



Kent County Council

Foster Carer Diary Record Policy

Kent Fostering Service

Foster Carer Diary Records are essential to help preserve and capture important memories, milestones and the child's journey in foster care.

Document Author	Angela Cornwell, Fostering and KSH Development Team Manager
Document Owner	Maria Cordrey & Mark Vening, Heads of Fostering
Version 3	June 2023
Approved	Caroline Smith, Assistant Director Corporate Parenting
Review Date	June 2026

Version Control

Version No	Date Issued	Summary of changes	Author
1	July 2020	Original	Maria Cordrey, Fostering Team Manager
2	June 2023	Update 'contact' to 'family time',	Angela Cornwell

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction and legal framework	3
2. Why Foster Carers should record Information	3
3. What information Foster Carers should record	4
4. Recording for Foster Carers providing short breaks and respite	5
5. Recording for Relief Carers	5
6. How should Foster Carers record, store and share information	5
7. Process	7
8. Additional Considerations	8
9. Use of language and writing directly to the child	9
<i>Appendix 1: Helpful Language</i>	9
<i>Appendix 2: Writing directly to the child/young person</i>	10

1. Introduction and Legal Framework

The Fostering Service has a duty to maintain records on its staff, foster carers and the children placed with those foster carers under The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and The Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS).

NMS 26.2 states 'staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed.'

The Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for Foster Care Standard 2: 'Understand your role as a foster carer' and Standard 4: 'Know how to communicate effectively', also highlight the need for and importance of foster carers record keeping.

Any records relating to children in care continue to be regulated as personal data under the new Data Protection Act 2018. The Act covers access to any records kept either on paper or electronically and increases the rights of the public to have access to any records that may be held on them, including children and young people. For this reason, it is important that foster carers make records in a factual manner and that the records are kept secure.

This policy clarifies Kent Fostering Services expectations of foster carers to record information about and for the children they look after, including the confidentiality, sharing and storing of that information.

The policy should be read in conjunction with foster carers attending the 'Record Keeping for Foster Carers' training.

2. Why foster carers should record information

Foster carers are a pivotal part of the professional team around the children and young people they care for. They often know more about a child's likes and dislikes, feelings, worries and achievements than the other professionals involved with the children / young people. It is therefore important that carers record and report their observations accurately and that, as far as possible, both the positive and negative aspects of a child / young person's daily life are reflected.

- Records are essential for the child / young person to better understand the reasons they came to live in foster care and can help to make sense of their lived experience, contributing to a more rounded sense of self and their identity.
- Records contribute to the decision making and care planning for a child/young person (this includes the potential for records to be filed as part of care proceedings and used as reference in child in care reviews for example, to better understand a child / young person's behaviour, concerns and progress).
- Records can contribute to the observation and assessment of family time between children/young people and their birth families.
- Records can support an application for additional interventions and support for the child / young person /fostering family (e.g. education, therapy etc).

- Records are helpful should a complaint, standard of care concern or allegation be made against foster carers; providing a clear method for which events can be recalled accurately and situations more clearly understood.
- Records can be helpful for foster carers and social workers to monitor a child's progress, review and develop practice, including identifying different strategies to respond and manage children and young people's behaviour.
- Daily records about a child moving from foster care to an adoptive family may be essential to help the adoptive parents understand the child's routine.

3. What information foster carers should record

Once a child/young person's daily routine is established (i.e. waking, sleeping, mealtimes, school, clubs), foster carers can summarise this at the start of the child's diary records and then record any other significant information daily. This avoids unnecessary repetition. The following should be included for the child / young person:

- Achievements and successes (e.g. award from school, certificate from a club).
- Success or progress with daily routines (e.g. joining the family for dinner, managing feelings and behaviours towards a sibling etc).
- A child/young person's developmental milestones such as crawling, walking, weaning and puberty.
- Difficulties or challenges with daily routines (deterioration in self-care, refusal, etc).
- Changes in behaviour or mood (including the specific behaviours observed, what happened before and after).
- Allegations – Carers should capture information shared by a child/young person relating to their experiences and any allegations.
- Physical altercation or the restrictive physical intervention of a child. This should be recorded in detail on the Kent Fostering Restrictive Physical Intervention Record.
- Details of clothing purchased with costs and amount of pocket money given.
- Dates or times a child or young person is away from the foster home (e.g. missing, family time sleepovers with friends, school trips, activities, clubs).
- Specific incidents, events or changes in the circumstances of the foster family and/or the child's family (e.g. Christmas, birthday celebrations, illness etc).
- Disagreements concerning any members of the fostering family and how this was managed.
- Dates of meetings, attendance, decisions (and actions).
- Accidents, injuries, medical appointments or treatment (e.g. dentist, optician, Dr).
- Details of when unwell, including any medication and treatment given.
- Hospital admissions for the child / young person.
- Visits (e.g. visitors to the home / trips out with others as a foster family and contact between child, carer and professionals).
- Time spent with birth family (including the child's presentation, mood, behaviour before and after contact).
- Times when alternative carers have been looking after the child, for example babysitters, respite carers or nominated carers.
- Details of any damage, theft etc by the foster child / young person.
- Involvement with the police including reasons and outcomes.

- Missing and unauthorised absence, including contact with the Out of Hours Service and outcomes.
- Requests / referrals for support / advice and outcome.
- Any concerns regarding PREVENT and actions taken.

4. Recording for foster carers providing Short Breaks and Respite

- Recording should include a brief account of events from a child's arrival to their departure, including activities, achievements and any problems, illness, seizures, unusual incidents or significant events.
- Record observations about mood, behaviour, and significant areas such as toilet training, communication, eating habits, sleeping pattern, bedwetting and like.
- Injuries, accidents, mishaps and any incident, observation or concern of event should be recorded with details (time/place) and how it was dealt with, including whether there was a need to use restrictive physical intervention with the child. All serious incidents should also be reported to the child's social worker as soon as possible.
- Medication records are kept by short breaks carers detailing administered medication during the child's stay. These records should be available for parents/foster carers to see.
- The needs of children receiving short-term breaks require there is an effective system for close communication between the carer and parents/full time carers.

5. Recording for Relief Carers

There is no expectation that Relief Carers should keep daily diary records about a child/young person who they have looked after. However, to preserve memories for the child / young person, it's helpful for the Relief Carer to give information to the child's Foster Carer at the end of the arrangement about what activities have been done, places visited, specific achievements, worries that arose or significant events. These should then be incorporated by the Foster Carer(s) into their records for the child.

6. How should foster carers record, store and share information?

As part of Kent County Council's (KCC) Environment Strategy, the Fostering Service are committed to reducing waste and developing new paperless ways of working. The electronic Children's Portal therefore is used to maintain records for the children /young people within foster care. In addition to contributing to the reduction in the council's carbon footprint, the portal is secure, confidential, expedient and enables valuable information for children/young people to be maintained in a legible format as part of their life stories. Foster carers should:

- Register and ensure they can use the Childrens Portal
- Record using the 'Foster Carers Diary Record' on the Children's Portal.
- Use own IT equipment, never saving the records to that IT equipment (see below).
- Ensure records are maintained for each child/young person in foster care
- Write about a child or young person in a manner they can see. The child should be aware of the existence of records and if appropriate the contents. If information is deemed unsuitable the foster carer should discuss with the Fostering Social Worker / Child's Social Worker about how this information can be recorded.

Once Daily Diary Records are created and saved on the Children's Portal, Foster Carers have a maximum of 31 days to submit, before the system automatically deletes the records. This is to help ensure the security of the information.

The records are created about and for the child or young person, and after they have been submitted via the Childrens Portal, foster carers will not have access to those records.

The Fostering Service do not recommend that Foster Carers keep a copy of children's diary records because as the 'Data Controller' (an authority that determines the purposes and means of the processing of personal data) the access and security of those copies, of which the child / young person is the 'Data Subject' ('the identified or identifiable natural person) cannot be directly assured. However, provided the Foster Carer takes all reasonable steps to maintain the information securely, by saving to an encrypted memory stick and stores in a locked cabinet / box to which others do not have access, and securely disposes of copies when a child / young person moves on from their care, this will comply with The General Data Protection Regulations. Any third-party information that the Foster Carer has where the child / young person is the subject (e.g. health letters, health or education assessments) must be given to the child / young person's social worker upon the child moving on from the foster home.

Foster Carers who have to maintain additional records such as medication charts, health charts, feeding schedules, or behaviour charts for example to help monitor and assess the specific needs of a child or young person, will have in the future the facility via the Children's Portal to attach and submit these with the diary record. Whilst this function is being developed, relevant documents additional to the diary record should be shared with your fostering social worker. It is understood that while the child/young person is in the Foster Carers care the Foster Carer will usually have to keep copies of those charts. As above, these should be saved to an encrypted memory stick and locked in a suitable cabinet/container to comply with GDPR.

Foster Carers may wish to keep personal diaries regarding appointments, meetings and notes for supervision. These remain the property of the Foster Carer but must be kept in the foster home, in a secure, locked storage container/cabinet. Where foster carers use their smartphones to record appointments, meetings and make notes for example, they must ensure that these are always suitably password protected (including fingerprint / identity scanning) and kept on their person. In both instances the child/young person should be anonymised using their initials for example.

Once submitted the diary records can be reviewed by the Fostering Social Worker should there be specific information that they need/want to discuss in supervision with the Foster Carer, including learning about recording practice.

The records will be saved directly onto the child/young person's electronic Liberi file, which is immediately available for the child/young person's Social Worker to read. This allows a more efficient sharing of information; particularly when this is needed for court.

If a Foster Carer needs to look at the child/young person's diary records at a later date because of a complaint, standard of care concern or allegation and they can demonstrate that their request is legitimate, they would not be required to make a formal Subject Access Request (SAR) but can make a request to the Heads of Fostering via headoffostering@kent.gov.uk where a decision would be made about the disclosure of the required relevant information in connection with an enquiry / investigation.

IT files that are created as a part of normal family life (photos, videos etc.) should only ever be stored on IT equipment (including smart phones, tablets etc) belonging to the foster carer, kept in the foster home and where the carer is able to share it with the child/young person. Encryption of these files is not necessary.

7. Process

- For all emergency bed, respite, parent and child, short break and task centred foster placements daily diary records must be maintained by the foster carer whilst the foster child is in placement.
- In some circumstances, usually in more settled ongoing permanent placements, the foster carer may reach agreement with the child's Social Worker and the Fostering Social worker that weekly summaries are acceptable. Of course, more frequent records may be needed from time to time, during periods of change or when issues arise.
- Foster Carers will use the Diary Record template on the Children's Portal, clearly recording the period the record covers.
- Foster Carers will submit diary records through the Childrens Portal, which will go directly to their area fostering team, and saved to the child's file. It is the responsibility of the child/young person's Social Worker to read these as and when they consider necessary and inform the child's care plan.
- Fostering Social Workers will read a random selection of those diary records prior to each supervision.

8. Additional considerations

Significant events: It is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to inform the Fostering Service and Child's Social Worker of any concerns / incidents / significant changes with a child/young person in placement or within the fostering household. E-mail should not be relied on solely to do this and a telephone call is recommended. This is in addition to the information being clearly recorded in the diary record and a note made of who was informed and when.

The Fostering Regulations require the Fostering Service to record and report certain events that take place within a foster home (Schedule 7 Notifiable Events). It is essential therefore that Foster Carers immediately inform of the following:

1. Death of a child in placement.
2. Information in respect of an individual in the foster home under sections 35, 36, 39, 41 or 45 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
3. Serious illness or accident of a child in placement.

4. Outbreak in the foster home of any infectious disease which in the opinion of a general practitioner attending the home is sufficiently serious to be so notified.
5. Allegation that a child placed with foster carers has committed a serious offence.
6. Involvement or suspected involvement of a child placed with foster carers in sexual exploitation.
7. Serious incident relating to a child placed with foster carers necessitating calling the police to the foster carers home.
8. A child placed with foster carers is missing from the placement.
9. Any serious complaint about any foster carers approved by the fostering service.
10. Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster carers.

Written diary records: The Fostering Service recognise that there is likely to be a small cohort of foster carers who are not confident in using electronic communication systems or might have a preference to handwrite diary records. In these instances, Fostering Social Workers/Social Work Assistants, will explore ways to support the development of the required skills.

In exceptional circumstances where diary records are written, Foster Carers should still follow the principles and guidelines of this policy, using the Diary Record Template (which can be provided hardcopy) and always ensuring the security of the information. There will be the following variances.

- Written Diary Records should be signed and dated by the Foster Carer.
- The Records should be given directly to the Fostering Social Worker at each supervision, where the Social Worker will read a random sample and sign.
- Fostering Business Support will scan and upload the Diary Records onto the child / young person's Liberi file and shred the hardcopies.

9. Use of language and writing directly to the child

Following feedback both nationally and locally from care leavers about their experiences of reading their files and how those records can feel impersonal, at times lack sensitivity and be difficult to understand, social workers case records are now written directly to the child in everyday language, free of jargon and always being mindful of the impact on the child's feelings.

The fostering service would like to support this change in practice by encouraging our Foster Carers who have children living with them long term and for whom care proceedings have finalised to do the same. Whereas diary records must continue to be a factual account of the child's life, by writing the record directly to the child/young person, carers might be supported to hold the child's feelings in mind, being particularly sensitive to how the child might experience reading their records as an adult.

Appendix 1: Helpful Language

To assist with making diary records jargon free the following are some examples of the different language and terms we now use as an authority which will be helpful for Foster Carers to also adopt.

Do not use	Alternative Words
Contact	Family Time Seeing family Family visit Seeing Mum /Dad / Sisters / Brothers
LAC	Child in Care Young person
Placement	Where I live Home My House
Care Leaver / Leaving Care	Care experienced adult Next Steps Continuing Care / Support Moving On
Respite	Holiday Break Short Break Mini Get Away

Appendix 2: Writing directly to the child/young person

The following excerpts are examples of how foster carers in Kent write directly to the child in their diary records.

Dear M

We had the dentist first thing in the morning, you don't really like the dentist as you have never been before, but we had breakfast and talked and then planned what we could do afterwards, so you had something to look forward to after your appointment.

The dentist told you that you needed to have 3 baby teeth removed as they were not healthy and if they didn't this would be painful for you. The dentist tried to take an Xray, but you really didn't like this, so we have a plan for next time.

You thought that the way they called out the numbers and letters of your teeth was fascinating, and you kept asking questions. You said that the reclining chair was 'cool'. You had family time with your mum in a room at and had a good time, you made lots of drawings, some mum took with her and some we have put on the fridge at our house. You are seeing Mum again next week and we talked about what you could do together then.

Dear A

You woke up not happy today, we were not sure what was wrong, but you were quiet and seemed tired. We didn't keep asking you A as we know that it annoys you, so instead we tried to encourage you to have breakfast and just stayed near you. You went back up to your room and we gave you this space. Sometimes you hurt yourself A when you have sad things on your mind and we were worried that you would do this to feel better so we kept checking in with you until lunchtime, when you came downstairs to eat your favourite chicken wrap with us and were ready to talk about how you were feeling.

Dear B

You had family time today with your Dad and you look forward to this, you like to make sure you look nice doing your hair and you keep asking me 'is it time to go yet'.

We arrived at ... and we waited for 20 minutes but your Dad did not arrive to see you.

Your social worker tried to call him and he said that he missed his train. You were really sad and cross B and your social worker said she would call you to let you know when you can see your Dad again.

You did slam a door and throw your shoe, but we knew that you were looking forward to seeing your Dad and when he didn't arrive this made you angry.