

Middlesbrough Fostering Service

An 'A to Z' of Good Practice in Fostering



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[Introduction](#)

This 'A to Z' of Good Practice in Fostering has been written to go hand-in-hand with Middlesbrough Fostering Service's – Foster Carer's Handbook.

It lists further information and guidance that foster carers will find useful in their care for children and young people in Middlesbrough.

There is an index at the back to help you find what information you are looking for.

[A](#)

[Access to Records](#)

Every child has a right to see his or her records and there must be good reason for someone to say no to a request. Records written by other agencies cannot be made available without that agency's permission. When a child sees their records for the first time, what is written may come as quite a shock and they will need help to cope with this. If a child wants access to their records a formal request has to be made. Remember that these records belong to the child and that one day they might read them, be child focussed or even write to the child.

As Foster carers you also have the right to see your file, which needs to be organised via your Supervising Social Worker. You will not be able to see any references taken up in confidence or any third-party information without consent of the author.

[Accommodated](#)

When young people are 'Looked After' or 'Cared For' by the Local Authority and in foster or residential care with or without the agreement of their parents. If parents have not agreed to the accommodation of their child, the child should be subject to an Interim Care Order or Care Order from the courts.

[Achievements](#)

Recognising the achievements of children and young people is incredibly important to their self-esteem and confidence. There is an annual celebration event to have those achievements recognised by foster carers, social workers, professional colleagues, elected members and parents and families of the children.

[Activities](#)

Life for children and young people in foster care should be as 'normal' as possible and, therefore, it is never possible to avoid some risks involved in activities such as swimming, horse riding, canoeing etc. However, carers should not expose children to

high-risk situations without appropriate safeguards and discussion with the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker.

Consents for outdoor activities, school trips and holidays abroad should be discussed and agreed as part of 'Delegated Authority' issues covered in Placement Planning Meetings and at subsequent Reviews. Children in Care must not be taken on holiday during term time.

Adaptations

If you are asked to care for a child or young person with specific needs that require your home to be adapted for easy access or aspects of care to be provided you will be provided with appropriate equipment. This will be done based on assessed needs and in collaboration for those services who are experts within the relevant field.

Adequate Space

Each child or young person placed with any Foster Carer must as a minimum requirement have their own bed, storage space for clothes and personal belongings for their day-to-day care and development. Reasonable space should be provided for this, and quality of life should not be compromised.

Adolescence

Adolescence is the development stage for young people normally experienced within the teenage years. It is a western culture and part of the "rites of passage" for young people. There are many physical, emotional and social developments associated with this period of child development.

Adoption

Adoption is the legal process by which a child or a group of siblings who cannot be brought up within their birth family become full, permanent and legal members of their new family. Adopters become the child's legal parents with the same rights and responsibilities as if the child was born to them.

Advocacy

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is a UK charity providing socio-legal services. It offers information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children and young people aged 0-25, through a network of over 100 advocates and 40 lawyers. NYAS is also a Community Legal Service.

Looked After Children are entitled to access an advocate to support them to get their voice heard in relation to specific issues. An appointment of an advocate for a Looked After child is appropriate where a child wishes to be represented at a meeting (For example, a Child in Care Review. or assisted in making a complaint or bringing a

matter to the attention of the care provider, the local authority or the Regulatory Authority.

Information on how to access the service should be provided to the child and young person at any time by their social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer especially where their wishes and feelings may not be in accordance with plans being made for them.

For Children in Care and Care Leavers, their Social Worker should talk to them about the advocacy service. If the child/young person wishes to have an advocate to support them with a particular issue, then the Social Worker must make the referral and state the issue that the advocacy is required for.

[Agency Decision Maker](#)

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is part of the approval process and decision making for children and young people's plans when they have gone through the permanency planning process as well as approving Foster Carers. The ADM is a senior member of the Children's Social Care service for the Council.

[Alcohol](#)

Whether you are an adult, or a young person alcohol brings an element of risk to health, behaviour and consequences. There are specific laws regarding the sale and consumption of alcohol. Foster carers are not allowed to be drunk in charge of a child or young person and should always be cautious when drinking socially either at home or out at a social event. The impact on a child placed in your care may have some very negative experiences relating to alcohol.

Foster carers must ensure that if they are drinking alcohol, this does not result in the inability to be responsible for children in their care. They should be aware that many children/young people will associate alcohol with violence because of their personal experiences, and therefore may be fearful when they see carers drinking.

Foster carers should not encourage children/young people to drink or purchase alcohol under the legal age limit. Where carers are aware that young people in their care may be drinking alcohol, they should advise the child/young person's Social Worker.

Although many people don't think of it as a drug, alcohol can be equally damaging to health and wellbeing. It is important to talk to children and young people realistically and in context about the dangers of alcohol, especially when taken in large quantities. This includes both the potential effects on health and the changes that over-indulgence will make to behaviour and judgement.

Discussing the issue of alcohol is especially important given the associations often made in the media with romance, adventure and sexual prowess. A high proportion of teenage mothers claim they were drunk when they conceived, and an even higher proportion claim they lost their virginity when drunk – and regret it.

[Allegations](#)

From time-to-time allegations are made against Foster Carers. There are well established procedures for dealing with such allegations. There is a mandatory training course for all foster carers called 'Managing Allegations'.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Standards of Care / Managing Allegations Policy, Procedure and Guidance.

[Allowances](#)

Fostering services must provide age related allowances to Foster Carers for the cost of caring for a child. The amounts are set annually by the council and are within a structure of national minimum recommendations.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Policy and Guidance on Foster Carer Fees and Allowances.

[Alternative Education](#)

Sometimes children and young people may find themselves excluded from mainstream education. The local education authority will by statute provide alternative education provision. The decisions related to this are complex and require the expertise of education professionals to support foster carers in understanding the processes.

[Anti-Discriminatory Practice](#)

Anti-discriminatory practice (ADP) is about working and caring for children and young people without prejudice and providing a lesser standard of care because of issues such as gender, race, culture, religion, disability, sexuality.

In addition, it is also challenging discrimination and demonstrating a commitment to ensuring children and young people's needs are appropriately met.

More information can be found by completing the Training Hub Course: Equality, Diversity and Cultural Competence.

[Approval](#)

The approval is the process by which a person wishing to become a foster carer has to go through in order for them to care for children and young people. The process includes a comprehensive assessment including medicals, local authority checks and DBS. A report presented to Fostering Panel who will determine whether or not

someone can be recommended to the Agency Decision Maker to be approved as a foster carer.

Once the Agency Decision Maker has made their decision an approval will be granted. An approval includes the number of children someone can care for, the age range of those children and the gender. Sometimes the approval may mention specific information linked to specific schemes the fostering service may have. This approval lasts for a maximum of 12 months, where it is reviewed and represented to the Fostering Panel. Changes to approvals must always be presented to the Panel and formally agreed.

[Attachment](#)

Attachment is a complicated process which remains a continued source of study and research. However, what is known is that it is an essential requirement for those involved in the care of children. Attachment behaviours serve the primary purpose of providing safety and protection for everyone, particularly for those that are less able to meet their own needs.

[B](#)

[Babysitting](#)

In order for Foster Carers to use a babysitter for children placed with them they need to discuss the process with their Supervising Social Worker. There normally involves DBS's checks, some type of assessment to determine the appropriateness of someone being a babysitter.

Babysitters should not be under 18 years old. The child in placement no longer needs a babysitter when aged 14 plus but thought must be given to the maturity of the child and in what circumstances he or she is being left. Carers can use their older adult children as babysitters if they are deemed suitable. All babysitters must be DBS checked.

[Back Up Carer](#)

This is a person or persons identified by a foster carer (either during the assessment process or when acting as an approved foster carer), who will care for the children placed with these carers, for periods ranging from a weekend (two overnight stays) or longer periods of one up to four weeks. The respite can take place either within the main carers home or the back-up carers home.

Bedrooms

As a fundamental principle, all fostered children need their own bedroom with space to store belongings, play and study. There are some exceptions to this rule, for example brothers and sisters may share a bedroom up to 10 years of age.

For some families, lack of personal space is not an issue. Although the ideal might be for every child to have their own bedroom, many foster carers simply do not have enough space to make this possible. If you cannot provide this this would need to be agreed prior and social workers consulted and your foster child is sharing a bedroom with another child, you should speak with your supervising social worker about what is acceptable behaviour. An important thing is for everyone to be clear about what has happened to the child or young person in the past, what they now need and how this can be provided. As a general rule, unrelated children should not be sharing a bedroom on an ongoing basis.

Some children who have been abused might need their own space so that they can learn that they have the right to be safe and private. This might be their own bedroom or could perhaps be a shared room that is divided by a partition or furniture. For some children the important thing will be to have somewhere to keep their possessions safe.

Your Safer Care Policy Document should be clear about bedroom rules, whether or not children are sharing. As children grow older, they should be given increasing control over who goes into their room. Anyone who needs to go into a child's bedroom should ask permission first and should leave the door open. This applies to children as with adults.

Bunk Beds – Age guidance provided by manufactures of bunk beds should be followed. However, the general rule is that children should not sleep on the top bunk if they are under 6 years of age, or over the age of 14.

Behaviour

Behaviour is a way of communicating, and everyone communicates through their behaviour, regardless of age and whether or not they have speech. There are numerous strategies for managing behaviours.

Training that provides further information is the De-Escalation and Behaviour Management course which covers both parts on a 2-day course.

Birth Certificates

Where possible the social worker for the child will ensure they have a copy of a child's birth certificate. If the need arises the social worker will arrange for a copy to be made available for the Foster Carer when considering applying for passports and other formal documents or if the young person requires to see it for whatever reason.

Birthdays

Birthdays should be celebrated for all children subject to their cultural and religious needs. Foster Carers will receive additional allowance of 1 week's age-related allowance to contribute towards the cost of birthday celebrations.

Bullying

All suspected or actual incidents of bullying are taken seriously by the Fostering Service. They are fully investigated, and support is provided by the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker to the child and their foster carers.

Foster carers must record all suspected or actual incidents and report these to the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker within 24 hours. The foster carer, the Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker are to plan how to address concerns, this is to include:

- Who should talk to the child.
- Who else needs to be notified, for example, Schools, Birth Parents.
- Whether any immediate action is needed to safeguard the child.

After any concerns have been discussed with the child, and if bullying is confirmed or continues to be suspected, a risk management meeting is held. The Supervising Social Worker is to record all reported incidents of bullying and the action taken.

C

Care Plan

By law each child and young person must have a Care Plan. This states the plans with which they are being provided care for and who is responsible for what and the timescales attached to the actions. This Plan is also a legal document that can be presented in court, stating the intentions of the Local Authority.

This should be reviewed regularly, and Care Team Meetings held monthly.

Child Abuse

Children who are looked after may have been abused in one form or another at some time in their life. Sadly, this may also occur during their time of 'being looked after'.

Child Allowance

A child's allowance is the money provided by the Fostering Service to the Foster Carers for the day-to-day care of the child/ren placed in their care.

[Child Development](#)

No matter what age range a Foster Carer provides care for it is important to understand Child Development.

[Child Mental Health](#)

A child's mental health is an important part of their overall needs and development. There are support services and assessments that can be accessed to help Foster Carers care for children and young people who are experiencing difficulties with their emotional and mental well-being.

[Child Minding](#)

A foster carer can be a registered childminder; however, it is normally appropriate to discuss this with a Supervising Social Worker and/or the Retention Team Manager.

[Child Protection](#)

This is a term that is the same as safeguarding and is the umbrella theme for keeping children and young people safe through formal processes and procedures. Safeguarding Children is one of the mandatory courses foster carers must complete on an annual basis. This is completed on the Training Hub.

[Child's Social Worker](#)

Each child or young person has an allocated social worker who is qualified and registered as such. They have statutory duties and very specific responsibilities for children in care.

[Children Act 1989](#)

The Children Act 1989 is the main piece of legislation that sets out how local authorities and other agencies work with children. The fostering service's related regulations are all tied into this piece of law.

[Children with Disabilities](#)

Children with disabilities are by virtue of having a disability is considered as children in need. This means they are entitled to services as not to receive such services will impair their health, development and general welfare.

[Children's Guardian](#)

A Children's Guardian is appointed by the Court, does not work for the Local Authority, and looks after the child's interests if a Court Order has been applied for.

[Children's Guide](#)

A Children's Guide is a document that explains to children and young people what will happen once they are placed in the care of the Local Authority. There are numerous contact details held within the guide which the children and young people may require if they are not happy in their placement. Foster carers should have copies of the Guide to give to children and young people when they are placed with them.

[Children's Rights](#)

Children and young people have rights but are only able to exercise some of them with adult help. Carers must defend the rights of the children fostered by them and also consider what this means for their own children. To assist with the promotion of a child's rights the National Youth Advocacy Service can be contacted to help a child or young person.

[Children's Workforce Development](#)

Children's Workforce Development is responsible for the co-ordination of training and development of those who work with children and young people.

[Christmas and other Religious Festivals](#)

Any religious festivals that are celebrated as part of a child's religious and or cultural needs will result in additional payments for the Foster Carers to ensure the child can have a positive experience.

[Clothing Allowance](#)

A child or young person who is placed in the care of the Local Authority must be adequately clothed. The child's social worker will obtain whatever clothing they can from the child's home. Part of the child's allowance includes a percentage for clothing allowance which enables foster carers to purchase new clothes as and when necessary.

[College](#)

Young people are encouraged to attend college after year 11 education ceases. Foster carers will be supported in ensuring this can happen and finances and equipment are not seen as a barrier for attendance. College attendance forms part of a young person's Pathway Plan and for further information go to Leaving Care.

[Communication](#)

Communication is the most important aspect of our lives and to be a good communicator requires listening skills as much as talking skills. Communication is not always about verbal skills it also includes non-verbal skills and behaviours. As a Foster Carer communication is possibly the most important and impacting skill they could possess.

Complaints

Middlesbrough Borough Council has a procedure, which foster carers and children placed with them should be aware of. Children who want to make a complaint need to be listened to and may need a lot of help to make their complaint. Foster Carers need to understand that for a child, making a complaint is a positive step, as it means the child has thought about the situation, decided something is not right and is willing to do something.

Complex Needs

The term complex need is used frequently within child care. This relates to the range of needs a child may have that are interlinked and present a range of behaviours that require skilled and therapeutic support.

Compliments

Everyone likes a compliment and as with the complaints process there is a similar process for making and receiving compliments. Speak with your Supervising Social Worker for further information.

Computer Use

Carers should be aware of the potential dangers of the internet as well as its obvious benefits for both education and leisure. Carers should ensure that internet filters, also known as parental controls, appropriate to the age of the children are installed. If possible, computers should be in communal areas within the household and carers should monitor their use. Children should be guided on the safe use of chat rooms, including using a nickname and never agreeing to meet anyone in person who they have been in contact with online, unless in a public place with the carer present.

All foster carers must complete the Fostering Networks – Digital Skills Programme and produce a Digital Passport for all children aged 10 and over. The Digital Passport is to be updated on an annual basis.

Confidentiality

All records are confidential and should be kept in a safe place. The recording and information held by a Foster Carer, for example, Review documents have to be given back to the Supervising Social Worker when the child leaves the placement as it belongs to the Local Authority.

Remember the information you are given about a child and their family is confidential and must not be shared with everyone. Foster Carers must be particularly on their guard in social situations and take care when responding to questions this includes support groups and training events.

Working in partnership with birth parents is a prime task of fostering. Relationships can be completely undermined if confidentiality is not fully respected. In sharing the

care of a child, carers will receive a lot of confidential information which the child and the family have given in trust. It is appreciated that carers or the child may wish to share certain information with very close relatives and friends, or other people concerned with the welfare of that child. However, carers should discuss this and seek permission from the child's Social Worker in the first instance.

Carers may at times discuss very sensitive situations with each other in mutually supportive roles but must remember that such discussions should be treated in highest confidence and children never specifically identified or named. They must carefully consider how much detail they need to reveal when looking for support from other carers and should operate on a 'need to know' basis.

When a child is placed, carers will receive highly confidential written information which must be kept in a secure place and returned to the child's Social Worker at the placement end.

Conflict Resolution

There may be times when people are not able to get on or have such a disagreement that they cannot resolve it themselves. There are skilled workers and organisations that are able to engage in conflict resolution. Should this input be required Foster Carers can discuss this with their Supervising Social Worker.

If the conflict is with their Supervising Social Worker, Foster Carers can approach the Retention Team Manager, Family Placement Service Manager or an independent organisation such as the Fostering Network.

Connected Person

The term Connected Person is a new term introduced by the Placement, Care Planning and Review Regulations 2011. (Previously known as Kinship Care).

A Connected Person is someone who has a relationship with a child and could be a family member (other than parents) or a friend.

They will be considered as appropriate carers for a child and be subjected to the same assessment and approval process as a Foster Carer. However, there are specific timescales attached to this which relate to the court hearing process.

Consent

Consent is a complex issue. However, in its simplest form it is the written/signed authority to allow something to occur. For example, for a child to be placed in care it requires consent from a person with parental responsibility. The complexities are about the age of the person concerned and whether they can make their own decisions to consent; the mental capacity of a person; the degree of importance and the timeliness of the signature. For example, A life-saving operation where immediate consent is required.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Delegated Authority Policy.

[Consent for Medical Treatment](#)

When a child is placed, foster carers must be given a copy of the Placement Agreement with signed medical consent. If they do not have this, they must inform the child's Social Worker, and their Supervising Social Worker. Foster carers may be able to sign forms such as consent for medical treatment including anaesthetics, dental treatment and permission for inoculations.

These forms may only be signed by the foster carer if the child's parents have delegated their power to consent to the Local Authority, and the child's legal status permits this.

In certain circumstances, foster carers are not authorised to sign medical consent forms. Carers should discuss this fully with a child's Social Worker immediately a child is placed in their care.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Delegated Authority Policy.

[Consultation](#)

Consultation is a day-to-day process that involves asking people what they think of something or what their wishes and feelings are about that subject. Children and young people in care are consulted on a regular basis. Sometimes it is on an aspect of their day-to-day care, sometimes it's in relation to their long-term care plans, and sometimes it is about an aspect of the child care service. This process must always be recorded as it provides evidence for decision making as well as inspections by Ofsted.

[Contact](#)

The Children Act 1989 states that contact between a child who is looked after and his/her family, and those connected with him/her must be encouraged. As far as possible, carers should work in partnership with parent(s) to encourage contact.

Even if a Care Order is in force, unless the Order says otherwise, contact must be allowed. At the Placement Meeting contact is discussed and the arrangements agreed to form a contact plan.

The Local Authority has a legal duty to promote contact unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child's welfare.

Each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in his or her Care Plan and/or Placement Agreement.

Where the Care Planning and carer's personal situation allows, it is expected that foster carers will allow up to two contact sessions a week (maximum 3 hours per session), in their own home to facilitate contact, as long as it is appropriate to do so.

The foster carers' role in respect of contact arrangements needs to be agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting and not be changed unless agreed by all parties. Contact arrangements should be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. The child's views should be sought and, wherever possible, given priority in determining contact arrangements.

Sometimes a child may return from time spent with parents in an upset or confused state. Carers need to realise that the child needs time to readjust or may need help in talking about their feelings. Try and prepare the child for meetings where appropriate. Including the birth family in celebrations such as birthdays can be very helpful.

If a member of the child's family visits unexpectedly, it is important to know what to do. The child's Social Worker should have described the child's legal status and Care Plan at the Placement Planning Meeting and should have made clear any concerns regarding any individual. Ensure you record such visits.

Some foster carers may be involved in helping children to move on to adoptive homes or be interested in adoption themselves. Further information is available from Adoption Tees Valley at <https://adoptionteesvalley.org.uk>.

Contact is also known as Family Time.

[Corporate Parenting](#)

The Children Act 2004 required Local Authorities that have responsibility for both Education and Social Care to bring these functions together under one directorate. This is to ensure that different agencies work together more successfully to improve outcomes for children. The focus is 'the journey of the child or young person' and delivering the 'Every Child Matters' agenda to Middlesbrough's Children, Young Persons and Families, all under the strategic aim of giving children and young people the best possible start in life.

Everyone who works for Middlesbrough Council is considered a corporate parent, as well as foster carers who have Delegate Authority.

[Court Orders](#)

Court Orders are only made when something, which is considered to be in the best interests of the child, can be achieved by the making of the order and that it is better than making no order at all.

Foster Carers with the help of Social Workers need to explain to a child the reasons for going to court, the decisions the court can make and prepare the child if they need

to attend the court hearing. A court order automatically ends when a child is 18 years old, unless stopped by the court earlier or the child marries.

Foster Carers should ensure a child's views are heard. The court will appoint a Children's Guardian, to talk about the child's wishes and feelings and in addition a solicitor will be appointed for the child.

D

Data Protection

Data Protection relates to the law in respect of maintaining information in a confidential manner and who needs to receive information in different scenarios. (Please see - General Data Protection Regulations below for further information).

Decision Making

A Foster Carer is part of a team caring for children and there will be the need to attend meetings which are used to help make decisions for a child in the Foster Carer's care. The different types of meetings include.

- Placement Meetings
- Reviews
- Strategy Meetings
- Child Protection Conference
- Core Group Meetings
- End of Placement Meetings
- Permanence Planning Meetings

In all of these meetings, if a Foster Carer is invited, they will be required to contribute in terms of sharing information. This information is a contribution towards making decisions that will have an impact on the child concerned. The Foster Carer is not on their own and there will be many other people who will have a contribution to make.

Delegated Authority

Delegated authority is the process that enables foster carers to make common sense, everyday decisions about the children and young people they care for, such as allowing them to go to friends' houses for sleepovers, signing consent forms for school trips and even arranging haircuts.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Delegated Authority Policy.

[Designated Teacher](#)

Every school will have a Designated Teacher for Children in Care. The Designated teacher is the first point of contact in the child's school for carers and social workers.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for the completion of the Personal Education Plan for the young person. Carers should always attend the PEP meeting which will set targets for academic and social and emotional development progress as well as numerical targets for progress relevant for their key stage.

See Education Plans below.

[Disability Living Allowance](#)

When a child who is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) becomes looked after the Foster Carer concerned can apply to the local Benefits Agency for the DLA to be transferred to them on behalf of the child as their main carer. The Foster Carer's Supervising Social Carer will provide the necessary advice and information.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Policy on DLA Payments for CLA.

[Disclosure and Barring Service](#)

A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is a way for employers check your criminal record, to help decide whether you are a suitable person to work for them. This includes deciding whether it is suitable for you to work with children or vulnerable adults.

Any adult working with children and young people must have a DBS as a minimum requirement which is set out in law. The Local Authority will ensure these are undertaken and it is their responsibility to ensure they are updated as required.

For Foster Carers they need to be aware that regular visitors who are likely to have some child care responsibility such as babysitters and partners must have a DBS completed before engaging in child care activities. For clarification on any given situation Foster Carers should always speak to their Supervising Social Worker.

Once a Foster Carer is in receipt of a DBS, they should sign up to the Update Service. In the first instance the cost of this is reimbursed by the Fostering Service.

[Discrimination](#)

Discrimination means to treat somebody or a group of people differently because of prejudice. The discrimination is based upon their gender, race, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality and disability. There are many forms of discrimination, and these are but just a few.

Disruption Meetings

On occasions placements come to an end suddenly and in these instances a Disruption Meeting is normally held. This is a process by which everyone involved can learn from the experience in order to improve things for the child concerned or future placements. These meetings can be stressful, and it is vital that people are open and honest without recriminations. Therefore, they are facilitated by independent professionals skilled at managing such situations.

Doctors/General Practitioner

Every child and young person placed in care must be registered with a General Practitioner (GP). Where possible they should remain with their own family GP until it is deemed appropriate to transfer to the GP the Foster Carer is registered with.

The GPs provide the same service to children in care as they do to every other member of the community. On occasions the GP may be asked to undertake a statutory medical because it is considered to be the most appropriate thing to do. The decision as to which GP a child is registered to usually involves the parents giving consent especially for any changes of GP practice.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is ordinarily defined as violence between partners in an intimate relationship. However, it can include physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse.

The research currently states that it is predominantly men being violent towards women. There is evidence that the opposite occurs on less of a scale. There are also times when the domestic violence includes older young people on the vulnerable parent. The issue of domestic violence can be complex, and consideration should be given to the fact that any child placed in care may have experienced such an environment and this may manifest in replicated behaviour or other behaviours of concern.

Drugs

We know that many young people will have experimented with drugs in some form or another before they leave school. Specific advice should be sought if there is cause for concern regarding use of drugs, excessive alcohol consumption and/or solvent abuse.

The attraction of drugs includes the excitement of the sensation, the alternative they offer to alcohol and the escape they can provide from feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem. There is often peer pressure to join in. It is important that young people understand the different reasons why drugs are taken and what are generally considered to be appropriate and inappropriate uses. Training is available to carers of older children and teenagers.

A wide range of drugs are available today, some illegal and some not. They include:

- Cannabis usually smoked in a roll-up cigarette but can be taken in other ways.
- Stimulants such as amphetamines, cocaine powder and crack crystals.
- Ecstasy usually in tablet or capsule form.
- Hallucinogens like LSD and magic mushrooms.
- Tranquillisers and sedative pills.
- Heroin, either injected, sniffed or smoked. Can be seriously addictive.
- Tobacco, including vaping.
- Alcohol

Signs of drug use include sudden changes of behaviour, loss of appetite, unusual drowsiness, becoming unusually aggressive and demanding money for no explained reason.

If you have any concerns or suspicions about drug use, please speak to the child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker. There are several agencies and organisations who can help young people with such difficulties whilst offering further support to you.

Duty Numbers

The following numbers are the duty numbers for the Fostering Service and are to be used when you cannot get in touch with your Supervising Social Worker.

Business Support - 01642 201962

Fostering Recruitment - 01642 726617

Connected Persons - 01642 726616

Support and Retention - 01642 726615

E

Education

The learning and educational needs of each child or young person in foster care are given high priority and she or he is encouraged to attain her or his full potential.

Carers have an important contribution to make to a child's educational progress and development. They are in a good position to observe and to help identify and assess both the child's real capabilities and any difficulties, fears and development deficits.

Carers will need to be supported in this role with the help of the teacher through school reports and direct contacts with the school. The child's educational progress must be kept under review.

Education Plans

All Middlesbrough's children in care should have a Personal Education Plan or PEP. Foster carers are asked to contribute to its completion at a PEP meeting and should have a copy. Carers are also required to actively contribute to delivering good educational outcomes for the children and young people in their care.

Every child of a school age must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is the plan for ensuring the child's educational needs are appropriately met. These plans normally begin within 14 days of a placement starting.

If a child has moved from one foster care placement to another the PEP will follow them, although may need a review sooner than previously planned. A child's social worker will be able to provide the necessary information for a foster carer when considering the education plans for any child in their care.

Education Psychologists

If a child is having real difficulties in learning or concentrating at school, the head teacher may ask for an educational psychologist to see him/her. An educational psychologist is not a psychiatrist, but someone who has special knowledge about how children learn and what may be causing them to have difficulties. Educational psychologists are involved when children need specific educational help to overcome difficulties.

Education Resources

Children and young people's educational development and attainments are a crucial part of fostering. There are a large range of support and resources available to support children and young people in attaining their full potential through their education.

A child's PEP should provide some access to the resources available. However, Schools, Teachers and Social Workers are able to access a range of resources to aide a child's development.

Education Support Services

The education support worker's job is to be a link between the school and the foster home. They talk to the school about any problem a child may be having at school, for example, bullying. They are also involved when a child is truanting. They can also be involved with PEP meetings.

Emergency Duty Team

The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) is part of Social Care and provides an out-of-hours response to emergency situations involving child protection, child care, mental health and other adult service matters by providing a contact point for advice and, where necessary, immediate service to individuals and families who are experiencing crisis

in their lives. This service covers the following areas: Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-On-Tees.

On week days, this service is available from 5pm to 8.30am the following morning. At weekends and Public Holidays, a 24-hour emergency service is provided.

Contact is by telephone on 01642 524552.

EDT sometimes requires foster placements for children on evenings and weekends. Therefore, a list of Foster Carers who are available to take emergency placements is provided each week on a Friday.

If a Foster Carer wishes to be 'on call' they must contact the Duty Worker by Friday lunchtimes and they will be advised if they will be included on the list for EDT to use. An additional allowance will be paid if a Foster Carer is on the list for that week.

[Emergency Placements](#)

From time-to-time placements are made in an emergency. This means that the placement is made without a prior plan of introductions because the risks are such that the child concerned must be placed in a safe environment immediately.

Often these placements occur during the evening or over the weekend. Foster Carers will be asked by the Fostering Service if they wish to be placed on an emergency placement list for a week and these are the carers who will normally be contacted in such circumstances. Where an emergency placement has been made the relevant Social Worker and the Foster Carers Supervising Social Worker will deal with the matter on the next working day.

[Emotional Development](#)

Emotional development for a child and young person is extremely important and links to many aspects of their being and future successes. This aspect of a child's development is linked to attachment styles; resilience; cognitive development; psychological and behavioural development.

Foster Carers as main care givers will be instrumental in developing a child's emotional well-being and should seek advice and guidance from their Supervising Social Worker.

[Emotional Resilience](#)

Emotional resilience is a concept that explains how some children are able to cope with traumatic events and general disappointments better than others. This is directly linked to the emotional development of a child and their attachment profile.

Equal Opportunities

Middlesbrough Council has adopted a policy of equality of opportunity which aims to eliminate discrimination wherever it may exist on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic origin, sexuality, age and disability in the recruitment and training of its employees, Foster Carers and the provision of services.

E–Safety

Foster carers will be supported by their Supervising Social Worker to establish internet usage policies for their household. Setting up a written agreement with older children about usage must be considered. Foster carers must be made aware of a range of online resources which are available to help parents and carers to help children Stay Safe Online.

Exemptions

The maximum number of children a Foster Carer can look after at any one time is three unless the children are a sibling group. However, if a Foster Carer is required to care for 4 or more children, who are unrelated, the law permits this if the Local Authority issues an exemption certificate.

In recognition of the complexities of caring for 4 children an exemption allowance is paid which is dependent upon the banding level a Foster Carer is being paid.

Exercising Choice

Children and young people will from time-to-time wish to exercise their choice in all manner of things. This is a part of their development and learning. Sometimes this may involve risky behaviour, criminal behaviour, and abusive behaviour.

For the most part it is more likely to be a child exploring their world and learning the consequences of making decisions. These can be as simple as choosing what they want to wear or eat. Occasionally this learning process brings challenges to the foster carer and there may be a need to discuss with the child's Social Worker or the Supervising Social Worker for advice on dealing with certain issues.

There is a requirement for foster carers to document times when children do exercise their choice as this is good evidence that children and young people are being encouraged to develop and grow as individuals.

E

Family Time

Family Time is what it sounds like, a time where the family can have regular contact with their child. Please see Contact above.

[Fire Safety](#)

All fostering households should have their own fire evacuation plan in which they consider how they would escape from the home in the event of a fire. This should be shared in an age-appropriate way with any children who are placed with them and ensure that all household members know what to do.

Foster carers are expected to have smoke detectors on each floor of their home. When these are battery operated, they should regularly test the batteries and replace them annually. The Supervising Social Worker will also test the batteries when undertaking a Home Safety Check.

Electrical equipment in the home should be regularly checked to ensure that it is in safe working order. Electrical leads should be tidy and not trailing over walk areas and sockets should not be overloaded. Any electrical work should be undertaken by a qualified and registered electrician.

The Training Hub has a course on 'Fire Safety' which can be completed by all carers.

[Foster Carer Agreement](#)

Approving Fostering Agencies are required to enter into a written agreement with a foster carer at the time of approval. This sets out the terms and conditions of the partnership between the agency and the foster carers. There are minimum requirements stated in the Fostering Service Regulations.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Foster Carer Agreement.

[Foster Carer Files](#)

The Fostering Service is required to keep foster carer files safe and confidential. Files will be maintained by the Fostering Service and Business Support and should include:

- An Assessment Report signed by the Carers, their Assessing Social Worker, the Fostering Team Manager and the Chair of the Foster Care Panel. The approval is given by the Agency Decision Maker.
- A copy of the letter following panel giving details of the ages, gender, numbers of children to be cared for, and the type of fostering to be undertaken.
- A signed and dated copy of the Foster Carer Agreement Form.
- A copy of Annual Review Reports.
- The outcome of any complaint, concern or allegation raised against or by the carers.
- Copies of any correspondence.
- Record of contact and supervision between the carers and their Supervising Social Worker.
- A clear record of de-registration where applicable.

- A clear chronology of significant events at the front of the file.

The Fostering Service keeps all carers records on Middlesbrough Council's electronic record keeping system LCS, and CHARMS to record placements and process payments to carers. All records must be kept for 15 years from the date on which carers are de-registered.

Access to a foster carer file is restricted to those who are authorised and need access because of their duties. Foster carers have a right to see their own records. Such requests should be made through a carer's Supervising Social Worker who will advise them about the process. Foster carers do not have a right to see references taken up during assessment, or full Strategy Meeting minutes or third-party information as these are confidential.

[Foster Carer Recording](#)

Foster carers must keep a record of events relating to the children/young people in their care. Such a record may be used later in giving evidence in court, as part of the Child Protection process or simply to inform the child's Review. These records are confidential.

Facts and opinions must be clearly separated.

Please remember that children and birth parents may also be able to view these records.

The Training Hub has a course on 'Reporting and Recording' which can be completed by all carers.

[Foster Carer Register](#)

By law the Fostering Service must keep a record of all of its Foster Carers with some basic details which must be made available to Ofsted at any point in time.

[Foster Carer Reviews](#)

All foster carers will have their own reviews at least annually. The review is to assess whether the foster carer and the household continue to be suitable, however, the guidance explains that this should include wider discussion on for example, the carer's view of the Fostering Service and it should help in understanding the fostering service as a whole.

Such a review should also take place whenever there is a change in address, or significant changes in the household, for example, health problems; births; marriages and deaths; or if serious allegations are made against a member of the foster carer's household.

In any review, the agency must take the foster carer's views into account, along with those expressed by any other agency, which has placed children with them during the year under review.

The review and decisions must be recorded, and the foster carer must be notified of any changes or termination of approval. Where there is any disagreement a 'representation' procedure and/or Independent Review Mechanism is available.

Foster Carer's can and do resign. This terminates the approval, providing the resignation is in writing and remains in place for 28 days.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Policy on Reviews.

[Foster Carer's Support](#)

Fostering Services must provide a range of support to their Foster Carers. These may include Supervising Social Worker; support groups; training events; social events; independent support; peer support and mentoring. The range of support depends upon a number of factors including the wishes of the foster carers themselves.

[Foster Carers – Drugs and Alcohol](#)

Foster Carers must be aware that whilst they are responsible for the care of other people's children, they must take account of the use of prescribed drugs and the use of alcohol.

Where carers are prescribed drugs for purposes of treatment, they must ensure that they are properly secured in a locked medicine cabinet and present no risk to fostered children/young people. If the drugs need to be kept in the fridge, a lockable cash box is a useful way of keeping them secure.

The illegal use of drugs by foster carers whilst they are responsible for the care of children/young people is likely to result in termination of approval. Such matters will be referred to Senior Management and the Foster Care Panel.

Foster carers must not collude in any way with the taking of drugs by young people in their care. Carers must advise a young person's Social Worker and their Supervising Social Worker of any concerns they have regarding their use of drugs.

[Foster Carers - Smoking of Tobacco](#)

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 emphasise the importance of health promotion awareness for foster carers in relation to their own health and that of children in their care. Given the increased evidence it will become more difficult for Local Authorities to justify placing children in environments where they are exposed to the impact of passive smoking.

The Fostering service follows the BAAF recommendations 'Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children and their Carers', to ensure that priority is given to protecting the health of children and their carers.

[Fostering Network](#)

The Fostering Network is a leading fostering charity and membership organisation, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children to make foster care the very best it can be.

Their aim is to support those who foster, improve opportunities for fostered children and young people and provide expert guidance to all fostering services.

- Provide opportunities for children and young people that benefit them, make their voices heard and enable them to reach their potential.
- Promote foster care to ensure society understands, values and recognises how foster carers transform children's lives.
- Influence policy and the legislative framework so it supports and promotes excellence in foster care.
- Support fostering families and the services that work with them to provide the best possible care for children and young people.

As a foster carer for Middlesbrough, you are a member of this organisation and can call on them for advice and guidance in all matters of fostering.

The Fostering Network address and contact details:

87 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA

General number: 020 7620 6400

Email: info@fostering.net

Information and Advice – 020 7401 9582

24-hour legal helpline: 01384 885734

[Fostering Panel](#)

The Fostering Panel is a legal forum set up through regulation and standard that is made of a range of professionals including foster carers. The Panel is chaired by an independent person. The panel deals with new applications for foster carers; review of foster carers; policy changes.

The Panel makes recommendations based on all the information made available to it. The Panel never makes a decision that is the responsibility of the Agency Decision Maker.

[Fostering Service Inspection](#)

The Fostering Service is subject of inspections by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) on a regular basis. The cycle of inspections changes from time to time.

Sometimes it is annual sometimes it is every three years. The inspection focuses on whether the Fostering Service Regulations are being met. Everyone who is connected to the Fostering Service is part of the inspection in one way or another.

[Fostering Service Regulation](#)

The Fostering Service Regulations (April 2011) are the statutes in law that determine how a Fostering Service delivers its services. These regulations also apply to Foster Carers in how they provide care to children and young people.

[Friends](#)

Friends and friendships for children and young people placed in Foster Care should be encouraged. As with any other parent there is a degree of supervision and “vetting” of a child’s friends.

Therefore, a certain amount of delegated responsibility is passed on to the Foster Carers who can make a judgement on whether a child in their care has a sleepover or vice versa. Communication with the child’s social worker and their Supervising Social Worker is a helpful way of managing what can sometimes be a tricky judgement call.

[G](#)

[General Data Protection Regulation](#)

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information.

Personal information should be kept in accordance of this regulation along with the Data Protection Act 2018. As a Foster Carer you should be completely aware of this legislation and how it affects you and the children you are caring for.

The Training Hub has a course on General Data Protection Regulation, which is to be completed by all foster carers on an annual basis.

[Good Parenting](#)

Foster Carers are expected to provide the standard of care that is considered to be of a good standard. This is a value judgement, and everyone has their own understanding of what is good parenting. Therefore, a reasonable guide to this is that Foster Carers provide care to a standard they would want for their own children.

This is a helpful basis from which to start. Discussions with a Foster Carers' Supervising Social Worker are helpful if there are differences of opinion over the care of a child that brings about the different expectations and values of professionals.

H

Handbook

A handbook for Foster Carers to have access to for their reference is a part of the requirement under the National Minimum Standards, Standard 21, which is about support.

The handbook is designed to offer guidance and signpost Foster Carers to more detailed information for their development, advice and guidance in carrying out the fostering task. This document is the Middlesbrough Fostering Service Handbook.

Health and Safety

Foster Carers must provide a living environment that is appropriately and reasonably safe. Therefore every 12 months the Supervising Social Worker will undertake a Health and Safety Assessment of the Foster Carer's property which includes the garden, sheds and garages. Where actions are identified the Foster Carer is given a reasonable time period to address the issue.

The Supervising Social Worker must inspect the foster carers accommodation, including the outside environment and their transport and pay particular attention to the proposed sleeping arrangements for foster children. If there are obvious hazards the Supervising Social Worker must discuss these with the foster carer and consider whether the accommodation is suitable for any foster child.

Where a dog resides within the household, the Supervising Social Worker is to complete a 'Pet Questionnaire'. The questionnaire looks at the dog's personality, history, housing, routines, health and hygiene and safety. There is also a section for the Supervising Social Worker to add their comments observing the dog. This is reviewed annually as part of the carers' review.

The Supervising Social Worker inspects the foster home annually to ensure it can comfortably accommodate all who live there and that it meets Health and Safety Standards. Any work identified to address Health and Safety issues must be followed up to completion.

Where a foster carer is to providing transport for the child, the Supervising Social Worker is to ensure this is safe and appropriate to the child's needs and must check that car insurance, MOT and safety restraints are up to date.

The Training Hub has a course on 'Health and Safety' which all carers can complete.

Health Care

Each child or young person in foster care receives health care which meets her or his needs for physical, emotional and social growth, together with information and training appropriate to her or his age and understanding.

A full health assessment is carried out for every child/young person in foster care each year and every child/young person should have a Health Plan that is reviewed in the light of regular health assessments.

Carers should ensure that children and young people's routine health care needs, such as dental checks and sight and hearing tests, are met. It is helpful if carers can have this information readily available for their CLA Review.

Details of a child/young person's medical history should be obtained when they first become Looked After, this information should be passed on to carers. Carers should ask for details, particularly if the child takes any medication or has particular health needs or allergies.

It is essential to know the name of the child's own Doctor. If a child has a serious illness or is admitted to hospital, carers must notify the child's Social Worker or Emergency Duty Team who should then inform the child's parents. Any illness should be recorded and details of any medication or treatment administered.

Every child and young person placed in the care of the Local Authority must have an Initial Health Assessment, which helps the Social Worker gather some baseline information to help monitor progress for the child whilst they are in care.

Establishing a child's health needs is vital to ensure progress is being made and that the most appropriate care can be provided. Depending upon the age of the child regular health checks are undertaken. Occasionally additional health checks will be required particularly if a child is experiencing developmental delay in some area of their overall development. Health checks include the Dentist, Opticians, Optometrists and Paediatricians.

Health Professionals

There are a vast range of health professionals that potentially could be involved in the health care of a child. The main source of support and advice that Foster Carers can access is the Nurse Specialist for Children Looked After. Foster Carers can also discuss this further with their Supervising Social Worker.

Health Visitor

This person is attached to the local GP surgery or health centre. They work with children under 5 years old and with families who may need extra help with children over 5 years of age. Health visitors are qualified nurses, and some are qualified

midwives. Carers and parents can contact them at any time at the surgery or health centre. They will make visits to the home, if required.

Hobbies

Children and young people should be encouraged to undertake hobbies and participate in a range of different activities to enable them to explore what things they could take up as a hobby. The benefits of children having hobbies are linked to their overall development. Where there is an additional fee attached to hobbies Foster Carers need to discuss finances with their Supervising Social Worker.

Holidays

Foster Carers are provided with additional money to help pay towards them taking children and young people in their care on holiday with them. The local authority does not normally approve family holidays within school term which require the child missing any lesson time. If the Foster Carer thinks there are exceptional circumstances for this policy to be overridden, they must speak to their Supervising Social Worker first before making any bookings.

Human Rights

The Human Rights Act 1998 is a new law in full force from 2 October 2000. It gives further effect in the UK to the fundamental rights and freedoms in the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

Hygiene

Children and young people should be encouraged to develop personal hygiene skills. Foster Carers will on a day-to-day basis undertake this task. They can seek advice and support from the Nurse Specialist for Looked After Children.

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Identity

A child or young person understanding their identity is vital for the development and understanding their place in the world. For many children it is about their perception of their world and where they have come from. For others it is more complex based upon their family tree.

For all children it is the understanding of their culture and heritage. Some children may have significant cultural and ethnic differences to their carers and therefore need additional support to make sense of their world. The appropriate support is crucial to the Foster Carer's ability to care for children with different cultural and ethnic identity to them and the services considered most appropriate to help should be accessed via the child's Social Worker or the Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker.

Inclusion

Children and young people are often excluded from many things their peers experience on a day-to-day basis. It is the Foster Carer's role to enable children and young people to engage in education, social activities, and access community facilities. In doing so the child or young person is being included in "normal" life opportunities and build their skills and development as they grow to become a confident and included member of society.

Independence

Children and young people normally experience a sense of independence at different stages of their development. As young children it is associated to their attachment and social skills. As teenage years and adolescence come into a young person's development the level of independence normally increases and they start to engage in a range of behaviours that may on occasions result in consequences they had not considered possible.

Many young people will require their Foster Carers to support them and help them develop skills in preparation for an independent living situation. The Pathways Team is a key service directly responsible for supporting young people in preparing for independence.

Independent Advocate and Support

On occasions children and young people need independent support and guidance to deal with an issue that they feel is not being dealt with appropriately by the Local Authority, their parents or Foster Carers.

They are entitled to access an independent advocate who can help them address the issues they wish to deal with. The agencies most likely to offer independent advocacy are National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and in a formal setting such as court a Family Court Advisor CAFCASS, Guardian ad Litem) is normally appointed to represent the children's views, wishes and feelings.

Independent Reviewing Mechanism

The Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) is a process for Foster Carers to have an approval decision to be looked at by an independent body. The IRM is set up under statute law at the request of the Secretary of State. Agencies such as BAAF facilitate the IRM process. A Foster Carer has the right to request the IRM deals with any disagreement they may have regarding a recommendation made by a fostering panel about their approval status.

IRM is a review process which prospective or existing foster carers can use if they do not agree with the Qualifying Determination given to them by their Fostering Service provider. This means the outcome made by the Fostering Service provider that it does

not propose to approve a person as suitable to foster or proposes to terminate or change the terms of approval of an existing carer. It would be hoped that most difficulties and disagreements would be resolved prior to reaching this stage. Further information can be found at www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk or within our Foster Carers Complaints Policy.

[Independent Reviewing Officer](#)

An Independent Reviewing Officer is a person who is responsible for providing an independent view of a child or young person's plan and challenging the decision-making process for each case they are connected to.

They also provide a chairperson's role for the Foster Carer's Review. They write a report following the review meeting and make recommendations regarding the foster carer's approval status.

[Independent Visitor](#)

Children who are not in touch with their families may have an Independent Visitor.

[Individualised Plan](#)

Each child and young person must have an individualised care plan that explains how their needs are going to be met, by whom and by when. If a Foster Carer is not sure what the plans are for the child or young person in their care, they should contact the social worker for the child and ask for a copy of the plan.

[Induction](#)

Every newly approved Foster Carer undertakes an induction. This includes spending time with their Supervising Social Worker going through processes, policies and procedures. The induction also includes receiving and reading through this handbook.

[Information Sharing](#)

A key part of social care is the need to share information regarding children and young people. This provides people with an understanding of a child's needs and situation as well as their overall development. There are regulations, policies and procedures around information sharing protocols.

This can be a complex area and Foster Carers should always check with their Supervising Social Worker for clarification regarding information they might want to share that comes from a third party or may be considered confidential.

[Internet and Social Media](#)

We now live in a world that technology and social networking via the internet is part of the fabric of our society. This is an area children and young people may have more knowledge and skills than their Foster Carers and other adults in their lives.

This presents many interesting and sometimes worrying issues. Foster Carers can seek advice from the Fostering Service and support is available in relation to Information Technology issues.

[Introductions](#)

Wherever possible placements should be made following a series of introductions in order for the child or young person to prepare for their new placement and say meaningful goodbyes to those they are moving on from.

[Involving Parents and Family](#)

Wherever possible the parents and family members should be involved in the decision-making processes about their child's lives. They should also be invited to meetings, celebrations and other events that their child is involved in.

They may also be able to share information on a regular basis about their child's likes and dislikes, which will help the Foster Carer provide appropriate levels of care. If there is anything about involving the parents or family that causes a Foster Carer concern, they must discuss things with their Supervising Social Worker or the child's Social Worker.

[J](#)

[Judges](#)

Should a child or young person be the subject of care proceedings it is possible the case is dealt with by a court that requires a Judge to preside over it. The Judge has more legal authority than a Magistrates Court and can therefore deal with complex cases.

[K](#)

[Kinship Care](#)

Now known as Connected Person. (Please see Connected Person).

[L](#)

[Learning and Development](#)

Foster Carers are required to undertake a Personal Development Programme and demonstrate as part of meeting the NMS that they are engaging in learning and development opportunities to support their continued progress as Foster Carers and the standard of care they provide.

A Foster Carers Supervising Social Worker will provide the information for Foster Carers to determine how they can access learning and development opportunities.

Learning Environment

Having an appropriate environment for children and young people to learn in outside of school is important to their continued development. This requires them to have homework space and the opportunity to learn in a calm and relaxed atmosphere.

Therefore, Foster Carers are encouraged to provide appropriate space for homework to be done and establish a routine and environment that supports the learning process.

Leaving Care

Leaving Care is a term mainly used for those young people who are 16, 17 and 18 who are in the process of leaving the care system and moving on to an independent living situation. There is legislation in place that determines the legal duties on Local Authorities regarding care leavers. The Pathway Team will provide a care leaver with a clear plan.

Legal Advice

Legal advice is something that is required normally when a child or young person is involved with a court process. However, from time-to-time a Foster Carer may require legal advice if they are considering offering a permanent placement such as Special Guardianship, Residence Order or in some cases Adoption.

Other legal advice may pertain to complaints or allegations a Foster Carer is the centre of. The Fostering Network may offer legal advice.

Legal Highs

Legal highs are substances that have similar effects to illegal drugs like cocaine or cannabis. They are sometimes called club drugs or new psychoactive substances (NPS). Many of these drugs are now controlled, but some are still legal to possess. This does not mean they are safe or approved for people to use.

Some drugs marketed as legal highs contain ingredients that are illegal to possess. Legal highs can carry serious health risks. The chemicals they contain have in most cases never been used before in drugs for human consumption. This means they haven't been tested to show they are safe. Users can never be certain what they are taking and what the effects might be.

Other risks

- The increase in the risk to yourself if you combine alcohol with any legal or illegal drug.
- Legal highs can reduce inhibitions, so you do things you wouldn't normally do. They can cause paranoia, coma, seizures and, in rare cases, death.
- Because the chemical ingredients in a branded product can be changed without you knowing, the risks are unpredictable.

- Even drugs that look similar or have similar names may be of varying strengths and have different effects.

When to get Medical Help

Most problems with short-term use of legal highs will settle after you stop taking them. However, the negative effects of some legal highs can take a few days to wear off completely, just like the comedown from stimulants such as cocaine or amphetamines.

If you think the child or young person is having a serious negative reaction soon after taking a legal high, or experiences problems that do not settle with a little time out, fluids and fresh air, get medical help straight away by going to the accident and emergency (A&E) department of your nearest hospital.

If you're worried about continuing health problems of the child or young person after they've stopped taking the drugs, visit your GP. But if you think further advice would be helpful before deciding whether or not to visit your GP, call the FRANK drugs helpline on 0300 123 6600, or NHS 111.

Legal Highs and the Law

Many drugs that were previously sold as legal highs are now controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act, including mephedrone (meow meow or mcat., naphyrone, BZP and GBL). This means they are illegal to possess or supply to others. There are lots of different types of synthetic cannabinoids, and a large number have become Class B drugs.

To find out more about legal highs, visit the FRANK website - www.talktofrank.com

Emergencies and Assistance

If you think someone is "high" on drugs, keep calm and patient and try to talk to them about how they are feeling. Do your best to bring them down by talking through, gradually and slowly, where they are and who you are. Sometimes it is best simply to stay with them and stay alert. Any criticism or punishment can wait for later.

In an emergency make sure that the child or young person has plenty of fresh air, turn them on their side so they won't choke or vomit, don't leave them alone and get someone else to dial 999 for an ambulance. Collect any tablets or other substances that might have been taken and give them to the paramedic.

Ways of helping young people include talking through the issues, teaching them to care for and value their health and their bodies and getting them to think about other activities or groups of friends which could provide different forms of relaxation or entertainment.

Legal Representative

The term Legal Representative normally refers to the solicitor/lawyer/barrister that attends court and presents a person's case. The Local Authority has their own legal representatives that social workers work closely with. Parents will have their own legal representatives and children will have theirs appointed by their Guardian.

Life Story Work

Many children who are Looked After have complexities in their lives – they may have experienced abuse, many moves, or separations and they may have patchy memories about what has happened or been given an inaccurate account of their past.

Life Story work can be a useful tool in helping children to make sense of their lives. Such work is planned by the Social Worker, and the carers may be involved in assisting and supporting it. A Life Story book to help the child understand his or her life may be produced, this can include photos and letters etc.

It is important to maintain a record of the child's life and progress at each stage whilst in foster care. This can be done by keeping a written or photographic record – see the section on photographs. Consideration must be given to safeguarding the child in relation to confidentiality.

It is very helpful to keep mementos such as drawings, certificates and admission tickets to help illustrate activities the child has participated in whilst in your care. In this way you can provide the links for a young adult who is looking back and trying to make sense of their history.

Many children will require Life Story Work. This is a way of giving children the chance to learn about their past life and understand some of the things that have happened. Often the information is put into an album which may be called a Life Book.

Foster Carers play a significant part in this work by collecting memorabilia, keepsakes and photographs that can be placed in the Life Book or kept in a memory box for the child to take with them wherever and whenever they move on.

Living Standards

There is an expectation that Foster Carers provide a good standard of care and alongside that is a good standard of living environment. To help maintain the standards the annual Health and Safety audit of a Foster Carers home is undertaken.

The Supervising Social Worker has the authority to provide feedback to Foster Carers and request improvements if the need arises. Sometimes because of the demands on a placement support may be required which can be accessed via the Supervising Social Worker.

Local Authority Designated officer

When there is an allegation made against a professional including Foster Carers the investigation process is overseen by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Their job is to ensure due process is followed and that fairness is applied. They provide an evaluative report for the Local Authority to help the learning from such situations improve services.

M

Making Decisions

A Foster Carer is part of a team caring for children and there will be a need for them to attend several meetings. These meetings tend to involve sharing information, solving problems, reaching decisions and making plans. Ultimately there is a need for decisions to be made about the future of a child in placement. This decision making must be documented for future scrutiny if required.

Management

The Fostering Service has a Service Manager, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the service. This role is one of significant responsibility and there are Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards that must be achieved.

The management of three areas within the service are Recruitment, Retention and Connected Carers. There is a dedicated manager for these three areas.

Marketing

The Fostering Service engages in different marketing strategies in order to recruit more Foster Carers. There are times when the strategy includes the involvement of foster carers.

Matching Placements

Matching placements is the process by which the Fostering Service and the social workers determine the needs of the child or young person and identify the most appropriate Foster Carer for them. The skills, knowledge, experience, family composition, geographical area are all key considerations when deciding the match.

Medical Treatment

Any medical treatment a child or young person requires will need consent from the parents if possible, or by a senior manager of the Local Authority. The placement agreement may stipulate what a Foster Carer can agree to, however, it is important that the approval is clear and in writing before treatment is administered. However, in a life and death situation there are processes in place which the medical professionals will advise on.

Medicine and Medication

There are strict rules around the administration of medicine and medication. Foster Carers will normally have responsibility for the administration of medicines, and they can seek advice and guidance via the Nurse for Looked After Children and or their Supervising Social Worker.

Meetings

Foster Carers will be invited to a whole host of meetings for a range of different reasons, normally related to the needs and plans of the child or young person in their care. Other meetings may include supervision with their Supervising Social Worker.

Mental Health

The mental health needs of children and young people are included in the overall assessment and planning for their care and future. Mental Health has an element of specialism around it which requires mental health professionals to be involved. Should a foster carer have any concerns regarding a child or young person's mental health they should seek advice from the social worker and if already in place the named mental health professional involved with the child/young person.

Missing from Home

Children and young people go missing. There are protocols in place which explain the procedure for dealing with these situations. A Foster Carers Supervising Social Worker and child/young person's Social Worker will provide further support and practical support as and when the need arises.

Mockingbird Programme

Mockingbird is a global award winning and pioneering programme led by The Fostering Network in the UK. It delivers sustainable foster care through an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community.

Led by a hub home carer and liaison worker, the constellation community offers vital peer support and guidance alongside social activities, planned and emergency sleepovers and learning and development opportunities to strengthen relationships and permanence.

Moving a Child or Young Person On

In a majority of cases children and young people move on from a foster placement. It may be to return home or to live with a family member. It maybe they are being placed for adoption or into a long-term fostering placement. In any event the child or young person will need to be supported in this process and prepared for their new placement

and the next part of their life. Foster Carers are expected to undertake preparation tasks which will have been agreed within a planning meeting.

N

Names

Names are an intrinsic part of our identity; Children's names should not be changed unless through legal process and with the permission of those with parental responsibility. Children may have shortened versions of their names or nicknames.

Foster Carers are advised to check with the child or young person what name they preferred to be called and this to be respected.

National Insurance

The Department of Work and Pensions takes the view that Foster Carers who receive a fee for fostering are self-employed and therefore liable to Class 2 National Insurance contributions. If a foster carer is unclear of their entitlements and requirements regarding National Insurance, they must contact the Department of Work and Pensions for advice.

National Minimum Standards

In April 2011, a revised set of National Minimum Standards for Foster Care were implemented. These standards are the 'minimum' requirements for fostering services and all those that are connected to the service. These are not 'best possible' practice and offer a guide to what is expected and what Ofsted will be looking for as part of their inspections.

Foster Carers along with everyone else connected to the Fostering Service are expected to meet the standards and there are key elements that apply to the standard of care they provide.

Notifications

When serious incident or illness occurs within a placement, or a child or young person goes missing Ofsted are required to be informed of the event. This responsibility lies with the Fostering Service Manager. However, it is the Foster Carer's responsibility to report such incidents to the child's social worker, their own Supervising Social Worker or the Fostering Service Manager in their absence.

O

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) are the regulatory body that inspect Fostering Services to ensure they are compliant with regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

They are also available to receive any major cause for concern over the care of children and young people and can be contacted directly by children and young people as well as Parents, Foster Carers and Professionals.

Openness and Trust

The relationship between everyone involved in caring for a child or young person requires openness and trust. This develops as relationships develop and for some it does not come easily. Therefore, Foster Carers will need to model this aspect of a relationship in order for others to follow.

Out of Hours Advice and Support

The Fostering Service provides a range of support services, and one includes out of normal office hours and will be tailored to specific placement needs. For serious events that occur outside of the normal working day the Local Authority have an Emergency Duty Team that in the first instance will provide a telephone support role.

See EDT above.

Overnight Stays

Overnight stays at friends are part of a normal childhood experience. Children and young people in Foster Care should have the same experiences. Therefore, with reasonable oversight by Foster Carers overnights at friends can take place. There is a need for the Foster Carer to use their own judgement based on their knowledge of the child or young person and the friends they wish to stay with. Informing Social Workers of the arrangements is advisable.

Overpayments

Sometimes the unpredictability of fostering payments can be made where they should have not been. This will mean the Foster Carer will be required to pay the overpayment back. This will be done through negotiation with the council's Payment Section. If a Foster Carer has a particular issue regarding the overpayment, they must contact their Supervising Social Worker.

P

Paediatric First Aid

All Foster Carers are expected to undertake Paediatric First Aid training as part of their mandatory training plan on a 3-yearly basis.

Parent's Evenings

Foster Carers are expected to attend parent evenings and consultation events at a child's school. The child's parents will also be invited, and it may be possible for everyone to go together, or separate appointments may need to be made. Discussions with the child's Social Worker will help determine the most appropriate thing to do.

Parental Responsibility

By law, there are certain things parent(s) should and should not do when bringing up a child. Parent(s) must ensure that a child gets correct medical treatment, full education, and that physical, moral and religious needs are met. If a child's father and mother were married to each other when the child was born, or have since married, they both automatically have parental responsibility.

Parents only lose parental responsibility if the child is adopted. If there is a dispute, then the Local Authority can override the parent(s) in regard to parental responsibility.

Foster Carers do not have parental responsibility. However, may have some day-to-day parental responsibility delegated to them by the parent(s) and/or by the Local Authority.

Parents – Involving

Wherever possible parents should be involved in the lives of their children. This may be a telephone call at bedtime for them to say goodnight, it may be attending school events, it may include organising birthday parties. The level of involvement will be based on the needs of the child and the quality of relationship with their parents. The Child's Social Worker will be able to assist Foster Carers determine the best way of approaching this involvement.

Passports

Many Foster Carers take children abroad for holidays and many children go on school trips abroad, therefore a passport is required. Accessing or obtaining a passport must be organised in good time and will require parental permission and may need Senior Child care Manager involvement. Foster Carers in the first instance can obtain a passport application form from the post office and then ask the assistance of the Child's Social Worker.

Payments

Foster Carers will receive weekly payments through the Local Authority's payments department. The process works in arrears and requires the Supervising Social Worker informing the payments team of any changes. The payments are always paid directly into the Foster Carer's bank account. Any problems in payments should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker and the payments team may be contacted by either party dependent upon the issue.

Peer Support

Experienced Foster Carers are fantastic sources of support and can offer advice and guidance on many aspects of fostering. The Fostering Service may provide a mentor or "buddy" for new foster carers to help the support and learning process. If a Foster Carer requires a mentor for specific reasons, they can discuss this with their Supervising Social Worker who will be able to identify the most appropriate carer to provide the mentoring.

Permanency

Permanency is a term that describes the long-term plans for a child or young person. Every child or young person who is in care at the four-month stage will require a Permanency plan as this is a regulation requirement and focuses the planning and decision-making processes.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must check that the child's Care Plan includes a Permanence Plan with measurable milestones and a Contingency Plan should the preferred plans not materialise.

At the second Child in Care Review, there is a requirement to focus on the Permanence Plan, to ensure it provides permanence for the child within a timescale which is realistic, achievable and meets the child's needs. For a child under three years old the allocated IRO should make a decision, based on the needs of the child, whether or not to conduct the first review as a meeting to consider permanence. If it is considered that the chosen avenue to permanence is not viable, the IRO should ensure that the social worker arranges as a matter of urgency to consider the most appropriate permanent alternative.

At the third Child in Care Review there will be a need for a Twin Track/Parallel Plan to be made where a Permanence Plan has not been achieved. For example, where a plan for rehabilitation of the child has not been achieved, the Review should seek to establish whether the lack of progress is as a result of drift or whether there are valid child-centred reasons, properly recorded and endorsed by the social worker's manager. No further rehabilitation plan should be recommended unless there are exceptional reasons justifying such a plan or where further assessment is specifically directed by the Court. In this case, the Parallel Plan must include the active pursuit of

an alternative placement for the child. All subsequent Reviews should review the progress and validity of the Permanence Plan.

Permissible Sanctions

The following sanctions may be imposed on young people in foster care where there is evidence of unacceptable behaviour, always recognising that the imposition of sanctions should be immediate, relevant, fair and just.

- Assertive reprimands but not shouting.
- Curtailment of leisure extras, TV or outings.
- Short periods where the youngster is required to remain within the confines of the house or garden.

Where damage is malicious, youngsters should be expected to contribute or work to help with the cost of repair or replacement. Carers can access training to build their skills in managing challenging behaviour and calming potentially difficult situations.

Personal Development Plan

Every Foster Carer must have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) this maps out their training and development needs for a 12-month period.

Personal Issues

Everybody at some point in their life will have to deal with personal issues and these will vary greatly based on an individual's life experiences. For children and young people Foster Carers will deal with these on a regular basis and can access a range of support to help them.

For Foster Carers they can discuss their own personal issues with their Supervising Social Worker who will provide advice and support where appropriate. They can also help Foster Carers access services that may be able to provide additional advice, guidance and support.

Photographs

Carers may take photographs of the children in placement as an incidental part of their own family life, or as part of agreed Life Story Work. Such photographs are exempt from the Data Protection Act but must not be passed on to anyone else without permission from the child's Social Worker. Photographs should not be posted on social media.

Physical Development

Part of a child or young person's development is their physical development. For most children going to school engaging in PE and Games lessons as well as normal day to day play will be sufficient for physical development to take place.

For babies having toys that encourage physical activity are important for their development. For some children there may be a delay which requires additional physical intervention such as physiotherapy or a specific diet to compliment a course of physical development treatment. The Looked After Nurse will be a good source of advice and support if a Foster Carer has concerns over the physical development of a child in their care.

Physical Intervention

There are circumstances when it would be appropriate to intervene physically to prevent harm to the child, young person or others. If there are any incidents of physical intervention, consideration must be given to whether a Risk Assessment Management meeting needs to be convened.

Supervising Social Workers must ensure that these incidents are recorded by the foster carer in their weekly recordings, and that the foster carer informs the Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker the same day or the next working day. The Supervising Social Worker must record an observation within the foster carers file and contact the child's Social Worker to notify them of the incident.

When there has been physical intervention, the child has the right to be examined by a registered Nurse or Medical Practitioner within 24 hours. All children must be given an opportunity to discuss incidents and express their views away from the foster carer. The Supervising Social Worker must ensure that the foster carer and the child's Social Worker are aware of this.

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is prohibited as a means of punishment and Foster Carers sign their Foster Care Agreement with this knowledge. However, in exceptional circumstances where a child is at risk of harm to themselves, harming another person or causing significant damage to property they may be restrained for a short period of time until a diversionary tactic takes effect.

All such incidents must be recorded and passed on to the Child's Social Worker and the Foster Carers Supervising Social Worker. In some instances, for older young people physical restraint is likely to cause more harm than not doing it.

Placement Breakdown

A placement breakdown normally relates to a long-term placement when it comes to an early end because of a number of factors including a child's behaviour and the Foster Carer not being able to manage that behaviour. Some short-term placements may come to an end too early for similar reasons and will be considered a placement breakdown.

Placement Plan

A placement plan sets out the routines, delegated authority, how the needs of the child will be met and carries signatures that give consent to the placement going ahead under the agreements within the plan.

Placements – Planned/Unplanned

All placements will fall into one of two categories, planned or unplanned. Planned placements are when introductions are made and there is most likely a minimum of 24 hours' notice.

Unplanned placements are where no introductions have been undertaken and the placement is made immediately following a request for placement has been made.

Pocket Money

Every child and young person are entitled to pocket money. A minimum amount is set based on an age range. This information is part of the child's allowance breakdown. Foster Carers can if they choose to increase the amount. However, they cannot reduce the amount.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Savings and Pocket Money Policy.

Police

The Police are to be seen as colleagues within the child care environment and to this end work closely with social workers. Their involvement with foster carers relates to them returning children/ young people if they go missing or are absent from placement.

If a young person has become violent or uncontrollable and not responding to appropriate parenting strategies. The Police should not be used as a threat or method of control.

Policies and Procedures

Every Child Care Service including the Fostering Services have policies and procedures. These provide the guidance and understanding for the reasons things happen and how they happen. There is an expectation that policies and procedures are complied with. Not to do so may result in disciplinary action.

If Foster Carers have an idea on improving a policy or procedure they can put their suggestion forward to the Fostering Service Manager, who will give such suggestions careful consideration. Foster Carers often get asked to be involved in the consultation process designed to change policy and procedures.

This is a list of current policies and guidance:

- Allowances
- Delegated Authority
- DLA Payments for CLA
- Exemptions
- Family Finding
- Insurance Claims relating to Foster Carers
- Managing Allegations
- Matching
- Medication
- Post Approval Training for Foster Carers
- Reassessment after change in family dynamics
- Reg 24 Assessment
- Reporting Critical Incidents
- Respite
- Reviews
- Savings and Pocket Money
- Smoking
- Staying Put
- Supervision and Support

Popular Culture

Popular culture is a term to describe current and modern aspects of society that the general population are interested in or engaged in as part of their lifestyle. These include music; cinema; television programmes; magazines and media, social networking.

Each generation will develop their own popular culture and therefore as people grow up and age, they may find their own references to popular culture will differ from the current day. This is often the cause of arguments and boundaries being pushed, particularly by teenagers.

Positive Activities

Positive activities relate to any activity that has a positive impact upon any individual or group undertaking the activity. Many activities considered to be typical such as football, Dance classes, Scouts, Brownie, Duke of Edinburgh, Cadets are all considered positive activities. Others may include community activities such as litter picking, environmental clean ups in local parks and woods.

Positive Reinforcement

The central ethos, as in any family, should be based consistently on positive reinforcement thereby encouraging good behaviour by appropriate adult attention, as opposed to seeing the regular imposition of sanctions as the primary method of

management and control. Within this context, some form of sanction will be necessary where there are instances of behaviour that would be reasonably regarded as unacceptable in any family group.

Positive Relationships

Wherever possible a relationship should be a positive one based on a number of aspects such as respect, honesty, trust. Positive relationships provide good role models and support a child's development and future aspirations.

Positive Strategies

Positive strategies are any activity that results in a good outcome and can relate to a child's behaviour, an improvement in an aspect of a child's development or even on a wider scale of an improved aspect of the Fostering Service that ultimately improves outcomes for children and young people.

Pre-School

Pre-school is the term that normally refers to children who attend nursery and are aged between three and five before they start primary school.

Preventing Violence and Aggression

The prime aim should always be to diffuse and prevent the incidence of violence and aggression.

Wherever possible avoid dealing with aggressive situations alone, always seek support. Be aware of the case history of each youngster in your care and be sensitive to their needs. Understand the significance of your relationship with the youngster. Always make some response to attention seeking behaviour; failure to do so may make the situation worse. Youngsters should have the opportunity to communicate their concerns with carers where necessary. Time must be made available to them.

Do not issue threats of any sort but do point out the possible consequences of their actions. Threats usually escalate situations and if made in the heat of the moment can prove to be impossible to implement. Avoid cutting or unkind remarks; try to find the most positive way of saying what must be said. This especially applies when talking about the young person themselves, their family and friends.

Show disapproval of inappropriate behaviour, not of the person as an individual. All parties involved in an incident should be given support and made aware of their rights. Be aware of potential flashpoints such as mealtimes and late evenings. If they prove to be problem times, try to plan ahead and let the young person's Social Worker know. Carers should reflect on the circumstances in which incidents have happened to prevent further occurrences.

When disruptive influences threaten the stability and wellbeing of others, it is important that carers have planned ahead carefully and are engaging young people and channelling their energies appropriately. A calm, reasoned approach is called for. Diversion is often a useful tactic.

If all else fails, physical restraint may be used only to prevent a child from harming themselves or somebody else. Young people who have experienced violence or sexual abuse may find restraint threatening and those using it should be aware that they may be making themselves vulnerable to future allegations. Carers should never use restraint without another adult being present, unless circumstances are exceptional. All such incidents should be recorded and discussed with the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible.

[Privacy and Confidentiality](#)

As children grow up, they have a wish for secrecy, a desire for privacy and confidentiality. This is a very natural part of growing up and should be respected. Many parents and carers find this difficult to cope with. Children who are 'looked after' often hate the thought they are talked about or what they think they have told someone is being passed to someone else.

They also hate the fact that people can read about them in a file. It is important that children/young people understand that their Foster Carers cannot keep secrets from Social Workers and that Foster Carers will not discuss any information about them with people outside of the foster home.

[Prohibited Disciplinary Measures](#)

These include:

- Corporal punishment, including smacking.
- Deprivation of food and drink.
- Restriction or refusal of visits/communication with family members, where this is part of an agreed plan.
- Restriction or refusal of visits/outings with Support Workers where this is part of an agreed work plan.
- Withholding medical or dental treatment or medication.
- Using accommodation to restrict liberty, for example, locking children in their bedroom.
- Intimate physical searches

[Promoting Learning](#)

Foster Carers are expected to promote a child's learning through the provision of different experiences. The learning may be related to school or homework. However, it can be equally valid if it relates to visits to museums, parks, social interaction, going

to the theatre. Learning is gained in everything a child does and should be encouraged throughout their childhood.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

The challenge for Foster Carers is often to change behaviour of children in their care. For the most part the behaviour will be learned behaviour and therefore the child will need to learn different behaviour. Part of the process for this to occur requires accentuating positive behaviours and ignoring or redirecting the negative behaviours.

Promoting Welfare of Children

Everything that the Fostering Service and Foster Carers do is about promoting the welfare of children. This is a key principle to child care and the legislation related to child care. Therefore, great emphasis of fostering is to demonstrate the developmental progress of children placed in care. This requires having knowledge of the needs of children at the start of a placement, understanding the desired outcomes and having reviewing processes in place to ensure progress is being made.

Q

Questions

Asking questions, no matter how trivial it may seem is very important. Having an enquiring mind is a strength within the world of child care. Knowing what one does not know yet is part of a person's development and asking questions is part of that process.

R

Recording and Reporting Incidents

Carers must report and record any incidents, significant illnesses, hospital visits to A&E, minor accidents within the home (such as a fall from a bicycle) to their Supervising Social Worker.

Carers who have been subject to verbal or physical violence should ensure that the incident is reported to both the young person's Social Worker and their Supervising Social Worker. Such experiences can be distressing, and carers may need to talk to their Supervising Social Worker, another carer or a friend.

Carers must always report aggressive incidents to the child's Social Worker, both for their own protection and to try to prevent the situation from escalating. Careful recording and reporting of incidents can help build a picture and understanding of the child or young person's behaviour.

Records

There are several types of records kept by Local Authorities and Fostering Services: Computer records – basic information about children and their families. Also Foster Carer records are kept on an electronic database which includes dates of birth, telephone numbers, addresses etc. Case records – these include the above and are added to as and when required on a day-to-day basis. The Fostering Team holds the Foster Carer's files which will contain a range of information.

References

Every person applying to be a Foster Carer must have a minimum of three references from people who are not related and know them very well. Some references will be more formal which include employers' references, statutory agency references. On occasions ex-partner references are also required.

Registered Manager

Fostering Service Regulations state there must be a Registered Manager. For Middlesbrough Council this person is whoever holds the post of the Fostering Service Manager.

Relationships

Relationships form the key to successful placements and successful Fostering careers. Therefore, a great deal of time, commitment and effort should be put into developing positive relationships.

Religion

Generally, people agree that a set of beliefs or values is important in providing boundaries for life. They help us decide how to conduct ourselves in different situations and also to define right and wrong. Personal core beliefs and values, the 'Do's and Don'ts of life', come to us as we grow, from families, friends, in play and via education.

For some, religion provides a value system, and this is personal to individuals. Some may share the same religion and beliefs and others quite opposite ones. Indeed, some have no religious faith whatsoever. The latter will still have values and beliefs of their own.

Religious Celebrations

Children should be able to celebrate the religious celebrations that are important to them and are part of their culture and religion. This may require the Foster Carer seeking advice and support to ensure things are in place to ensure a child's wishes and needs are met.

Reparation

Young People should be encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility towards the environment in which they live. Where children have caused damage, depending on their age and level of understanding, they should be encouraged to help the carer undertake repairs. Most children will value their rooms and surroundings if they have made an investment in them.

Where damage is malicious, youngsters should be expected to contribute or work to help with the cost of repair or replacement. Pocket money should not be withheld from a child as punishment for unacceptable behaviour.

Representations

Should the situation arise whereby a Foster Carer's approval is either being changed or removed they have the right to make representation to Panel.

Respite Placements

Respite Foster Placements – these Regulations apply when a child is placed for a series of short-term placements with the same Foster Carer when no single placement lasts for more than four weeks, and the total duration does not exceed 75 days in any 12-month period.

Responsibility

Everyone involved in child care has a degree of responsibility. Foster Carers hold substantial responsibilities, and these are set out in the Foster Care Agreement.

Additional or more specific responsibilities will be recorded within a Placement Plan. Delegated Authority will provide additional responsibilities as and when required.

Retainer Payments

Retainer payments are those payments paid when no child is in placement and the Fostering Service need to retain the services of the Foster Carer.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessments are a basis of many aspects of child care. These are key to identifying appropriate placements and matching processes. Foster Carers run risk assessment thought processes every day whilst caring for a child. Most risk assessments will be recorded to demonstrate the types of risk, the level of risk the probability of things under assessment occurring and what measures can be in place to reduce risk. A Foster Carer should work closely with the child's Social Worker and their own Supervising Social Worker to establish risk assessments.

Risk Taking

Young people as they develop will begin to take risks in terms of their decision making. This in turn means they may do things that may risk their health and well-being. Risk assessments can help Foster Carers manage risk taking behaviour. However, some risk taking is part of normal adolescence development and it is the quality of care and support given by the Foster Carers that makes the difference as to whether risky behaviours accelerate or become less if not go completely.

S

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the same as the term child protection. The focus of all child care work is safeguarding and therefore great emphasis is placed on training in this area. Social work practices and fostering practices are primarily about safeguarding children and young people from harm.

Safeguarding Procedures

Safeguarding Procedures explain what happens when an allegation or child care concern is received by the Local Authority. These procedures are written by the South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership (STSCP) and are supported by the law.

Training for Foster Carers is provided on a regular basis and makes up for one of the mandatory training requirements for all involved in child care.

There will be occasions when you will be required to care for children who are subject to Child Protection Plans or disclose information that requires Safeguarding processes to be implemented.

The following information is a basic guide to Safeguarding and the terminology used:

Safeguarding: This is the terminology used for the overarching process and principle that relates to the protection of children and young people

Strategy Meeting: This is the terminology used to describe the forum by which information is shared by a range of multi-agencies and the plan of action is agreed in response to that information when considering the safeguarding of children and young people. It is commonly known as a Section 47 Strategy Meeting.

Safeguarding Conference: This is the terminology used when the decision is made following the investigation into a safeguarding matter may require a multi-agency protection plan implementing to reduce the risk of harm to the children and young people concerned.

Child Protection Plan: This is the terminology used to describe the multi-agency plan that is to be implemented to reduce the risk of harm to each child and young person. Clear outcomes are written into the plan to determine what needs to be achieved.

Core Group Meeting: This is the terminology used for the regular meetings held to review the Child Protection Plan.

Assessment of Need: This is the terminology of the work undertaken by social workers and other professionals to determine what needs to happen. The plan states how this is to be done, by whom and by when.

[Safer Caring](#)

Safer caring is a crucial element of Fostering. Providing care to a high standard required the Foster Carer to provide that care in a safe manner. This requires an in-house Safer Care Policy for each family and for individual placements.

Implementing such policies will reduce the risk of allegations; misunderstandings and keep everyone as safe as possible from unwanted situations. The Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker will assist with the development of Safe Care Policies.

[Safety](#)

Safety means many things and in the world of fostering it primarily relates to the safety of children and young people. Therefore, there is always a focus on safeguarding children. This also includes the health & safety aspects of a child's living environment which is assessed every year by the Supervising Social Workers.

[School Activities](#)

Most schools provide activities within the school grounds and are considered to be extra curriculum activities. Children and young people will receive information regarding these throughout the academic year. Foster Carers should encourage children and young people to engage in school based.

[School Dinners](#)

Every child in care is entitled to have school dinner, they are not entitled to free school dinners. Therefore, it is a choice the Foster Carer needs to make in discussion with a child as to what they prefer, either a school dinner or a packed lunch. This is something that can be initially agreed during a Placement Agreement meeting.

[School Trips](#)

A child or young person may have the opportunity to go on Educational School Trips, being part of this experience along with their peers should be encouraged.

School Uniform

Where a school uniform is required Foster Carers will be financially supported to provide one. When a child changes school there is an increased allowance to cover the cost of the necessary clothing including sports kit. For further information speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Schools

The majority of children placed in the care of Middlesbrough Council are from the borough and therefore attend schools within the borough. Each school has a designated teacher who has responsibility for co-ordinating with professionals regarding children in care being educated in their school. Similarly, there is a nominated teacher who has responsibility for Safeguarding within their school.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a key aspect of a child's development. If they have a high self-esteem, they are likely to cope with setbacks and pressure a lot easier than those children who have low self-esteem. Children who enter the care system may experience periods of low self-esteem at different times of their lives for many reasons.

Foster Carers are crucial in supporting children maintaining a high self-esteem and provide positive feedback and encouragement on a regular and consistent level.

Sexual Health Guidance for Children and Young People

All young people have the right to receive good relationship and sex education. It helps to prepare them for a healthy adulthood, prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually acquired infections and supports the development of fulfilling, non-abusive personal relationships. Young people in care are less likely to receive guidance and support about sexual relationships. It is, therefore, vital that their sexual health needs are considered and addressed by carers.

Short Breaks

Short breaks are placements for children in need and quite often children with disabilities. They are designed to provide "time-out" for children and their families to enable them to receive quality care and support which enables families to stay together. The lengths of stay are normally in two-day blocks not exceeding 75 days in a 12-month period.

Skill Development

Children and young people require continued stimulation in developing their range of skills. These skills may be simple hand eye co-ordination skills or more complex issues relating to developing independence such as cooking skills. Foster Carers are

expected to provide day to day opportunities to help children develop the different skills that enable them to develop into well rounded and highly skilled adults.

Smoking

Smoking is well documented to have a negative impact on people's health and that includes those who receive the effects of passive smoking. Therefore, the Fostering Service have a smoking policy to guide Foster Carers and influence the placement matches.

Foster Carers are expected to offer support to young people who smoke with regard to strategies for ceasing. The Nurse for Looked After Children is able to provide advice, guidance and programmes for cessation. Foster Carers should discuss issues around smoking with their Supervising Social Worker.

Please Read the following policy for further information: Middlesbrough Policy on Smoking.

Social Development

Children and young people are expected to develop in to sociable adults and in order to achieve this they require support and guidance on how to develop their social skills and interaction. The role of a Foster Carer is vital in developing a child's social needs and skills and therefore must provide a range of experiences and opportunities for social development to grow and progress towards adulthood.

Social Networking

Modern society and current popular culture are heavily inclusive of social networking. This is the term used for the social interaction on the internet via Facebook; Twitter; MSN, for example.

These can be an excellent way of communicating and keeping in touch with friends and family. However, they can also be the cause of many problems as the immediacy and open access to accounts and comments/pictures can cause arguments; fights; regrettable consequences.

Social Worker Visits

The Social Worker should visit when reasonably requested to by the child or the person who is caring for the child. When the child becomes looked after they should be visited weekly for the first 4 weeks and thereafter at least once every month, until; the child ceases to be looked after.

At least once a month the child should have the opportunity to talk alone and in confidence with their Social Worker – this could be during a visit or whilst they are transporting them. When a child is placed in an emergency for up to 6 weeks with a relative or friend, who is not an approved Foster Carer, they should be visited weekly.

If the plan is for the child to remain in their care for longer than 6 weeks the relative or friend has to be approved as a Foster Carer, if the child is subject of a Care Order. Some visits to children should be unannounced and the child's bedroom should be seen from time to time. For children living with a family some visits should be at a time when all members of the household are present. A written record must be made of each visit to a child.

Social Workers

All children being looked after should have a Social Worker, who is based in the office of the area from which the child came. Generally, their job is to keep in touch with the child, their family and residential or Foster Carers and any other interested people, and to make sure plans are carried out.

They usually organise planning meetings and reviews, and handle any court matters for the Children, Families and Learning Department. The child's Social Worker is the first person the child, residential and Foster Carer should contact for information or final decision making.

Solvents

Solvent abuse is another common form of teenage experimentation. Children may start as young as 8-9 years but usually stop after a few sessions. Others do not. Solvents can include petrol, dry-cleaning fluids, liquid shoe polish, the butane gas in cigarette lighters, aerosol sprays and certain types of glue.

Warning signs and evidence to look out for include suspicious containers, a chemical smell on clothes or breath, "drunken" behaviour, sudden swings of mood, loss of appetite and secretiveness about leisure time activities.

As with drugs, any concerns that young people in their care may be involved with solvent abuse, they should discuss this with the young person's Social Worker and seek advice.

Stable Placements

The importance of a stable placement cannot be underestimated. This provides an ideal opportunity for children and young people to experience consistent boundaries and routines and for a relationship to develop. Stable placements come about as a result of many different aspects including a good match in the first instance; a good understanding of the child's needs; the appropriate level of care including the consistency of care; the emotional intelligence of the Carers; the appropriate range of support services in place.

Statement of Purpose

The Fostering Service provides a Statement of Purpose which states what service users can expect from receiving care from the Local Authority. Expectations are also recorded in a Foster Carer's Agreement. Sometimes these documents are overlooked, and people's expectations differ which can cause conflict.

Therefore, it is necessary for all foster carers to be familiar with the Statement of Purpose and their Foster Carer's Agreement.

Stimulating Environment

A Foster Carer must provide a stimulating environment in order for a child's development to progress in a holistic manner. Therefore, having toys; books; for example, are very important. Similarly having quality time with the child talking and engaging in conversation is vitally important. Going out into the community, playing in the park is another key component to a stimulating environment.

Supervising Social Worker

All Foster Carers will have a Supervising Social Worker, who is a qualified Social Worker based in the Fostering Team.

Their role is:

- To support Foster Carers via telephone calls, letter, groups, and regular visits to the Foster Carer's home.
- The Supervising Social Worker must make at least one unannounced visit to the Foster Carer's home per year.
- Arrange at least one visit every six months when all members of the household are present.
- The Supervising Social Worker must see the children of the Foster Carer, preferably on their own, with their parent's consent, at least once every six months.

Supervision

Supervision is a legal and standard requirement that means all Foster Carers must receive regular supervision from their Supervising Social Worker. This is an opportunity for the Foster Carer to discuss many things including placement and personal issues, learning experiences and share information generally about fostering.

Suspensions of Harm

Suspicion of Harm is a concept that drives many of the safeguarding practices. If any person involved in working and or caring for children must report any suspicions, they have about the welfare of a child or young person.

The professionals responsible for following up concerns will determine whether suspicions are indeed harmful. Therefore, if a Foster Carer has any cause to be suspicious about a child's welfare, they must either ring the Local Authority duty team or speak to their Supervising Social Worker for advice.

I

Teenagers

Teenagers are young people aged between 13 and 19 and are in a particular period of life that appears to be associated with behavioural development; attitude; independence; risky behaviour; challenging authority; self-centred view of the world. It is no wonder adults struggle to engage with this group.

Termination of Approval

When Foster Carers resign; have their approval status removed it is technically called termination of approval. For those terminations that are not in agreement with the Foster Carer there are routes in which to challenge. Please see Independent Review Mechanism.

Training and Development Standards

Every Foster Carer must complete their Training and Development Standards within the first year of approval. This an evidence-based portfolio designed by the Department of Education and demonstrates evidence of learning and experience of their fostering role. Connected Person's Foster Carers have 18 months from becoming fully approved foster carers.

Transitions

All children and young people experience transitions in their lives. The most common one is moving from one school to another, one school year to another. For children in care these transitions can be more problematic as they have other types of transitions to deal with such as from home to foster care, from one placement to another. Support is important for children who experience transitions and Foster Carers are crucial part of the support for children in care.

Travel Expenses

A proportion of the weekly allowance for a child covers travelling expenses incurred through normal parental involvement for example collection from leisure activities, medical appointments, school events. Where additional travel is required, Foster Carers must discuss with their Supervising Social Workers.

Trips and Outings

Children and young people should be encouraged to experience different trips and outings either through school, clubs or with their Foster Carers. These opportunities support development in a number of ways, which include social development; identity; self-esteem; understanding the world.

U

University

Planning for a young person to attend University will begin from the time their Secondary school education is coming to an end and their GCSE results are due. The Pathways Team will consider University as a realistic option for young people who have demonstrated through their exams that this is an appropriate route for further learning.

Sometimes young people's plans for university come to fruition following two years at college, again the Pathways Team will provide the necessary support for this to occur.

V

Valuing the Individual Child

Children 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. They may have different skin colour, hair, dress and religious beliefs. They may speak a different language or eat different types of food. Carers need to recognise, respect and celebrate these differences. They may also need to support them in feeling positive about themselves and being proud of their heritage. There are clear laws against discrimination on race, disability, sexuality or gender.

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

Sometimes, a child with additional special needs has become too difficult for the parents to cope with and that is the reason why he or she is in care. Carers can help by obtaining as much information as possible about the disability.

Middlesbrough Borough Council endorses the National Standards for Foster Care which state that: "Children and young people and their families are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality."

Each child has her or his own identity and self-esteem valued and promoted. Foster carers and Social Workers work co-operatively to enhance the child's confidence and

feeling of self-worth. Names are very important – a child's name needs to be respected and should not be shortened/amended without permission and discussion with the Local Authority and parents.

The child's race, culture, religion and language must be respected. Discrimination should be challenged on behalf of any child. Carers need to promote children's cultural and religious heritage and identity. Whilst carers may have their own strong beliefs, these should not be imposed upon a child and issues such as church attendance/household values need to be discussed at the planning stage in any placement.

Variations to Approval

Foster Carer's may be asked to care for children or young placement outside of their approval criteria. This required a variation put in place authorised in the short-term by the Fostering Service Manager. Longer-term a Foster Care Review should be held and the variations acknowledged formerly and presented to Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.

Violence and Aggression

Aggression is a feature of behaviour that may be an element of youngsters' need to be looked after and trying to understand some of the causes of this are important. It is helpful for foster carers to have strategies for dealing with violent or aggressive confrontations, should they arise. This can apply equally to younger children and older adolescents.

Youngsters may well have experienced aggression, humiliation or helplessness at home or school during their childhood. Circumstances that are threatening create feelings of fear and insecurity and may well provoke an aggressive response. Fear of humiliation or a sense of being ignored, undervalued or misunderstood, with feelings of low self-esteem, may be countered by strong aggressive reactions. Other youngsters may respond by becoming withdrawn and uncommunicative.

Youngsters may have experienced adults who are not able to handle complex and difficult situations and have resorted to outbursts of temper, destructive behaviour or domineering means of control. Aggression is one of the identified products of frustration and helplessness. Carers should be aware that when faced by challenging behaviour, their own feelings of anger may result from not knowing what to do i.e. frustration and helplessness. Sometimes, aggression is used to cover up feelings of depression. In some rare cases, aggressive behaviour may have an organic cause, or may be evidence of a psychopathic disorder.

Many youngsters who are looked after by carers may be ill-equipped to recognise or express their feelings. A lack of success in achievement, being misunderstood or not valued by others can result in feelings of confusion and low self-esteem. Many foster

carers will not be experienced in either managing or bearing the brunt of verbal or physical violence and it can lead to the same feelings of inadequacy and helplessness felt by the youngster. The power and significance of aggression should not be underestimated. It requires firm judgement, and often experience, to understand and respond appropriately.

A useful starting point is for carers to assess and acknowledge levels of aggression within themselves. Recurrent problems and the feeling of running out of ideas, energy or motivation can result in feelings of helplessness. Carers should endeavour to know a youngster's circumstances well enough to understand factors and situations that may lead to or trigger aggressive behaviour. Carers need to be aware that they may not be conscious of personal mannerisms and phrases which may recall a youngster's memories of past bad experiences.

A carer's own ability to deal with frustration or provocation is of great importance; a calm reasoned response is called for – easily said, but often not so easily done! The overall aim is to enable youngsters to find enough socially acceptable means of expression, and so to lessen their need to resort to aggressive or violent behaviour. Carers should try to be aware of patterns in a youngster's behaviour. Particular places, activities or times of the day can be stressful trigger points, for example, meal-times and bed-times, the build up to going to school or family contact can be key events. Carers need to acknowledge when they themselves are feeling stressed and understand how they personally manage this, whether it be a quiet walk, physical activity or having someone to talk to.

The value of the carer's response to and management of their own stressful periods should not be underestimated. This hopefully provides an alternative model to the one the youngsters have previously experienced. Many youngsters will try to recreate the circumstances and responses they have been used to in the past. The trick is to try not to respond or get wound up – again, often easier said than done but well worth the effort.

It is important to remember that help and support is available to carers via the Supervising Social Worker, The Foster Service or Emergency Duty Team (EDT).

W

Welcoming a Child or Young Person

Setting the tone of a placement begins with the quality of welcome a child or young person receives during the introductions and/or the first day they are placed. Being welcoming in a warm, open and caring manner is an essential experience for children when moving into a new home and with people they hardly know or have never met before. Support and guidance in how to do this can be provided by the Supervising Social Worker.

Welfare Benefits

Basic fostering allowance and enhanced allowances do not affect benefits. However, retainers paid when a Foster Carer is not caring for a child and the fee payment do. If a foster carer has any concerns about the impact of fostering on benefits they are claiming they must speak to their Supervising Social Worker who will seek advice from the Local Authorities Welfare Right's Unit.

Whistleblowing Policy

Every Local Authority has a Whistleblowing Policy. This is a process for anyone that has a concern regarding the practices of a professional or service to alert the Local Authority. There is a confidential helpline in order for concerns to be passed on to an independent body without fear of recriminations and the concern not to be given the attention it requires. The referrer's identity will always remain confidential and will receive feedback on outcomes of any action taken.

Working Together to Safeguard Children

An important aspect of safeguarding children is the ability of different agencies working together. There are practice manuals and procedures in place to advise the STSCP and all partner agencies within a Local Authority how to work together and safeguard children.

Y

Young Person

A young person is the term used to describe children who are within a certain age range and whilst there is not a definitive age range it could mean all children. However, for the most part young people are probably more popularly categorised within the age group of 11 to 18 and relates to secondary school upwards.

Young Person's Consent

Young people of 16 years and over can give or withhold their consent for their own medical examinations and treatment. Young people under 16 may also be able to give or withhold such consent, depending on their capacity to understand the nature of the condition and the treatment. It is for the doctor to decide when a young person can give informed consent after consultation with those that know them best.

It is often the case that young people who have experienced frequent disruption in their lives have health care needs that are treatable but which over time have been undetected, ignored or given insufficient attention.

Carers should adopt a vigilant attitude towards the health of young people, especially in emergency and short-term situations where their needs are not well known. If

concerns arise, medical advice should be sought promptly, especially where this relates to drugs, solvents or alcohol.

Carers must pay attention to the storage of medications, making sure that a locked cabinet is used. A lockable box, such as a cash tin, provides suitable storage for medications which need to be refrigerated. Young people of 16 years and over should, in general, be trusted with the retention and administration of their own medication. This should be based on their level of maturity and understanding. Some younger children with illnesses like asthma may be used to using inhalers. It is important for carers to know what level of responsibility their birth parent and main carers have given their children, and whether this is appropriate.

Youth Offending

When young people are involved with offending behaviour, they may be receiving services from the local Youth Offending Team/Service. This type of service provides support in court; prepare reports for court and ensure sentences passed down by courts are adhered to.

Youth Services

Youth Services relate to any service delivered for young people aged 11 to 21. The service will typically include a place for young people to visit; a befriending service; a programme of activities designed to support development and life skills. The staff are normally exceptionally trained in communicating and working with teenagers and will work on issues such as sexual education; drugs awareness; alcohol awareness; relationships.

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