or development gaps.

## **Section H4. Fostering Panels and Independent Review Mechanism**

### **Changes in Approval**

When there are significant changes in the circumstances of a foster carer a report will be placed before one of Suffolk Fostering Service's Fostering Panels for recommendation of any change to the approval. The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will consider the Panel's recommendation and make the required determination.

### **De-registration**

Where foster carers decide to withdraw from fostering this should be put in writing to Suffolk Fostering Service. This matter will be reported to the Fostering Panel and a formal letter of de-registration confirming that they are no longer foster carers will be sent.

Under the revised Fostering Regulations 2013 foster carers have to automatically be de-registered after 28 days where they have provided a written resignation even when they subsequently change their mind.

Where Suffolk Fostering Service has reason to de-register foster carers against their wishes the foster carers should be given full details in the form of a report which will be presented to the Suffolk Fostering Service Fostering Panel. Foster carers can provide their own report to panel, and can attend the panel and bring someone to support them if they wish.

Following the Panel's recommendation to de-register a foster carer, and if this is confirmed by the Service Decision-Maker making a 'qualifying determination', the foster carers will receive a letter advising of the intention to de-register them and detailing the reasons for this..

If foster carers are not satisfied with the outcome they have a right to request a review..

### **Dissatisfaction with the decision-making process**

Foster carers who do not agree with the qualifying determination made by the Agency Decision-Maker (ADM) can either ask the Independent Review Mechanism to review the recommendation or they can ask for another Suffolk County Council panel to be convened which will have a different Chair and panel members to the original. The case will be heard again and a fresh recommendation made to the ADM. The ADM will then make a decision based on the new recommendation.

If the carers are still unhappy they cannot then go the IRM. They have to choose one or the other. They can use the Suffolk complaints procedure if they feel that the matter was not handled correctly but this could not change the outcome.

### **Independent Review Mechanism**

Statutory guidance on the Fostering Regulations 2013 states that where, following a completed stage 2 assessment or brief report, the fostering service considers that an applicant is unsuitable to be a foster carer, or where they consider that a foster carer's



terms of approval should be changed, particular requirements apply. The applicant must be given a 'qualifying determination' - a notice that the decision maker proposes not to approve them as a foster carer or to amend their terms of approval, together with the reasons for this and, where the fostering panel made a recommendation, a copy of this. This is defined as a '*qualifying determination*' by section 4 of the Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations 2009.

The applicant must be advised that they may, within 28 days of the date of the notice, either submit written representations to the decision maker or apply to the Secretary of State for a review of the determination by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

The option to seek a review by the IRM does not apply if the applicant is considered unsuitable in accordance with regulation 26(7), where the foster carer or any member of their household age 18 or over has been convicted or cautioned in respect of a specified offence.

If, within 28 days, no representations are received and no application is made to the IRM, the decision maker is free to decide whether or not to approve the applicant as a foster carer (following a full assessment), continue the assessment (following a brief report) or amend their terms of approval. If representations are received, the matter must be referred back to the fostering panel, to which the applicants must be invited to attend. A decision is then made by the decision maker, taking account of the panel's further recommendations.

If the application is referred to the IRM, the fostering service must, within 10 working days of notification of this, supply the IRM with the documentation submitted to the fostering panel and any relevant information received subsequently, along with copies of the notices of determination (regulation 29). The decision maker must take account of the recommendation of the IRM, as well as that of the original fostering panel, in reaching a decision about approval.

### ***Information supplied by the Independent Review Mechanism***

"Since April 1st 2009, the remit of the IRM has included an independent review of fostering suitability applications from potential and current foster carers whose fostering service provider has decided not to approve them as a foster carer or to terminate or change the terms of their approval.

If you are a prospective or an existing foster carer who has recently received a qualifying determination which you don't agree with, you have two options:

- you can either apply to the IRM for a review of fostering service provider's qualifying determination or,
- you can make representations to your fostering service provider.

However you cannot do both. The cost of having your case reviewed is met by your provider; this means Suffolk County Council will pay travel costs

### **What the IRM can do for you**

The IRM is a review process conducted by a Review Panel which is independent of fostering service providers. If you choose to use the IRM the review panel will, where appropriate:

- review your suitability as a prospective foster carer(s) to foster a child,
- review any proposed changes to your terms of approval,
- make a fresh recommendation to your agency on your suitability to foster a child and the terms of your approval, including approval for a specific child.

### **Things the IRM doesn't do**

- It does not make a decision about your case which is done by your fostering service provider. The reason is because the IRM is not a higher appeals authority.
- It does not consider the suitability of the care plan for a child e.g. whether they should be long-term fostered.
- It does not handle complaints against the fostering service provider. Complaints should be dealt with through the fostering service provider's complaints procedure.

### **How the Review Panel works**

The Review Panel considers the following information to make its recommendation:

- all information presented to the original fostering panel,
- any relevant information received by the fostering service provider where the papers were sent to the fostering panel; and
- your reasons for requesting a review.

If the Review Panel needs further information, it will be requested from your fostering service provider before the panel meeting unless it would be more appropriate to ask you directly.

You will be invited to attend the meeting and a separate waiting room will be made available to you and the representatives from your fostering service provider. The Review Panel will meet with you and representatives from your provider to ask for clarification of information contained in the reports. They may need to meet separately with your fostering provider during the meeting to clarify any third party confidential information that you are not entitled to see. The panel will also obtain legal and medical advice, should it wish to do so.

## Results and outcomes

The Review Panel makes its recommendation and will provide you with a copy of both its recommendation and reasons and a set of minutes, although this will not contain a record of any third party confidential information that was discussed. A copy of the panel's recommendation and reasons and a full set of minutes will be sent to your fostering service provider to assist them in their decision making.

If the IRM is reviewing proposed changes to your terms of approval, they may recommend terms that they consider appropriate. However, if the panel considers that you are not suitable to foster, they have the power to recommend this. As in all cases, it is for your fostering service provider to make the final decision about your approval. The foster service provider must take the review panel's recommendation into account as well as the recommendation of the fostering panel when making its final decision on your suitability to foster a child. The Service Decision Maker will make a final decision having considered the recommendation from the Independent Review Panel

The only people who can apply to the review panel are those whose fostering service provider notifies them that it does not consider them suitable to be foster carers, wishes to change their terms of approval or withdraws their approval and the decision maker's letter was sent on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

## Making your application

Your application must be made in writing and include the following:

- the reasons why you disagree with your fostering service provider's determination,
- the date of the letter you received from your fostering service provider informing you of the determination
- the name and address of your fostering service provider.

This will enable us to obtain from them the information which the Review Panel will need.

You must make your application within 28 calendar days from the date of the fostering service provider's letter.

You can send your application to us by post, fax or email. It is important that you do not send your application to any other address as this will delay the review panel considering your application:

Contract Manager,  
**Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**  
Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park,  
Royds Hall Road,  
Wortley,  
LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Tel No: 0113 202 2080 or 0845 450 3956 (charged at local rate)  
Fax: 0113 263 7414 or 0845 450 3957 (charged at local rate)  
Email: [irm@baaf.org.uk](mailto:irm@baaf.org.uk)

Suffolk Fostering Service believes in working in partnership with our foster carers to support them in the fostering task. We will offer regular supervision, one of the functions of which is to ensure that foster carers are aware of what is expected of them. In the event that a foster carer does not meet the required standard, disciplinary procedures may be considered.

## **Section H5. Code of Conduct**

**If you are also an employee of Suffolk County Council, or work with children or vulnerable people please see your employees code of conduct policy.**

## **Post Script**

*Once again,*

### **Welcome to Suffolk Fostering Service**

We have an active and enthusiastic foster carer community across Suffolk and are delighted that you are joining us!



## Useful Websites

- <http://dreams.suffolk.gov.uk/existing-carers/fostering/>  
Suffolk County Council Children & Young People's Services Website sharing information on every aspect of fostering for Suffolk.
- [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)  
Advice and information on bullying and child sexual abuse
- [www.teenagehealthfreak.org](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.org)  
This is a site for teenagers about the changes they have going on in their body. It also answers any health related questions they might want to ask.
- [www.parenthood.org.uk](http://www.parenthood.org.uk)  
This is a parenting education and support forum that provides advice on parenthood and training and shares resources.
- [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)  
A useful website providing information on how to improve children's learning and reading skills.
- [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)  
British Association for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF) has been supporting, advising and campaigning for better outcomes for children in care for over 30 years. They work with everyone involved with adoption and fostering across the UK. They provide training and advice and have produced many useful publications that are recommended by local authority fostering services.
- [www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)  
Website for foster carers. They state: "*The Fostering Network is the voice of the foster carer and has been influencing policy and campaigning for improvements for nearly 40 years*".
- [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)  
The Department for Education is responsible for education and children's services in England. The site has pages devoted to Foster Carers and published reports on Fostering Services and research.
- [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
The official body for inspecting Fostering Services. Provides links to inspection reports and official publications as well as a FAQ and contact details.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 - Glossary of Terms – Staff Roles**

#### **Head of Adoption & Fostering**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Adoption and Fostering Service, main tasks and responsibilities include:

- To provide strategic leadership for countywide Adoption and Fostering Services
- To establish a safe, coherent and consistent approach to needs assessment and service delivery for children and young people in Suffolk
- To achieve best value services through maximising provision within the available budgets
- Hold portfolio responsibilities for Adoption and Fostering Services
- To work with, and deputise for the Assistant Director – Early Help and Specialist Services to develop and deliver the County Council and directorate strategic agenda.
- To act as a champion for vulnerable children and families.
- To develop establish new systems of working and key strategic relationships that will contribute to supporting children 'in need' and their families.
- Ensure that sufficient numbers of adopters and foster carers are recruited and prepared to meet the needs of looked after children in Suffolk.
- Hold delegated operational responsibility for budget management, workforce planning, performance and quality assurance

#### **Professional Advisor Adoption and Fostering**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Adoption and Fostering Service, main tasks responsibilities include:

- To contribute to the strategic leadership , plans and strategies for county wide Adoption and Fostering Services, including analysing data and contributing to the writing of the annual reports.
- To project manage and contribute to service development to ensure best practice and best value services.
- To provide professional advice to the Fostering and Adoption panels.

- To develop and maintain positive co-operative relationships with local residential and adoption fieldwork colleagues and with other agencies and organisations.
- Reports to the Head of Service.

### **Practice Manager**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Adoption and Fostering Service, main tasks and responsibilities include:

- To contribute to the development of plans and strategies for Children & Young People Services both locally and countywide and implement key themes and priorities for the children of Suffolk.
- Provide management and direction for the Fostering Service within the area and contribute to the management of the same service across the county.
- To supervise and manage Consultant Social Workers.
- To develop and maintain positive co-operative relationships with local residential and adoption fieldwork colleagues and with other agencies and organisations.
- To provide effective management and leadership to the Fostering team, ensuring appropriate advice, support and supervision is given.
- To co-operate with Social Care Managers & Social Workers within Children & Young People Services, to provide placements for children and young people where this is in their best interests.
- Where required to manage Foster Carer assessments to meet the range of children's needs.
- To monitor and review the work of the team to ensure a high standard of professional practice is provided and maintained and to ensure that files are completed to departmental standards in respect of assessment, planning, review and closure.
- To operate a workload management scheme in line with the requirements of the Fostering Service and provide an effective duty system to respond to placement requests and foster carer support issues.
- To ensure effective management systems are in place to monitor annual foster carer reviews as required by regulations.

- To develop, motivate and empower staff to maximise their skills and experience in meeting a range of responsibilities and manage through structured and unstructured supervision and performance appraisal.
- To take responsibility for a range of budgets including monitoring, analysing and resource allocation.
- Reports to the Head Of Service

### **Consultant Social Worker**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Adoption and Fostering Service, main task and responsibilities include:

- To provide supervision and management of all supervising social workers
- To be the point of contact for carers in their supervising social workers absence
- To co-operate with Social Care Managers & Social Workers within Children & Young People Services, to provide placements for children and young people where this is in their best interests.
- Where required to manage Foster Carer assessments to meet the range of children's needs.
- To monitor and review the work of the team to ensure a high standard of professional practice is provided and maintained and to ensure that files are completed to departmental standards in respect of assessment, planning, review and closure.
- To operate a workload management scheme in line with the requirements of the Fostering Service and provide an effective duty system to respond to placement requests and foster carer support issues.
- To ensure effective management systems are in place to monitor annual foster carer reviews as required by regulations.
- To develop, motivate and empower staff to maximise their skills and experience in meeting a range of responsibilities and manage through structured and unstructured supervision and performance appraisal.
- Reports to a Practice Manager

### **Supervising Social Worker**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Adoption and Fostering Service, main tasks and responsibilities include:

- Principal task is to support foster carers in the care of young people.
- To be the first point of contact for the foster carer.
- Be involved in the delivery of training for prospective foster carers.
- Arrange and hold regular supervision meetings with foster carers.
- Help foster carers develop professionally, by identifying or providing relevant training and learning opportunities.
- Participate in planning for the child/young person.
- Ensure that foster carers have access to advice and support from the fostering service outside of the arranged supervision visits. This could include providing additional support to the placement to prevent breakdown.
- Provide information to foster carers and facilitate local support groups to enable the sharing of knowledge and experiences between foster carers.
- Undertake annual reviews of foster carers, completing relevant reports to the Fostering Service; and accompany foster carers to attend the Fostering Panel as necessary.
- Reports to a Consultant Social Worker

### **Family Support Practitioner**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Adoption and Fostering Service, their main tasks and responsibilities include:

- To work with children, young people and their foster carers in their homes or at specified centres to protect and promote best outcomes for the children and young people.
- To support foster carers in gaining the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to promote good outcomes for children.
- To engage in direct, supportive work with children, young people, and foster carers, including help with practical skills; accessing advice, guidance and support from other agencies, both statutory and voluntary
- To ensure that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount at all times.
- To engage in collaborative partnership with all other practitioners and agencies working with the family

- To lead group activities where a need is identified and work in partnership with foster carers and other agencies to deliver this service
- Reports to a Consultant Social Worker

### **Child Care Social Worker**

An employee of Suffolk County Council's Early Help & Specialist Services. Every child in foster care must have an allocated social worker who has prime responsibility for the welfare and supervision of the child.

Their main tasks and responsibilities are to:

- Maintain links for the child with his/her birth family, by arranging visits.
- To visit the child/young person in placement, see them alone and with you as their foster carer.
- To visit the child/young person within the first week of placement and to ensure planning for the child in placement is understood by everyone involved.
- To visit the child/young person at intervals of not more than 6 weeks in the first year of placement. After the first year of placement at intervals of not more than 3 months.
- Help and support birth parents.
- Obtain information for the foster carers and to make sure all Looked After children (CiC) paperwork is completed and signed.
- Be responsible for promoting the educational, health and developmental needs of the child/young person. This will be done in close liaison with you as the foster carer(s).
- Undertake or co-ordinate direct work with the child/young person, including Life-story work.
- Co-ordinate the involvement of all other professionals in discussion with the fostering service and the foster carer.
- Co-ordinate and participate in planning for the child/young person, including the preparation of young people for when they leave care.
- Work with the foster carer to help the child/young person to prepare to move on.
- Reports to a Child Care Team



**Central Resource Team (CRT)** - are responsible for arranging placements for all children in care, the majority of which will be with foster carers. Someone from the team may contact you directly if your supervising social worker is not available, and may circulate details of the children they are looking for families for through the carers newsletter, email and text.