



Children and Young People's Department

Foster Carers Handbook

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Introduction

This handbook has been produced to provide relevant information to Wirral Foster Carers as they progress through their fostering career. The content of this handbook has been shared with and agreed by a range of Foster Carers, Looked After Young People and Social Workers to ensure it is accurate and most of all a useful tool.

It is hoped that it will be a valuable resource to our Foster Carers and we would, therefore, welcome feedback and ideas from you as to its contents and the accessibility of the information provided.

Julia Hassall
Director of Children and Young People's Department

By signing this Charter the Fostering Service, Wirral Council and registered foster carers' agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the Charter in their actions.

The Fostering Service's Role

The fostering service aims to provide stable and high quality foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them.

The Foster Carer's Role

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service. We are assessed, trained and supported to look after children and young people in a family setting. We provide them with stability, care and an opportunity to grow and develop and to reach their potential.

Our working relationships are based on mutual trust and respect. This charter explains what we expect from each other.

What Foster Carers Can Expect From the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is committed to:

- Working in partnership with you
- Providing you with Information
- Being clear with you about decisions
- Providing you with Support
- Providing opportunities for learning and development
- Ensuring fair treatment for all
- Communicating effectively and consulting

Working in Partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

We will:

- value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- recognise that you are the people who live with children every day and know them best
- include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for
- ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance
- treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- respect confidentiality

Providing Information

We know that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's need.

We will:

- give you all the information you need in order to care safely for the child
- provide this information in writing at the time of the placement (except when it is an emergency placement and it is not feasible to do so, then we will provide this information as soon as possible)
- ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you at the time of the placements (except in emergencies where this will be done as soon as possible)
- provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlements
- provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures

Being clear about Decisions

We recognise that in order for children to live a full family life foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

We will:

- ensure that, wherever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- being clear about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what

Providing Support

We recognise that fostering is an isolating and challenging task. Appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care.

We will:

- respond positively to requests for additional support
- provide you with six weekly supervision
- give you honest and open feedback
- provide you with access to 24-hour support
- pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- pay fees that reflect the task
- Ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families

Opportunity for Learning and Development

We believe that foster carers must be able to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they have the skills and knowledge they need, and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

We will:

- provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support

Ensure Fair Treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances.

We will:

- consult with you before changing terms and conditions
- ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you
- ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you be subject to an allegation
- provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our agreed timescales
- Ensure that you know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation

Effective Communication and Consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- facilitate regular communication between you, Councillor's and the Director of Childrens' Services
- ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- Give you timely feedback from consultations

What the Fostering Service Can Expect from Foster Carers

The fostering service aims to provide stable and high quality foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them.

Foster carers' are committed to:

- Working in partnership with the fostering service
- Respecting children in their care
- Sharing Information
- Individual learning, development and support
- Communication and consultation
- Promoting healthy lifestyles within and outside of the home environment
- Supporting the child/ young person to do well at school
- Supporting the child/ young person in their aspirations

Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

We will:

- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- provide children with an experience of family life
- attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments
- attend the parents' evenings of children in our care
- show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow
- departmental policies and procedures
- Respect confidentiality

Sharing Information

We believe that open and honest communication is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- inform our supervising social worker about changes in our household
- Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us

Individual Learning, Development and Support

We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need, and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster.

We will:

- be prepared to develop our skills throughout our fostering career
- attend relevant training
- take up opportunities offered to us
- let you know if we are unable to attend
- Attend and contribute to support groups

Effective Communication and Consultation

We believe that open and honest communication is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- respond to local consultations and discussion in order to inform the development of the service
- Meet with Councilors', children's social care managers and staff and others in order to promote communication and a good working relationship.

Councillor Tony Smith

Lead member for Children's Services **Date:** 16.11.2012

Julia Hassall

Director of Children's Services **Date:** 16.11.2012

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Glossary of Terms

Abuse

This is something that causes actual harm or is likely to cause significant harm to a child. This harm may be in the form of physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.

Physical: Includes children who are physically hurt or injured by being hit, shaken, squeezed, burnt and bitten. Also includes children who are being given alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison.

Emotional: Includes persistent lack of affection; also includes where a child may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous or withdrawn.

Sexual: Includes full Sexual Intercourse, Masturbation, Oral Sex, Anal Intercourse, Fondling and also showing children Pornographic material.

Neglect: Includes the Health and Development of a child being impaired.

Protection from abuse is enshrined in law by The Children Act 1989 and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 prohibits Foster Carers from using corporal punishment towards any child placed in their care. This includes smacking, slapping, shaking, and all other humiliating forms of treatment and punishment.

The Fostering Service (including Foster Carers) is required to promote and safeguard the child's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Also See – Allegations, Managing Behaviour, National Minimum Standards for Foster Care, Safeguarding Children and Sanctions.

Accidents

Foster Carers are advised to record accidents on their diary sheet and let the child's Social Worker and person(s) with parental responsibility* know of any accidents a child might have. You should record when and how it happened, the outcome for the child, what action you took and who and when relevant people were told.

Foster Carers are also advised to seek medical advice if they are unsure if the accident may have caused an injury.

If the child has a serious accident or illness consent to medical treatment may be required. Once you have sought medical attention you will need to contact the child's Social Worker or Manager or the Duty Officer. If it is out of hours, the Children & Young People's Department's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or Police must be informed. Anyone with parental responsibility* must also be informed and consent sought if necessary.

A child age 16 and over can sign or refuse their own consent and sometimes children under this age can sign for themselves if they have sufficient understanding.

Following this, Foster Carers must record the details as above on a [Schedule 7 Events and Notification Form](#) which can be accessed from the [Wirral Council Website \(Information for Current Foster Carers\)](#). Once you have completed this form you will need to email it to the child's Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and the Fostering Manager. A copy of the form will also be shown to an Inspector during an Ofsted Inspection.

*In some situations it may not be appropriate for Foster Carers to inform birth parents or people with parental responsibility. However, a discussion must take place with the person you notify in Children & Young People's Department to decide who will undertake this.

Also See – [Consents](#) and [Events and Notifications](#).

Activities

Foster Carers must give each child in their care encouragement and equal access to opportunities to develop and pursue their talents, interests and hobbies. All children, including those children with disabilities, are to be supported to access as wide a range of activities as possible.

Also see – [Consents](#) and [School Trips](#)

Adaptations

In some situations the Children & Young People's Department will consider financial support for equipment or changes that may need to be made to your home to meet the needs of your foster child, including needs arising from a disability. Please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker, child's Social Worker or their Manager.

Also see – [Disabilities](#) and [Finances](#).

Adoption

Adoption is where a new family is provided for children who can no longer live with their birth family. An Adoption Order transfers the child's legal relationship from their birth family to the new adoptive family.

Children/young people who are adopted change their surname name to that of their adoptive family and they receive a new birth certificate. Adopted children/ young people often stay in touch with their birth family, through either face to face contact or indirect letter box contact, if this is in their best interest.

For more information you could look on the [Wirral Council Website \(Adoption\)](#).

Also see - [Birth Certificates](#)

Advocate

An Advocate is a person who can help children and young people voice their views about their care. They can help a child to let professionals know when they have concerns or worries or do not agree with a decision that has been made about them. An advocate is not a Social Worker or a member of the Children & Young People's Department. They can attend meetings with the child, such as reviews, planning meetings or case conferences. If a child in your care wants more advice they can visit the ['Right Side of Care Website' \(Advocates\)](#).

Alcohol

As we know alcohol can have adverse effects on a person's wellbeing and ability to function. It is illegal to be drunk in charge of a child; therefore Foster Carers would be expected to only drink in moderation within the health guidelines. Foster Carers also need to take into consideration a child's previous experiences within their birth family and how drinking alcohol could be interpreted by a child.

Foster Carers are in a good position to advise young people about how to manage their alcohol consumption and the effects on their health.

Allegations

An allegation is a direct statement made by an individual. If a child or young person makes an allegation of abuse it will be taken very seriously and they will be reassured that it was right to tell an appropriate adult. All allegations from whatever source should be reported to the Investigating Agencies e.g. the child's Social Worker, Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT), Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or directly to the Police if the Children & Young People's Department cannot be contacted. If you don't feel that you have been listened to you can contact [Ofsted](#).

Also See - [Abuse](#) and [Safeguarding Children](#)

Allegations Against Foster Carers

Allegations are sometimes made against Foster Carers. This places Foster Carers in a difficult and sometimes distressing situation. Wirral Children & Young People's Department has a procedure that aims to deal with allegations against carers quickly, fairly, confidentially and impartially.

Click here to see the [Allegations Against Foster Carers Procedure](#)

Allowances

Foster Carers are entitled to receive certain allowances to help them to look after the children/ young people in their care. Click here to see the [Guide to Foster Carers Payments](#)

Also see - [Finances](#)

Anti-discriminatory Practice

Wirral Council is committed to anti-discriminatory practice in every aspect of its work. Anti-discriminatory practice is concerned with the recognition and understanding of prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of Disability, Poverty, Race, Religion and Sexual Orientation. It involves providing services that do not compound stigma and prejudice but that actively promote equality and diversity.

Assessment

Foster Carers are often involved in assessing the needs of the children in their care. Information from Foster Carers can prove to be invaluable. Therefore, it is important that they keep a separate diary sheet for each child to record accurate facts or events in the child's life, both positive and negative. Children should be encouraged to read and to contribute to the diary sheet as this is a record of their life. A copy of the diary sheets should be emailed to the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker. If you require further advice and guidance in relation to diary sheets speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Also see - [Recording](#)

BAAF

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) is a National Organisation that gives advice, training and support on issues relating to Fostering. Wirral Council hold a corporate membership with BAAF and has access to research, literature and training, which Foster Carers can have access to through their Supervising Social Worker.

Click here to access the [BAAF Website](#)

Baby-sitting

The law does not specify any age below which children must not be left alone without the supervision of a responsible adult. Ideally all baby-sitters should be 16 years or over because young people under 16 cannot legally be held responsible for anything that happens to a child in their care.

The Children & Young People's Department recognises that all carers, including Foster Carers need a break and occasionally have to leave their foster children with relatives or a baby-sitter. Foster Carers are advised to consider carefully with whom their foster child is left in the care of.

Bedroom Space

The Fostering National Minimum Standards (standard 10) requires each child over the age of three to have their own bedroom. If this is not possible the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by the child's Responsible Authority. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom the Fostering Service must take into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour and the wishes of the children concerned. The decision making process and outcome of the assessment will be recorded in writing where bedroom sharing has been agreed.

Further to this, any child aged eight and over must only share with a child of their own gender. Any child over 12 months must not share with an adult unless it has been advised that this is in the child's best interest or there is specific medical advice to do so.

Beds or furniture must not block the doorway to obstruct a child from getting out in the case of fire. The child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker will ask to see where the child is sleeping during their visits and this will be recorded in writing.

Bedwetting

Any child or young person who has suffered a traumatic experience may begin to wet the bed. A child placed in care will almost certainly feel distressed and it is important to be patient and allow the child time to settle and feel safe and secure.

Displaying annoyance or attempting to punish the child may make the problem worse.

Rewarding the child for success will work better than punishment for failure. If the problem persists, talk to the child's Social Worker, your Supervising Social Worker or the Designated Nurse for Looked after Children. Persistent problems could be a sign of another problem.

Also See - [Designated Nurse for looked After Children](#)

Belongings

Foster children may bring items of clothing, toys or other possessions with them when they come to stay. These belongings may not seem very valuable to an adult but they may be precious to a child and therefore should be treated with respect.

When a child moves from a foster care placement their clothes must be packed in a suitcase or sports bag. Their other belongings should be packed carefully in boxes or plastic crates. Bin bags must not be used as these are usually purchased for rubbish and children's belongings need to be treated with respect.

Benefits

Many Foster Carers may be (or could be) claiming state benefits; it is important for Foster Carers to know how fostering can affect these benefits.

Foster Carers need to be clear what benefits they can and cannot claim for their foster child. For example, they cannot claim child benefit but can claim Disability Living Allowance if appropriate.

If you want advice about this see the [Wirral Website \(Welfare Rights\)](#).

Birth Certificates

If a child does not have a birth certificate the Foster Carer's can apply for one by completing a form from the Registrar's Office, Birkenhead Town Hall (forms are also available to download from the [Wirral Website](#)) or ask the Child's Social Worker to apply for one. Once the form has been completed and returned, no appointment will be necessary and a birth certificate will be issued straight away for a small fee.

If the child requires a passport you will need a birth certificate. If you are booking a holiday abroad it is advisable to apply for a birth certificate before you book a ticket, as sometimes a child's name on the birth certificate is different to the name it is currently known by. Holiday companies often charge for changing a name on a ticket.

Also See – [Child's Name](#)

Birthday Presents

Foster Carers receive a birthday allowance for each child placed with them. It is paid automatically to purchase a present in time for the child's birthday. Depending on the age of the child, the child should have a say about what they want for their birthday.

If the child moves placement before their birthday and a present has been purchased, the present and any money from the allowance which has not been spent must move with the child. If the allowance has been received but not spent, the allowance must be returned to the Fostering Service, as it will be paid to the child's new carer.

[Click here to see the Guide to Payments to Foster Carers](#)

Also See - [Finances](#)

Books

Foster Carers must provide an environment in which education and learning are valued. It is important that Foster Carers have age appropriate books and toys available for the children in their care. Foster Carers should encourage their children to use the local library facilities. It is important that children are regularly read to by an adult to assist their interest and pleasure in books. Even children who are able to read alone, benefit from hearing someone else tell a story.

Also See - [Homework](#)

Bullying

Bullying is a repeated action intended to hurt, threaten, intimidate or frighten an individual who is unable to defend himself/ herself. The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the person being bullied.

Bullying is unacceptable as it creates insecurity, damages trust and lowers self-esteem.

Bullying involves the abuse of power and can take many forms:

- Physical: Pushing, hitting, biting or use of violence
- Verbal: Name calling, teasing, spreading rumours
- Emotional: Hiding things, taking friends, threatening
- Racist: Racist comments, gestures or graffiti
- Sexual: Abusive comments, inappropriate physical contact and remarks

The following behaviours may be an indication that a child may be being bullied:

- Refusing to go to school, truanting or frightened of going to school
- Repeated episodes of feeling unwell or headaches
- Unexplained bruising or injury
- Loss of money or stealing
- Bedwetting or nightmares
- Child starts to become withdrawn and/or refuses to say what is wrong
- Child starts to become aggressive and may become a bully himself or herself

If this happens it is important to:

- Listen to the child; be patient, calm and sensitive
- Reassure the child that you believe them and will help them
- Record it on your diary sheet
- Contact the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker
- Play an important part in resolving the situation

All incidents of bullying will be investigated. The complaint will be recorded on the child's case file. When a bullying incident occurs, verbal or written reports will be made from speaking to all those involved, including witnesses.

The victim and the Foster Carers will be involved in the decision making about how the situation will be resolved. The Foster Carers and child's Social Worker will monitor and record the outcome of any strategy used.

The above process will happen if the child is the victim or the perpetrator of the bullying.

Foster Carers must attend training about bullying.

Click here to see [Wirral's Bullying Anti-bullying Policy](#)

Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT)

The Central Advice and Duty Team are the first team within the Children and Young People's Department that people contact or make referrals to if they have concerns in relation to a child's wellbeing. The Central Advice and Duty Team can be contacted on Tel No: 0151-666-2008.

CAMHS

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) offer a range of services:

- Therapeutic work for sexually abused children and their carers
- Therapeutic work for looked after children or their carers
- Therapeutic work for children and families in the community
- Therapeutic work for children 16-19 years old
- Therapeutic work for children with complex special needs
- Involvement with the Youth Offending Team (YOT)

Foster Carers can seek advice and consultation with this team but must speak to the child's Social Worker first.

Car Seats

Foster Carers who are taking children out in their car must ensure that car seats are fitted and are suitable for the needs of the child. Seat belts are a legal requirement for all passengers. For more information about car seats visit [Child Car Seats: Carrying Children Safely](#)

Care Order

If a Court decides that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm through lack of adequate parental care or control it can make a Care Order.

This means that the Local Authority will look after the child. A Care Order gives shared Parental Responsibility to the Local Authority and the child's parents.

The Care Order lasts until the child is 18 years old unless the child is Adopted or a Supervision Order, Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order is made, or the order is discharged.

Care Plan

Every looked after child must have a Care Plan. This is an agreement for looking after and meeting the child's current and future needs and outlines how Foster Carers and the Local Authority are meeting the five outcomes for children in relation to:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution

- Achieving economic well being

This plan will be reviewed on a regular basis by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Foster Carers must have a written copy of the Care Plan for each child. If you do not, you must ask the child's Social Worker for one. Your Supervising Social Worker will discuss with you how you will fulfil your Foster Carer role within this plan.

Also See - [Child's Review](#)

Care Proceedings

The Local Authority can instigate 'Care Proceedings' if they are very worried about a child and apply to the Court for a Care Order or Supervision Order.

Also See - [Care Order](#) and [Children's Guardian](#)

Child Arrangement Order

Foster Carers can apply for a Child Arrangement Order for a child they have looked after. Certain conditions apply depending on time scales. Your child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker will be able to give advice about this.

Also See - [Parental Responsibility](#) and [Permanent Foster Carers](#)

Child Protection Case Conference

A Child Protection Case Conference is held when there is a concern that a child is at risk of significant harm. The conference brings together family members and those Professionals involved with the family.

The purpose of the meeting is to share information and decide whether there should be a Child Protection Plan. If the child's name is placed on the register the Chair will make recommendations that will form the Child Protection Plan. A core group of people will also be agreed to implement the plan.

The core group will meet on a regular basis and the Child Protection Plan will be reviewed within set time scales.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Children may have previously exchanged sex for rewards, gifts, drugs, accommodation and money. Some maintain this lifestyle whilst continuing to be accommodated by the authority. Such situations must be reported by the Foster Carers to their Supervising Social Worker and to the child's Social Worker to decide on the actions that should be taken.

Foster Carers must be alert to such behaviours and should do all they can to create an environment which encourages children and young people to be open about their past or present attitudes and behaviours and which demonstrates they will be supported to guide them away from such lifestyles.

Where there is any suspicion that a child is engaged in such behaviour it should be addressed in the child's Placement Plan together with strategies to be adopted to help the child find alternative lifestyles need to be identified.

In addressing these behaviours consideration must be given to the extent to which the child is suffering Significant Harm and whether it is necessary to refer the child under Safeguarding Children Procedures in the area where the child is living.

Changes in Circumstances

The legal requirement to notify the Children & Young People's Department of changes in circumstances is within your Foster Care Agreement as follows:

- Foster Carers will provide written notice of changes to the child's care arrangements and seek agreement prior to any changes happening
- Foster Carers must not change the child's name or address to which they are placed or whom they live with in the household.
- Foster Carer's must not take the child out of school to go on holiday.
- Foster Carers will give written notice by letter or email, to the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker of:
 1. Any intended change of address, including temporary and holiday addresses and contact numbers. These should include both the Foster Carer's change of address and if the child is to be cared for elsewhere, the temporary carers address. This written notice will include dates of the proposed changes.
 2. Any change of composition in the household, with details and dates. This includes any members of the household being away or people joining the household, including temporary arrangements
 3. Any change (including temporary) in personal circumstances and any other events affecting either the capacity to care for any child placed or the suitability of the household
 4. Any request or application to Adopt or apply for a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or for registration for child-minding or day care.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit cannot be paid to anyone who is in receipt of a Fostering Allowance. Child Benefit is only payable if the carer has a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order for the child, even if they are also receiving an allowance from the Local Authority.

Child Development

Foster Carers must have knowledge of child development and attend training to enhance their understanding. Monitoring child development is important to ensure that children meet their 'development milestones'.

Child Protection

Child protection refers to the activities undertaken to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child.

Also See - [Safeguarding Children](#)

Children Act 1989

The main principles of this act are:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- The best place for a child to be looked after is in their own families
- Birth parents should be involved whenever possible in all decision making and planning for their children
- Legal proceedings should be avoided where possible
- The welfare of the child should be promoted by partnership between the family and Local Authority
- Children should not be removed from their families, and contact should not be ended, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so for their well being
- Consideration must be given to the child's race culture, religion, language, and any disability

Click here for more information on [The Children Act 1989](#)

Children's Earnings and Grants

If a young person earns £60 plus a week, the Foster Care Allowance paid to carers is reduced by the amount normally considered for clothing and pocket money. This means the children are responsible for the purchase of their own clothes.

If a young person earns £40 plus a week the Foster Care Allowance paid to carers is reduced by 59.65% of the amount for clothing and all pocket money. The Foster Carers still receive the remainder of the amount normally considered for clothing. Therefore, both child and Foster Carers share the responsibility for clothing.

If a young person earns £30 plus a week the Foster Care Allowance paid to carers is reduced by half of the amount normally considered for clothing and all pocket money. The Foster Carers still receive half the amount normally considered for clothing. Therefore, both child and Foster Carers are responsible for clothing.

Children's Guardian

During Court Proceedings a Guardian will be appointed by CAFCASS, to represent the child in Court. They will usually need to talk to the Foster Carers and the child in order to compile a report for the Court.

Children's Involvement Manager

Wirral employs a full time Children's Involvement Manager for children and young people aged 0-25 who have received, or are receiving a service from the Children & Young People's Department.

Services provided include:

- Support, advice and information
- Advocacy
- Children's rights
- Complaints
- Representing children's views locally, regionally, and nationally.

Click here to view the [Right Side of Care Website](#)

Children's Rights

Children have a right to be cared for in a nurturing environment, where their needs are met. They have a right to be respected and their wishes and feelings to be taken into account and included in any decisions made about them. This is enshrined in [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Foster Carers receive training, which includes communicating with children, complaints and advocacy as part of their induction and ongoing development.

Also see - [Children's Involvement Manager](#)

Child's Name

Foster Carers cannot give permission to change a child's name. It is important that Foster Carers check that the name they know the child by is the name on their birth certificate. This is especially important when booking a holiday abroad as you may find that the child's passport has a different name on it to the one you know the child by.

Click here to see the [Change of Name of a Looked After Child Procedure](#)

Also see - [Birth Certificates](#), [Delegated Authority](#) and [Holidays](#)

Child's Review

If a child is looked after they will have a Care Plan that is reviewed within four weeks of coming into care, followed by a second review after three months, and thereafter at least six monthly intervals.

The purpose of the Review Meeting is to agree the proposed care plan is appropriate to meet the needs of the child. There should be no surprises in the review, as all issues relevant to the Care Plan should have been discussed previously with all those involved with implementing the plan.

The Review Meeting should be used to seek the views of the child, Foster Carers, parents, school and anyone else who is involved with the child. Wherever possible, children should take part in the review, which is, after all, about them. Foster Carers are expected to encourage those children who are of an age and understanding to take part in their review.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) may request to visit the child in care before the Review Meeting to consider their views, wishes and feelings. The IRO will also explain the review process. The Review Meeting will be chaired by an IRO and a written record of the meeting will be circulated to all those involved.

Religious Festival Presents

Foster Carers receive an allowance for each child placed with them. It is paid automatically at the end of November. Depending on the age of the child, the child can have a say about what they want as a present. This allowance must not be used for the purchase of clothing.

If the child moves before the Religious Festival presents have been purchased, the presents and any money from the allowance which has not been spent must move with the child. If the allowance has been received but not spent, the allowance must be returned to the Fostering Service, as it will be paid to the child's new Foster Carer.

Also see - [Finances](#)

Clothing

Children in Foster Care must be well dressed and have clothing suitable for their age, the weather, school, leisure and bedtime. Children from an early age must have a say in what is bought for them and their feet must be measured for the purchase of shoes, to ensure they fit properly. The Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker have a statutory duty to check the children's clothing on their visits to you.

When a child first becomes a child in care, the Foster Carers can claim up to a maximum of £200 for initial clothing and receipts for the purchase of this clothing need to be submitted. However, Foster Carers can claim up to £50.00 on request and in advance of purchasing the clothes but must submit the receipts once they are bought. Further money up to the maximum allowance can be requested on production of receipts as required and will be sent with the Foster Carer's payment.

If a child moves placement or returns home, their current clothes and the clothes they arrived with must go with them, in a suitcase or sports bag. This can be purchased from the clothing element of the Foster Care Allowance.

On occasions the receiving Foster Carer may judge the clothing the child brings is inadequate. This must be brought to the attention of the Supervising Social Worker, or child's Social Worker. If this is the case, following discussion with the child's previous Foster Carer, the previous Carer may be asked to provide more suitable clothing for the child.

Also See - [Finances](#), [Social Work Visits](#), [Supervising Social Workers Visits](#)

Complaints

Wirral Children & Young People's Department take all complaints seriously and have a clear complaints procedure. If you have an issue you wish to raise you may first want to discuss this with the child's Social Worker, Child's Social Worker's Manager or the Supervising Social Worker in an effort to resolve problems at an early stage. If you are not satisfied with the outcome a more formal complaint can be made by contacting the Complaints Officer or Ofsted.

Click here to see [Wirral's Complaints Policy](#)

Computers

It is expected that Foster Carers will provide the children in their care with access to a computer and the Internet. Schools communicate with children via the Internet and children without this facility are severely disadvantaged.

Wirral Children & Young People's Department have a protocol about the use of the Internet. Foster Carers must supervise the use of the Internet, and the computer must be accommodated within the household in a suitable place, which allows for such supervision.

Click here to see [Wirral's Internet Safety Policy](#)

Training is provided to Foster Carers about internet offending. Foster Carers are also advised if they do not already have computer skills themselves, to take up training opportunities to learn as part of their personal development plan.

Also see - [Homework](#)

Confidentiality

Foster Carers must treat all personal information they have in the course of working with children and their families as confidential. Obviously, information about the child must be communicated to the relevant people, if in doubt speak to the child's Social Worker.

Foster Carers must not promise a child total confidentiality as sometimes information a child discloses must be shared, particularly in relation to child protection issues.

All written information you receive, and anything you write about children you care for must be kept in a safe secure and locked place. When a child leaves your care all the information relating to that child must be passed to the next carer. If the child returns home the

information must be passed to the child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker. Foster Carers must not keep any information about a child that they are not caring for.

Also See - [Recording](#)

Connected Carers (Family and Friends Foster Carers)

When a child needs to be accommodated by the Local Authority the first consideration is given to family, friends or people already known to the child. This is required by the Children Act 1989, as it is believed to reduce the emotional impact of separating a child from their usual care givers.

For Foster Carers this can complicate family relationships, as the children placed with them have to become their first priority, even when this may conflict with the relationship they have with the children's parents or previous care givers. As connected carers they sign up to the same Foster Care Placement Agreements and follow the child's care plan, just as other carers would do. The Local Authority also visit, support, advise, train, supervise and review as with other Foster Carers.

Consents

Foster Carers can sign for children to take part in non-adventurous activities including school trips if:

- It has been discussed and agreed at the Placement Agreement Meeting, and the Foster Carer has a signed copy of the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record).

Or

- The Foster Carer has a consent form or letter signed by the parent or person with parental responsibility or the LAC Service Manager or District Manager of the child's Social Worker specifying the carer can sign for non-adventurous activities for a particular child.

If you do not have either of the above, ask the child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker for advice.

Foster Carers cannot sign for adventurous activities or let the child take part in adventurous activities without prior consent.

An adventurous activity is defined as:

'Where there is general agreement that an activity requires the person conducting the activity to have specific skills, knowledge and qualifications in order to reduce to a minimum the risks from undertaking that activity'.

The list below is not exhaustive but examples of adventurous activities:

- Abseiling
- Parachuting
- Archery
- Pony trekking
- Assault courses
- Power boating
- Canal boating
- Pot holing/caving
- Canoeing
- Quad biking
- Cycling
- Quasar laser
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- Games
- Fencing
- Rafting
- Flying
- Rock climbing
- Gliding
- Rowing
- Hang gliding
- Sailing
- Helicopter rides
- Shooting
- Hill walking
- Skiing
- Horse riding
- Snorkelling
- Hot air ballooning
- Swimming - where there are no attendants
- Ice-skating
- Indoor rock climbing
- Sub aqua
- Judo/wrestling
- Tobogganing
- Mountain biking
- Trampolining
- Motorcycling
- Water-skiing
- Orienteering
- Weight lifting

If a child is going to take part in an adventurous activity, including if Foster Carer's are taking a child on holiday and think it is likely it may involve adventurous activities; Foster Carers will need written permission from the District Manager or Manager of the child's Social Worker for the child to take part.

The child's Social Worker will need to be contacted to make arrangements for obtaining the signature.

When a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order is made the holder of the order can consent to activities and medical treatment.

[Click here to see Wirral's Delegation of Authority Policy](#)

Also see - [Overnight Stays](#)

Consents for Medical Treatment

A Foster Carer will have a signed copy of the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record) and Delegation of Authority for medical consent which allows the Foster Carer to sign and give consent to immunisations, dental check-ups and eye tests, etc.

The Foster Carer must keep this documentation safe and produce it whenever necessary.

Specific treatment - will need either the child themselves if old enough, or the parent or person with parental responsibility, or the District Manager or the Manager for the child's Social Worker to sign. They will need to know precisely what treatment is being advised and by whom. What the treatment will involve, what risks or side effects are possible, expected care needed following the procedure, for how long and by whom.

[Click here to see Wirral's Consent to Medical Treatment in Foster Care Placements Procedure](#)

Contact

A child's contact with his or her family is most important and Foster Carers must encourage children to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as outlined in the Foster Placement Agreement and the Care Plan.

There should always be a clear understanding with the Foster Carer from the outset about the child's continuing relationship with their parents and other family members. Foster Carers should enquire with the child's Social Worker, or their Supervising Social Worker, about contact arrangements before the placement begins to ensure that they will fit with the carers' circumstances. Delegated Authority in relation to contact should be discussed as part of the Placement Planning Meeting and Foster Carers should receive written contact arrangements, this is usually within the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record), but any changes may be given separately.

Foster Carers are expected to take and collect the child from contact. Exceptions to this would be if the young person is old enough to make their own way to the contact, if the Foster Carer is required to take another foster child to a different location, if the Foster Carer has an emergency or it is deemed that the Foster Carer would be at risk from the person the child is having contact with.

Foster Carers are advised to ask before the child is placed about contact arrangements to ensure arrangements are made to enable carers to carry out their responsibilities around contact. This may include supervising contact in their home or elsewhere. A record of contact should be kept by the Foster Carer on diary sheets and children should be encouraged to contribute.

Prevention of contact cannot be used as a punishment. Foster Carers must attend training about contact as part of their induction and ongoing development.

[Click here to see Wirral's Contact Procedure](#)

Contacting Children & Young People's Department

By phone

The Social Worker for the child will give you their contact number. You will also have your Supervising Social Worker's direct line, mobile number and the team number. If you cannot contact them directly you can ask for the Duty Officer. All Social Work Teams have a Duty Officer. You can leave a message with the team clerk or the person who answers the phone. Leave your name, telephone number and brief details of what you are ringing about. You can also contact the Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT) if it is very urgent.

Out of office hours you will need to contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or the Police.

By email

Practice Managers and all Social Workers have email. Usually their address is 'their name'@wirral.gov.uk – (all lower case).

As you know, Social Workers are not office based and have to juggle priorities. There will be times when your child's Social Worker is not available. However, you can contact them as described above. It is important that you leave a message or put your requirements clearly in writing to ensure your child's Social Worker or Supervising Social Worker understands what you need.

The email address for the Duty Fostering Service is: dutyfostering@wirral.gov.uk

Contraception

The Children and Young People's Department has a policy which describes Foster Carers responsibilities in relation to sexual health and contraception.

[Click here to see Wirral's Personal Care and Relationships Procedure](#)

If you want advice about sexual health matters or contraception in relation to your foster child you can contact the Designated LAC Nurse, or contact the School Nurse based in the school your child attends.

Core Group

A Core Group consists of professionals, birth family and the child concerned if appropriate, who will meet to share information about the child and their family and develop a plan for the child's care.

Also see [Case Conference](#)

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is a term used when physical force is used which is intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort. Foster Carers must not smack children and corporal punishment is not an option in any circumstances.

Also see - [Managing Behaviour](#) and Sanctions

Data Protection

This legislation regulates the handling of personal data. This allows the Children & Young People's Department to share information with Foster Carers when appropriate.

It also requires Foster Carers to keep information confidential and only to share on a need to know basis.

Days Out

Foster Carers are able to take children for days out in and away from Wirral without prior consent unless it involves adventurous activities.

Also see - [Consents](#)

Delegated Authority

Delegated Authority refers to the arrangements for all or some of the responsibilities held by a person with parental responsibility which will be met by the Foster Carer. The level of the Foster Carer's decisions and consents should be considered at the child's Placement Planning Meeting and during supervisory visits. If a Foster Carer is unsure of their level of decision making responsibilities they should contact their Supervising Social Worker or the Child's Social Worker.

[Click here to see Wirral's Delegation of Authority Policy](#)

Designated Nurse for Looked After Children

The Designated Nurse for looked after children has a responsibility to ensure all looked after children have their health needs met. The Designated Nurse is available for advice to both children and Foster Carers and will ensure that a child's health assessments are carried out. Add in contact details of designated nurse.

Also See - [Medicals](#)

Diary Sheets

Diary sheets are records which are completed by Foster Carers on a daily basis which will provide an accurate picture of the child/ young person's placement and allow progress to be monitored. Foster Carer recording is very important in understanding the child/ young person's needs and helping to put an effective plan in place. Foster Carers should add in quotations any views or direct comments made by a child about how they are feeling. Drawings from children should also be added to diary sheets.

See - [Recording](#)

Dinner Money

Whilst the child is in foster care the Foster Carer is responsible for the payment of dinner money, even if the child was receiving free dinners before being looked after.

Disabilities

Children with disabilities may need specialist care. Carers may need specific training to meet those needs, which will be provided for by the Department. Please discuss your training needs with your Supervising Social Worker.

Also see [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#)

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

DLA is a benefit for children with disabilities. It is for people who need help looking after themselves and those who find it difficult to walk or get around. It is divided into two parts:

- Care component – for help with personal care needs
- Mobility component – for help with walking difficulties

You can be paid either the care component or the mobility component on its own, or both at the same time. DLA is for the child and not for the parent or carer.

If you get DLA for a child, it must be paid into a separate account open for this purpose and not be used to pay for something that we would normally expect you to provide from your Foster Care Allowance.

The way in which you use the DLA will depend on the individual child's needs. As the appointee you are expected, by the DWP, to use the award to support the child and to save any surplus for the child to use in the future. Foster Carers will need to record how this money is used and be able to account for all transactions.

This allowance is the child's entitlement and if the child moves placement the money from this account must go with them. The DWP is responsible for monitoring the use of DLA. You may wish to contact the DLA general enquiries helpline (0845 712 3456), to clarify situations in which it is appropriate to use the DLA to support a particular activity or purchase. It is not the responsibility of the Fostering Service to monitor your use of this award. However, if the Fostering Service suspects that you are using the award inappropriately we will ask the DWP to investigate.

Diversity

Any form of discriminatory practice is not permitted. Carers should challenge any form of discrimination.

All children should be encouraged and helped to understand, enjoy, and take a pride in their ethnic origin and cultural heritage. For Foster Carers to do this they will need an understanding and awareness of the child's ethnic origin and cultural background, and provide the child with opportunities where they can develop their own identity. Foster Carers

must be aware of particular needs in relation to health, self-care and diet in relation to religious and cultural requirements.

Wirral Council provides support for families with specific issues relating to cultural background. Foster Carers must attend training in valuing diversity to meet the requirements of the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers. Where a child is placed from a different ethnic or cultural background to themselves, carers will be expected to attend specific training to ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of the child.

Drug Abuse

Wirral Drug and Alcohol Action Team is a partnership of Agencies, which include representatives from organisations such as Health, Police, Probation Service, Merseyside Voluntary Agencies and Wirral Council's Education, Youth and Children's Services. Working with these organisations, Wirral DAAT is responsible for meeting the targets of the Government's National Drug Strategy, which are to:

- Prevent today's young people from becoming tomorrow's problematic drug users.
- Reduce the availability of illegal drugs.
- Reduce drug-related crime and its impact on communities.
- Reduce drug use and drug related offending through treatment and support.
- Reduce drug-related death through harm minimisation.

Duty Officer

All Social Work Teams have a Duty Officer. If you cannot speak to your child's Social Worker or Supervising Social Worker and you need immediate advice or to leave important information, ask to speak to the Team Duty Officer.

You can also email your enquiry to the Team Manager or Social Worker.

Also see - [Contacting the Children & Young People's Department](#)

Education

Many children who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority suffer from enormous disadvantages in almost all areas of their lives. However, some care leavers go on to be very successful later in life.

A sound education plays a key role in ensuring that young people become successful in later life. Poor experiences of education and care can contribute to social exclusion in later life. For example approximately a quarter of all rough sleepers have been in care and about a quarter of adults who have been in prison have been in care. This is particularly disturbing since only about 0.5% of children ever come into care.

For these reasons the Fostering Service must give a high priority to meeting the educational needs of children in Foster Care, and ensure that they are encouraged to attain their full potential.

One way in which this is to be addressed is through the use of a Personal Education Plan (PEP) to ensure that key figures in the child/young person's life get together to discuss the educational issues affecting the child/young person's school life and level of attainment. Each looked after child must, by law, have a Personal Education Plan. It is the Social Worker's responsibility to ensure that this is completed and is a vital part of the Care Plan.

In Wirral, a Designated Teacher in the school which the child attends has the responsibility for writing the plan. This should result from joint planning between the Foster Carer, the child/young person, the Social Worker and the Designated Teacher. The Foster Carer's contribution to this process is vital.

The partnership formed between the school's Designated Teacher for looked after students and the carer is the only practical way to ensure that a good education can be delivered to these young people who are experiencing disrupted lives. It is important for the Foster Carer to be ambitious and have a key role in ensuring that the children get the best out of their education.

Foster Carers take their foster children to school and collect them unless the children are old enough to go on their own. It is important that Foster Carers consider this when agreeing for a child to be placed. Foster Carers can claim mileage expenses or bus passes for this.

Foster Carers should attend parents' evenings/open days, in conjunction with the birth parent where appropriate.

Foster Carers should introduce themselves to the child's class teacher in primary school, or make contact with the school's Designated Teacher for looked after students in secondary schools. The Designated Teacher may name another teacher in the school as the main point of contact to help to resolve any day-to-day issues, which arise for the child in school.

Foster Carers must provide an environment in which education and learning are valued. This involves a suitable area in the home to study and IT equipment to support their learning.

Foster Carers must establish an expectation of regular attendance at school, supporting the child's full participation through provision of necessary uniform and equipment. They should support the children with their homework and encourage school trips and after school activities. Foster Carers must have the necessary information promoting education as part of their induction and ongoing development. Not sure what this is trying to say!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

If the Foster Carer is asked to take a child home or keep the child off school without a formal exclusion, the Foster Carer must contact the Designated Teacher. If a child is formally excluded the Foster Carer must contact the Designated Teacher and the child's Social Worker for guidance.

To see the Foster Carers Supporting Educational Potential Procedure [click here](#)

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

The Emergency Duty team consists of one or two Social Workers on duty at any one time. They are available out of office hours. Their role is to deal with urgent situations, which cannot be left until the next working day. If the EDT Social Worker is not available and a child is at immediate risk please ring the Police. Add in contact details

Events and Notifications

In line with Foster Care Regulations Foster Carers must inform the Children & Young People's Department of any of the following events:

- Death of a child
- Serious illness or accident of a child
- Outbreak of any infectious disease
- Allegation that a child placed with Foster Carers has committed a serious offence
- Involvement or suspected involvement in Child Sexual Exploitation of a child placed with Foster Carers
- Serious incident necessitating the Police being called to the foster home
- Absconding by a child placed with Foster Carers
- Serious complaint about a Foster Carer approved by the Fostering Agency
- Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with
 - Foster Carer
 - Any intended change of address, including temporary or holiday addresses
 - Any changes in composition of the household
 - Any other change in personal circumstances which affects ability to care for the child
 - Any request or application to adopt or register as a child minder

Family Group Conferences

These are set up by a Co-ordinator, with a child, his/her family and friends, and anyone involved with the family. The purpose of the meeting is to develop a plan for the child's future. The aim is to give families a central role in decision making whilst still ensuring that children and young people are safe.

These meetings are usually in three parts:

Part 1 - Information Giving

The child, family, friends, and anyone involved with the family, say what they think about the situation and what help they can offer. Additional information can be asked for from workers with the family. The family and friends are then left alone to discuss the situation.

Part 2 - Private Family Time

The child, family and friends then work out who needs to do what and work out how the plan can work. The Co-ordinator can be asked to join if information or refreshments are needed.

Part 3 - The Plan

The Co-ordinator then discusses the plan with the child, family and friends to ensure it is clear and agreed by everyone at the meeting. If the co-ordinator does not think it will keep the child safe, the group may be asked to adjust the plan.

Once the final plan is agreed, those involved will work together to put the plan into action and agree how and when the plan will be reviewed.

Family Link Scheme

The scheme is designed for children whose parents are clearly accepting primary responsibility and care for the children. It allows children who normally live with their own family to spend short periods of time with approved Foster Carers to provide the family with a break as part of a package of family support.

Finances

Foster Care Allowances are paid by crossed cheques or directly into the foster carers bank or building society, fortnightly in arrears (every other Friday). The level of payment is reviewed once a year and carers are sent written confirmation of changes. [Click here to see the Guide to Foster Carers Payments](#)

Also see – [Consents](#) and [Education](#)

Educational Trips

An application for the cost of field trips and residential courses which are an integral and necessary part of the child's school curriculum can be requested as part of the Personal Education Allowance and discussed as part of the PEP.

Foster Carers are expected to meet the clothing/equipment needs of the child for holidays and trips from the weekly allowance and/or the annual holiday allowance.

Equipment

Newly approved Foster Carers are provided with 'setting up equipment' needed for the children that carers are registered for. This would include items such as a bed, combination wardrobe, car seat, cot, buggy, sterilizer, highchair and bedding. There is however a price limit on what the Local Authority will pay. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker. Foster Carers can choose their own equipment up to the value agreed and request money in advance. Foster Carers must provide receipts once the items are purchased.

Replacement equipment can be requested if the Foster Carer does not receive a fee above Band 1.

When requesting specialist equipment, e.g. a requirement arising from disability this should be agreed with the Team Manager at Wirral Fostering Service.

Fees

Wirral Foster Carers are rewarded through the payment of fees that recognises the skills they have. This fee scheme allows carers to progress through three levels, and on achieving each level, receive a higher rate of payment. Each level is referred to as a band.

Foster Care Allowance

This is paid for each child, the weekly amount depending on age. Children who are looked after are also entitled to a number of additional allowances such as holiday grant and festival allowance (e.g. paid for the purchasing of a Christmas present), and birthday gift.

Initial Clothing

An allowance of up to £200 can be paid for each child. Please note this amount is usually only paid once during each care episode as the fostering allowance contains an element for clothing replacement. The allowance paid must allow the carer to purchase sufficient and appropriate clothing for the child. Carers may choose to use the allowance initially in part, using the remainder at a later date.

If needed, Foster Carers can ask for a cash payment to meet immediate initial clothing needs.

Tax

All Foster Carers are defined as Self-Employed by the Inland Revenue.

In reality, most carers will not have to pay any tax, if you want any help or advice the business adviser at the Inland Revenue will be pleased to assist you. It may be helpful to look at the [Inland Revenue Website](#).

Travel Expenses

For details on travel expenses - see Guide to Foster Carers Payments

First Aid

Foster Carers are expected to attend a First Aid course as part of their pre-approval training. A certificate of attendance is required to complete the Training Support and Development Standards portfolio.

Also see - Medication

Foster Care Agreement

The Fostering Service Regulations require Foster Carers to sign the Foster Care Agreement before commencing fostering. This will ensure that carers have a full understanding of what they can expect from the Local Authority and the expectations the Local Authority have of Foster Carers. If you do not have a Foster Care Agreement please speak to your Supervising Social Worker or contact the Fostering Service.

Note: The Foster Care Agreement requires Foster Carers to notify the child's Social Worker or their Manager and their Supervising Social Worker or their Manager, of any changes in circumstances.

Also see - [Changes in Circumstances](#)

Foster Carer Reviews

Regulations for Fostering Services require Foster Carers to be reviewed at least annually. Your first review is presented to the Fostering Panel. The Fostering Panel also has a responsibility for considering reviews in particular circumstances e.g. Change of banding, any complaint or allegation and de-registration. Foster Carers are invited to attend the Fostering Panel when their assessment or review is being presented.

All other reviews are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This is usually undertaken in the Foster Carer's own home at a time to suit the Foster Carer. If carers disagree with the outcome, they can put their complaint in writing to the Team Manager of the Fostering Service within 28 days of the decision. Arrangements are then made for the Fostering Panel to consider the registration and complaint. The outcome will be confirmed in writing. Alternatively, Foster Carers can apply to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) for them to consider their registration. The IRM will make a recommendation back to the Authority. The Agency Decision Maker will then consider their recommendation and make the final decision about the Foster Carers registration.

Foster Talk

Foster Talk is a National Organisation that gives, advice training and support to Foster Carers.

Click here to see more information on [Foster Talk](#)

Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is a National Organisation that gives advice, training and support on issues relating to fostering.

Click her to see more information on the [Fostering Network](#)

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel has responsibility for approving, reviewing and monitoring Foster Carers. The panel consists of:

- An Independent Chairperson who is not employed in any other capacity by the Local
- Authority
- Elected Members
- A Social Worker Representative of the Children & Young People's Department
- A Foster Carer registered with another Local Authority
- Independent Representatives
- An Agency Advisor
- Access to Medical and Legal Advice

Foster Carers are invited to attend the Fostering Panel, along with their Supervising Social Worker, when their assessment or review is being presented.

Fostering Services Regulations 2011

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 is the Legal Framework that governs all Fostering Services. These regulations are mandatory and all Fostering Service Providers, including Foster Carers, must comply with them.

Any Inspector of Fostering Services would look at how these and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services are complied with.

Connected Carers are paid the same Foster Care Allowance, as other Foster Carers and are eligible to receive fee payments and progress through the banding scheme if they meet the requirements as any other carer. They are expected to complete the Training Support and Development Standards portfolio in line with other Foster Carers.

Click here to see the [Fostering Services Regulations 2011](#)

Health

Foster Carers have a duty to ensure that all the health needs of a child in their care are met. Before a placement begins the carer is provided with as full a description as possible of the child's needs, and the procedures giving consent for the child to receive medical treatment. Carers can sign for ongoing, non-emergency treatment if they have a letter signed by the Senior Manager which they should receive when the child is placed, if the child is subject to a care order. Parents can delegate consent which will be recorded in the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record) for the child & Designated Consent Tool.

There needs to be a clear understanding of any specialist health needs prior to placement. The carer is provided with a written record for children placed in their care. This is updated during the placement and moves with the child. It is the Foster Carer's responsibility to complete the child's appointment record and the child's medication record forms as and when necessary. If a child moves to another placement the Foster Carer is responsible for ensuring any outstanding appointments are relayed to the Foster Carer who is now looking after the child. They should also tell the relevant Health Professional of the change of placement address.

Children who are looked after should also have a Health Care Plan which outlines their health needs and makes clear who has responsibility for ensuring that these needs are met. The carer needs to be clear about their role. This includes:

- Registering a child with a Doctor and Dentist when necessary
- Taking the child to any health appointments including dental and optician
- Helping the child to access the services they need
- Giving attention to health issues and every day care of the child, including personal hygiene, nutrition and sexual health
- Acting as an Advocate on their behalf
- Providing activities and opportunities for children in their care to pursue hobbies and interests

Wirral has Designated LAC Nurses who can offer advice. Schools also have a Nurse available to give advice to pupils, parents and Foster Carers.

Also See [Designated Nurse for Looked After Children](#)

Health and Safety

Foster Carers have a duty to promote and safeguard the child's physical, mental and emotional welfare. The home and immediate environment must be free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contains safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age and development and level of ability. Health and Safety Checks are made annually by the Supervising Social Worker and will be discussed in the annual review.

Health Care Plan

Every child in care is required to have a written Health Plan which is part of the child's Care Plan which should be regularly reviewed.

Also see - [Health](#)

Holidays

It is expected that children in care will go on holiday with their Foster Carers as part of the family. This is particularly the case with children in long term care. If you are planning a holiday discuss this with the child's Social Worker, as permission will have to be sought. Holidays must be taken during school holidays for children of school age. If a child is to go on holiday/have time off school, permission is needed from the Head of Service.

When you have decided on the holiday you must put the details in writing to the child's Social Worker or their Manager and your Supervising Social Worker or their Manager, the dates you are away, the address you will be staying, and a contact number.

When booking a holiday abroad please ensure that you have all the correct documents. This includes ensuring that any travel documentation details the child's name as shown in his or her passport. Failure to do so might mean that the child might be refused the right to travel.

It is unusual for Foster Carers to take a holiday without the children in their care, especially if the children are placed long term with them, as these children are very much part of their family. Although the department does recognise that in certain circumstances Foster Carers might need to take time 'off' from their caring role. Foster Carers may take up to two weeks leave without their foster children, without loss of any fee. In These circumstances the Foster Carer will need to:

Identify a suitable friend or family member who they trust and could appropriately care for the child. Sometimes this will involve the suitable person moving in with the children in the Foster Carers own home which is often the least disruptive option for the child.

Make a request to the Supervising Social Worker for the children to be placed with another carer for the period they are away. The Supervising Social Worker needs to know well in advance of the planned holiday.

Foster Carer holidays should be taken during term time and at a time which is least disruptive to the child's education and consider the effect this will have on the child

Foster Carers should not consider taking holidays during the Christmas period as the service would not provide an alternative placement for the child

Also See [Foster Care Agreement](#)

Homework

Foster Carers have a responsibility to help the children in their care reach their full educational potential. Carers should encourage the young people to do their homework and must provide a quiet space and time for the child to study. In many instances this may involve carers sitting with and helping the children. Carers should ensure that children have access to libraries and provide any books and equipment needed.

Foster Carers will be required to have a good understanding of internet safety and undertake the training available if required.

Identity

It is essential that a child who is looked after develops a sense of his or her own identity. Foster Carers can assist in many ways including promoting contact with family and friends, keeping records, photographs, and childhood mementos. Carers must also help the child to compile a life storybook. At all times the Foster Carer must take into account the child's race, religion, sexual orientation and culture. Foster Carers must develop an understanding of the child's race, religion, sexual orientation or culture if it is different to their own.

Also see - [Diversity](#)

Independence

Preparation for adult life is something that we require as a standard in foster care. Foster Carers should provide all children in their care with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning the skills necessary to prepare them for the responsibilities for adulthood. This should include:

- Providing opportunities to help young people to manage their money plan their finances and understand about the costs of utilities and other services. Children are provided with a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding and should have their own bank account.
- Supporting children to develop the range of self-care and practical skills that will be needed as they make the move to greater independence – including capacity to budget for, plan and prepare nutritionally balanced meals, prepare for the world of work or further education, self-care and social presentation.
- Enabling children to develop basic housekeeping and household maintenance skills including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self-care and understanding and taking responsibility for personal health care.

Children are encouraged and enabled to choose their own clothing and personal requisites and to buy these through normal shopping arrangements. Younger children are

accompanied by the Foster Carer or others and older children are given the choice of shopping alone or with the guidance of their Foster Carer.

Children who are leaving care will have a Pathway Plan and an allocated worker. The Pathway Plan outlines the transition from foster care to independent living. Foster Carers have an important role in ensuring children have the necessary skills for living independently successfully.

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for fostering is part of a wider package of measures to improve the approvals process for Foster Carers and to encourage more people to come forward to foster.

The IRM is not an appeal process, the function of the panel is to review all the documents and information relating to a “qualifying determination” and make a recommendation to the Fostering Service Provider about whether or not a person is suitable to act as a “Local Authority Foster Carer” and/or a recommendation about the terms of approval, as the case may be. The final decision about the individual’s approval will continue to rest with the Agency Decision Maker.

Inspections

Fostering services are inspected regularly. Foster Carers are sent a questionnaire to complete before each inspection. Foster Carers can have an opportunity to meet with inspectors on request, or the inspectors may request to see them.

Insurance

Insurance is provided for Foster Carers and any children less than 18 years whilst registered as a Foster Carer for Wirral Fostering Services. Foster Carers are strongly advised to discuss the effect fostering has on the household and car insurance cover with their own insurers.

If you are aware that the child in placement has a history of fire setting you must speak to your Supervising Social Worker or Team Manager of Wirral Fostering Service as extra cover might be needed.

Also See – [Foster Care Agreements](#)

Child Looked After Documentation

The CLA system is designed to keep the welfare of the child paramount. The child is listened to and consulted about how their needs are met and how their future is planned for. It is intended to promote partnership working and clarity to the roles and responsibilities of all those involved with the child and the part they play in making a success of plans for the child whilst they are looked after. It is intended to ensure all children are able to reach their potential.

These are the forms that are completed and continually updated when a child comes into care. Although the responsibility for completion lies with the child's Social Worker, Foster Carers are also expected to contribute to them. These forms are:

Referral & Information Record - provides information needed immediately by Foster Carers.

Chronology - provides information about background, including legal and placement history.

The Placement Agreement - also known as the Placement Information Record - provides information about a child's everyday routines, health, education and identity needs, and arrangements for contact. This must also include details of activities the child might do with the foster family and with school, and agreement given to Foster Carers to sign consent forms for adventurous activities.

Care Plan - this clearly states the objectives for the care of the child and the strategy for achieving them. Foster Carers play a full part in ensuring the best possible outcome can be achieved.

Review Record - this informs the child's review that the placement and agreed objectives continue to meet the child's needs. It identifies the work to be undertaken and by whom to achieve progress for the child.

Consultation Documents - these are helpful to children and Foster Carers when presenting information to a review.

Assessment and Action Records - Foster Carers begin to complete these after the second review. They promote good quality care by recording the development and progress of a child in health, education, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation, emotional and behavioural development and safe care skills.

If you do not receive these forms you must ask the Social Worker for them as your Supervising Social Worker will discuss them with you.

Looked After Children Educational Service (LACES)

This is the Looked after Children Educational Service. This service consists of a team of Teachers and Mentors. Its responsibility is to oversee the attainment and educational progress of children in care and identify appropriate support. They are also available to Foster Carers for advice. The priority for this service is to work with Foster Carers to help them to support children to achieve their potential. Add in contact details

Also See - [Education](#)

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The Local Authority Designated Officer is informed of all allegations against professionals, including Foster Carers that come to the attention of the department. The role of the LADO is to:

- Be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases
- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- Liaise with the Police and other Agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair process

An allegation or concern is where a person is alleged to have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

Leisure Plans

A Social Inclusion Officer is employed to support children and their Foster Carers in developing a Leisure Plan for each child and ensuring it is carried out.

The Leisure Plan will identify the interests and hobbies of the child, what they are doing already, and what they might like to do. Some activities or taster sessions are provided by the Local Authority and some are provided from the Foster Care Allowance paid to Foster Carers. The Leisure Plan is devised by the Social Inclusion Officer in discussion with the child and their Foster Carers. The Social Inclusion Officer also informs Foster Carers of any events or activities available throughout the borough by direct mail outs or by meeting with carers at the drop in or support groups.

Life Story Book

Many children who are looked after have complexities in their lives; they may have experienced abuse, many moves or separations. They may have patchy memories about what has happened or even been given an inaccurate account of their past.

Life story book work can be a useful tool in helping children to make sense of their lives. Such work is usually planned by the Social Worker and Foster Carers will be involved in assisting and supporting such work. It is important that Foster Carers' records such as photographs, school photographs and childhood mementos are passed on with the child.

Foster Carers must have training about the importance and preparation of life story work as part of their induction and ongoing development.

Also See - [Identity](#)

Mainstream Foster Care

Children from 0-18 years can be placed with Mainstream Foster Carers. Foster Carers on this scheme build up their skills and knowledge of caring for children and sibling groups who become looked after either in an emergency during office hours or in a planned way.

These carers may have little information about the children at first but are often a vital source of information about the children as they get to know them. Mainstream Foster Carers therefore identify needs of individual children and, in discussion with the Social Workers, decide the best course of action, or best resource available, to meet those needs.

Mainstream Foster Carers often have children placed who are involved with the child protection procedure and also care proceedings going through the court process. The Foster Carer's diary sheets can be used as evidence for the court.

Mainstream Foster Carers are often involved in the contact that children have with their family and friends and should report back to the Social Worker issues of importance which arise out of contact.

Mainstream Foster Carers work closely with rehabilitation plans to improve the chances of a child returning home to their family. Where this is not possible, Mainstream Foster Carers can be a bridge to a permanent family or become that permanent family if it is appropriate for the child and the Foster Carers.

Mainstream Foster Carers prepare children for any future move. This preparation is vital to the success of any future placement.

Any Foster Carer can meet at a drop-in centre on Monday mornings during school term. Carers bring pre-school children with them and have the use of the play area and toy library. However, when there is a scheduled training session carers are asked to make other childcare arrangements. Carers get to know one another and each week have an issue discussed, usually by an outside speaker.

Managing Behaviour

Many children placed in foster care may display difficult or challenging behaviour due to traumas they may have experienced. There is a need for all concerned to agree the best way to manage this behaviour. Corporal punishment is not an option. Foster Carers should not feel alone in managing this behaviour and can ask for a planning meeting or discuss their concerns with a Social Worker or out of hours Social Worker.

Managing behaviour should be addressed in Care Plans and Placement Agreements. Foster Carers must attend training around these issues as part of their development.

Also See - [Corporal Punishment](#) and [Sanctions](#)

Medicals

A child should have a medical examination prior to a placement taking place unless this has been completed within the previous three months. Should this not be possible, because of the circumstances at the time of the placement, the examination must be completed within 14 days of the placement being made. Thereafter, a child less than five years must have a

medical examination and a written assessment at six monthly intervals. Children over the age of five must have a medical examination annually.

Consent Forms: Foster Carers cannot give consent for medical treatment unless it has been approved within the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record). If consent is required then the Foster Carer should contact the child's Social Worker or their Manager.

Medication: All medication must be kept in a locked box. Medication can only be given on the guidance of a doctor. A note of any medication given to the child must be made on the child medication record sheet by the foster carer. Foster Carers receive training as part of their induction and ongoing development.

Male Foster Carers

Male Foster Carers have a great deal to offer children in foster care. They can be positive role models, as individuals and as fathers and partners, demonstrating how family life can be nurturing and safe.

However, men have to be particularly careful about how their behaviour might be interpreted. They need to recognise they are in a position of power, even though they may not feel powerful and make sure they do not abuse their position (Skills to Foster -Fostering Network 2009).

Male carers need to consider their role in the Safe Caring Policy for their household. Fostering Network, in their Skills to Foster training, recommend that men do not bath children without a female present and to avoid being alone in a car with a child. Practically, it is sometimes impossible to avoid being alone with a child and for some children it would be safe to be so. Consideration needs to be given to the circumstances, the background factors for the child, such as previous abuse, present behaviour the child displays and the relationship the male carer has with the child.

If carers have any concerns, these issues must be discussed with the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker.

Missing from Care

If a child is missing you must contact the police and the child's Social Worker, or their Team Manager, immediately you become concerned. If it is outside normal office hours contact the Emergency Duty Team. You must then complete a form, which gives the circumstances in which the child went missing, what you did about it, who you told, where the child was found and when returned. This form should be given to the Supervising Social Worker.

When a child is returned home the Police will want to interview the child, usually alone.

Please read the 'Children and Young People Who Go Missing or Run Away From Home or Care Protocol'

National Minimum Standards in Foster Care

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services focus on delivering achievable outcomes for children.

Click her to see the [Fostering National Minimum Standards](#)

Also See [Fostering Service Regulations 2011](#)

Out of Hours Support

Out of hours support is provided by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT).

Also See - [Emergency Duty Team](#)

Overnight Stays

There is no statutory duty for DBS checks to be carried out on adults in a private household where a child might stay overnight. DBS checks should not normally be sought as a precondition of an overnight stay.

Decisions on overnight stays should in most circumstances, be delegated to Foster Carers and arrangements for such decisions written into the Placement Plan. Looked After Children should as far as possible be granted the same permissions to take part in normal and acceptable age appropriate peer activities as would reasonably be granted by parents of their peers.

Only where there are exceptional reasons or when overnight stays become regular should permission of the Responsible Authority be sought. The circumstances in which it is necessary to obtain the approval of the Social Worker should be included in the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record)

Also See – [Baby Sitting](#) and [Contact](#)

Parent & Child Fostering Scheme

Parent and Child Foster Care is for children and their parents, either mother or father or both together, who are in need of support with, or assessment of, their parenting skills. This may also involve more than one child. This may arise due to the legal status of the parent, e.g. parent(s) are themselves child/children in care. Or where there are concerns for the welfare of the child, due to the parents' care of the child. They are often Court directed assessments.

In some circumstances the parent is a looked after child. Foster Carers would provide support for a young parent and their child, in these circumstances the baby would not necessarily be in care. Depending on the criteria of the placement, this would affect the financial support the Foster Carer can expect.

Parental Responsibility

Parental Responsibility is the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority to make decisions for a child on their care and upbringing.

Foster Carers do not have legal parental responsibility; this is retained by the child's parents. Parental responsibility is shared between parents and the Local Authority when a Care Order is made. Therefore, the parents have to be consulted before any major decisions can be made on behalf of the child, e.g. change of school.

When a Child Arrangement Order is made, parental responsibility is shared between parents and the holder of the residence order. When a Special Guardianship Order is made, parental responsibility is shared between the parents and the holder of the Special Guardianship Order although the holder of the Special Guardianship Order has the final say in decision making.

Also See - [Consents](#)

Pathway Plan

Social Workers and Personal Advisors are responsible for drawing up a Pathway Plan to prepare and support young people who have been in care to live independently. Foster Carers will be expected, where appropriate, to help young people in their care to move on to independence.

Also See - [Preparation for Adult Life](#)

Also See - [Independence](#)

Permanent Foster Carers

Permanent Foster Care is a long term commitment to a child or siblings. The children become very much part of the foster family, although they may still have contact with their family of origin. The foster child needs to feel secure and loved and is, therefore, involved in family life as any other member of the household. This includes going on holiday, attending family celebrations, etc.

Permanent Foster Care is vital for many children who need to have stability and a sense of belonging and know the Foster Carers are committed to them throughout childhood and beyond.

Sometimes during the child's childhood permanent Foster Carers decide to apply for a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order. This can increase the child's security within the family and increases the carer's ability to make decisions in respect of the child without the Local Authority. A Child Arrangement Order and Special Guardianship Order give the Foster Carers shared parental responsibility. The parental responsibility is then taken between the Foster Carers and any other person who has parental responsibility in respect of the child, but not the Local Authority. This order overrides the care order in this instance. It is presently departmental policy that foster carers can continue to receive financial support.

For further information please read the ['Special Guardianship Orders Procedure'](#)

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All children who are in foster care must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is reviewed regularly in conjunction with their Looked After Child (LAC) review. The PEP also forms part of their care plan.

Also see - [Education](#) and [Looked After Children Educational Service](#)

Pets

All animals carry with them some potential Health and Safety risks. A common sense approach to managing these is required. Because of the particular risks associated with dogs, a dog assessment will be carried out with your review.

Foster Carers are asked to consider carefully whether to introduce a pet or another pet once approved, as some pets or dogs are unsuitable.

Photographs

Foster Carers are expected to purchase school photographs of the children they care for. These are important records of childhood milestones. Although it is important that Foster Carers take photographs of important events and compile a photograph album this should only be done with the child's consent and when they clearly feel comfortable about it. Children should only be photographed in suitable clothing and never in the bath or bathroom.

Also See – [Life Story Book](#)

Placement of a Child

When you are asked to have a child placed with you the Fostering Service can provide you with a guide as to what questions to ask before you agree to the child being placed. It is important you consider everything you are told about the child and whether you, or members of your family, can manage that child. You must have suitable sleeping arrangements that would not put this child or another child at risk of bullying or abuse. You must consider how you will take the child to school if this is necessary, without the use of transport services or taxis, and how you will fit in more appointments, contact and meetings etc. and yet be certain you can meet the needs of the child before agreeing to the placement.

Pocket Money

Children should be given pocket money to be spent as the child wishes. The Fostering Service suggests an amount to be paid from the Foster Care Allowance. Children should be encouraged to open a bank account as this is part of growing up and learning how to manage money.

Policies and Procedures

All Wirral's Council's Policies and Procedures relating to children are stored in two Electronic Procedure Manuals.

To access the Children's Social Care Procedures Manual [click here](#)

To access the Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures Manual [click here](#)

Ponds

To make sure children play safely outdoors it is vital that all water activities are thoroughly supervised. Weight bearing covers are needed for ponds, drains and water butts. Pools in play areas need to be emptied promptly and the temperature of the water needs to be checked.

Preparation for Adult Life

Preparing a child for adult life is a very important part of parenting and therefore fostering, as all children need to learn skills for living if they are to successfully achieve living independently as an adult. Preparation should start at a very early age and continue throughout childhood. For a child in foster care this learning can become disjointed and skills they may be assumed to have learned at an earlier age may have been missed. It is therefore important that Foster Carers have a good knowledge of child development and an understanding of the child's skills and abilities whilst caring for them.

Foster Carers should provide all foster children with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning the skills necessary to prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood. This will ensure that children are effectively prepared for the time when they will no longer be looked after. This should cover:

- Providing opportunities to children in your care to manage money, plan their finances and understand about the costs of utilities and other services;
- Supporting children to develop the range of self-care skills that will be needed as they make the move to greater independence – including capacity to budget for, plan and prepare nutritionally balanced meals; time management and an understanding of the expectations necessary to manage in the world of work; self-care and social presentation;
- Enabling children to develop basic housekeeping and household maintenance skills – e.g. by providing them with the opportunity to do their own laundry and participate in routine household cleaning and other tasks.
- Develop and maintain relationships with others;
- Understand their sexuality and establish positive, caring social and sexual relationships;
- Develop self-esteem;
- Prepare for the world of work and/or further or higher education;
- Develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self-care, and understanding and taking responsibility for personal healthcare;
- Develop financial capability, knowledge and skills; they are given a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding and the allowance is distributed or withheld in a fair and transparent manner.

- Children are encouraged and enabled to choose their own clothes and personal requisites that they buy and to buy these through normal shopping arrangements. Younger children are accompanied by the Foster Carer or others and older children are given the choice of shopping alone or with the guidance of the Foster Carer.

When a young person is preparing to move to independent living or semi-independent living they are consulted and actively involved in the decision making process. Together with their Foster Carers, Personal Assistant, and anyone else who needs to be involved to develop and implement a Pathway Plan. Preparation for adult life is a specific standard required under the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and all Foster Carers are required to attend training as part of their induction programme.

Race and Culture/Racism

Children in foster care can 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 or religious beliefs. They may speak a different language, or eat different types of food or celebrate different festivals.

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.

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

Also See - [Diversity](#) and [Identity](#)

Recording

This is the term used for keeping a record of day to day and significant events in a child's life. As a Foster Carer you will be asked to keep diary sheets for each child. It is good practice for children to be involved in the information that is recorded and be given the opportunity to add their own comments. As this is a record for the child in the future this needs to include things that have gone well, personal achievements, nice things they have done, places they have visited as well as things that haven't gone well, disclosures, worries and contact with professionals. Sometimes you will be asked to provide these for evidence in court. Therefore they must be factual and keep opinions to a minimum. Your Supervising Social Worker will provide you with a copy of the guidance on recording and additional diary sheets. Diary sheets should be emailed to your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker at intervals specified by your Supervising Social Worker.

Foster Carers must attend training about recording in their post approval training.

Running Away

See - [Missing from Care](#) and [Events and Notifications](#)

Safe Caring

Each fostering household must have a Safe Caring Policy and have undertaken safe caring training as part of their induction and ongoing training.

Safeguarding Children

Child protection is everybody's responsibility, which means we must all take measures to reduce the risk of harm and report concerns when appropriate.

Foster Carers must attend induction and ongoing training to include child protection procedures, signs of abuse, caring for a child who has been abused.

Also See - [Allegations](#)

Sanctions

Sanctions need to be relevant, justified, used sparingly and time limited. They should follow on from the behaviour or action as quickly as possible.

Permissible sanctions are:

- Loss of privileges
- Early bed
- Paying towards damage they have caused to someone else's property
- Not staying out with friends
- Doing extra jobs
- No television or treat
- Not being allowed out for a time limited period

Sanctions that are unacceptable include those that:

- Humiliate a child or young person
- Cause them to be ridiculed

The following disciplinary measures must never be used:

- Corporal punishment
- Deprivation of food and drink

- Restriction of contact or visits/communication by telephone or post to or by a child or
- young person
- Any requirements that a child/young person wears distinctive or inappropriate clothes
- Use or withholding of medication or dental treatment
- Use of accommodation to physically restrict a child or young person
- Intentional deprivation of sleep
- Imposition of fines (except by way of repayment or compensation)
- Intimate physical examination of a child/young person
- Isolation of a child/young person in consequence of their behaviour. If isolated for other
- reasons there must be adult supervision
- Excessive use of sending a child/young person to bed early
- Adults modifying a child/young person's behaviour through bribery or use of threats
- Excessive shouting
- Removal of personal belongings to which the child is likely to have an emotional
- attachment to, e.g. photographs of their family

School Trips

Children in foster care are expected to have access to school trips and activities. The Foster Carer can claim the expenses for trips which are an integral and necessary part of the school curriculum by completing an expense claim form and attaching a copy of the school letter detailing the activity and all costs. Schools often require parental consent for the child to take part. This will be discussed at the child's Placement Planning Meeting and recorded in the Placement Plan. There is also a fund (PEA) to support a child's social and academic progress with activities and equipment. This can be accessed through the child's social worker and should be identified at the PEP meeting.

Also See – [Consents](#) and [Finances](#)

Sexual Health

The child's Social Worker should agree with the carer how age - appropriate sex and relationship education should be provided. This should be set in the wider context of independence, self-care protection, skills and relationships. He/she should also be responsible for providing, or arranging to provide, the child with information on appropriate behaviour in relation to both themselves and others.

It is important that a child knows what is regarded as 'appropriate' behaviour, particularly in relation to physical and sexual conduct. This is especially important where the child's early experiences have been abusive or neglectful. Children should be given such teaching at as early an age as possible and it should be renewed periodically.

Foster Carers should give young people, including under 16s, information on sexual health and contraception and details of where and how to access local services.

Foster Carers are provided with training as part of their induction and ongoing development.

Short Breaks

Where appropriate, requirements for foster care placements for short breaks are different from those of children being fostered for longer periods. In particular, birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and educational needs. The arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Signing for Activities

See - [Consents](#)

Signing for Medical and Dental Treatment

See - [Consents](#)

Smacking

See - [Sanctions](#)

Smoking

Prospective Foster Carers are advised at an early stage that smoking habits will be considered during assessment along with other health issues. The Smoking Policy is clear that Foster Carer's who smoke cannot foster children under the age of five. Advice and assistance are available to promote no smoking. Applicants who smoke are encouraged to consult their GPs. Information in regard to the harmful effects to a child is included in the preparation and training programmes for prospective and approved foster carers.

The need not to smoke in the presence of the child is stressed and that the foster home is smoke free. Babies and young children up to the age of two years and all children with respiratory problems or a medical condition exacerbated by people smoking, are at particular risk and it is not in their best interests to be placed in households with smokers.

Children and young people who smoke are also at risk. Steps should be taken to discourage children in foster care from smoking.

To see the Wirral Fostering Service Non Smoking Policy [click here](#)

Social Inclusion Officer

The Social Inclusion Officer is specifically employed to support Foster Carers to support Looked after Children to develop their interests and talents, to reach their full potential in their given interest and to build social relationships. This helps carers build the child's self-esteem, sense of achievement and build confidence in themselves.

The Social Inclusion Officer, with the child and their Carers, develops a leisure plan. The Social Inclusion Officer listens to the child to learn what their interests are in order to tailor the leisure plan to suit the child; this may be sport, art, drama etc. The officer will then work hard to ensure specific activities are available for the carers to encourage the child to take full advantage of opportunities provided. The Social Inclusion Officer will ensure the child has a swimming pass and, if they cannot swim, have free swimming lessons from the local swimming pool.

Also See - [Leisure Plan](#)

Social Worker

A good and effective relationship between the carers and the child's Social Worker is important both to the welfare of the child and as a vital part of the support process.

There should be regular joint visits to the carer by the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker, the first being to draw up the Placement Agreement.

It is important to have meetings between the family, the child's Social Worker and the Foster Carer at regular intervals during a placement. These meetings should take forward work identified in the child's care plan and monitor progress.

Social Work Visits

The first responsibility of the child's Social Worker is to the child in placement. They must satisfy themselves that the welfare of the child placed continues to be suitable and provided for within the foster placement.

There are statutory requirements to visit the child at minimum prescribed intervals and to see the child alone.

A Social Worker must visit:

- From time to time as circumstances may require
- When reasonably requested by the child or the foster carer
- Within the first week of placement, and then at intervals of not more than six weeks during the first year of placement
- At intervals of not more than three months, if the child has been placed for one year
- Weekly, if the child has been placed under regulation 24. This is when a child is placed in an emergency with a friend or family member who has not had a full foster carer assessment completed

A Social Worker will prepare a report from these visits and will take into account what the child is saying about the placement, the suitability of the bedroom space, living conditions and the clothing provided. The Foster Carer's ability to follow the care plan includes promoting contact, health, education and meeting the child's needs.

The Social Worker and the Foster Carer share information about the child to ensure they are working together to meet the child's needs. The child's Social Worker will need to see a child on their own each time they visit. This will usually take place in the child's own bedroom.

Special Guardianship Orders

Foster Carers can apply for a Special Guardianship Order for a child they have looked after. Certain conditions apply depending on time scales. Your child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker will be able to give advice about this.

For more Information on Special Guardianship Orders [click here](#)

Also See - [Parental Responsibility](#) and [Permanent Foster Carers](#)

Statutory Visits

See - [Social Worker Visits](#)

Supervising Social Worker

Foster Carers receive supervision from a named, appropriately qualified, Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker ensures each carer is informed in writing of, and accepts, understands and operates within, all standards, policies and guidance agreed by the Fostering Service.

When Foster Carers are approved, Supervising Social Workers ensure the carers receive and agree to the 'Foster Carer Agreement' as required by the 'Fostering Services Regulations'.

The Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker will also ensure that the Foster Carer has access to this handbook and any information and advice which will enable the Foster Carer to provide consistent high quality care for a child placed in their home. This may include facilitating access to other Social Work and Professional Support.

Supervising Social Worker Visits

These are held regularly with the Foster Carers. Meetings provide an opportunity to supervise the Foster Carer's work. These supervision visits have a support, training and monitoring purpose and are recorded.

Foster Carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. There are occasional unannounced visits, at least once each year.

Support

It is important that support is provided to children and Foster Carers in various ways and by various agencies and professionals as follows:

- Supervising Social Worker
- Wirral Fostering Services Team
- Social Worker for the child
- Support Workers
- Emergency Duty Team Social Workers
- Personal Assistants
- Youth Offending Team Workers
- LACES Team Teachers
- Learning Mentors
- Support Teaching Staff
- Family Support Workers
- Social Inclusion Officer
- Education and Cultural Services
- Libraries
- Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
- Community Paediatrician
- GP
- Health Visitors
- CAMHS
- Occupational therapists
- Support Groups
- Family Centres
- Training
- Community Based Projects
- Police
- Brook Clinic

Foster Carers are advised to discuss any support needs with the child's Social Worker or their Supervising Social Worker in order to access assistance from any of the above. It is important Foster Carers and children receive the right sort of support from the appropriate resources.

Carers are paid appropriate fees and/or allowances in accordance with the agreed levels for the type of foster care placement the child requires and the current registration status of the Foster Carer.

These fees and allowances are reviewed annually. Equipment required for children with a specific need is provided.

Tax

There is a fixed rate tax exemption of up to £10,000 per year which is shared equally among any Foster Carer's in the household. This means you do not have to pay tax on the first £10,000 income you make from Fostering.

For more information on Tax [click here](#)

Also See – [Benefits](#) and [Finances](#)

Teenage Fostering (TFS) Skills Band 3

This resource provides for children and young people with specific needs, who require carers who can manage challenging behaviour from children in the older age group, usually 10 years +, who need to be accommodated by the Local Authority for long, emergency, short term, weekend, holiday and respite placements.

Aims and Objectives

- Children's Services, Foster Carers, young people and their family of origin will, as far as possible, work in partnership to prepare the young person for the placement and maintain him/her in it
- The foster placement will meet the child's physical, emotional, social, religious, racial, linguistic and cultural needs
- The foster placement will provide the essential conditions for a young person to develop. These are not dependent on the young person's behaviour. They are:
 - Physical care and protection
 - Affection and approval
 - Education and teaching
 - Discipline and control
 - The opportunity to gradually acquire age appropriate autonomy
 - The young person will be treated with respect and value in order for him/her to develop self-worth and confidence
- Children & Young People's Department operates the teenage fostering scheme within the legislative framework of the Children Act 1989 and adheres to the principles and regulations for the benefit of all involved.
- The foster placement will provide all aspects of preparation for adult life.

Training

Prospective Foster Carers attend introductory courses on fostering. The main intention is to give as much information as possible about what is involved in being a foster carer and prepare for the fostering task.

Foster Carers must draw up a training and self-development plan with their supervising social worker. This is usually done during the assessment and review of foster carers' process but can be done or reviewed at any time.

All Foster Carers need to complete the Training Support and Development Standards work book within twelve months of approval. This involves the Foster Carer compiling a portfolio of their learning and experience as a Carer, showing that they meet the Minimum Standards for Foster Care. Workshops are arranged to support carers through this process, although carers can work independently. The Supervising Social Worker can give advice and guidance and will sign each standard once complete. The carer's portfolio will then be presented to the department for verification and a certificate of completion issued.

In order to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards Foster Carer's will be required to complete training in First Aid, Recording, Diversity, Managing Behaviour, Child Protection and Internet Safety.

There are numerous opportunities for Foster Carers to attend training courses on a very wide range of subjects but there are specified subjects foster carers must cover in their post approval (induction) training which are:

- Safe caring
- Health and Safety in the home
- Health and hygiene
- First aid
- Promoting health
- Communicable diseases
- Managing behaviour
- Child protection procedures
- Signs of abuse
- Caring for a child who has been abused
- Building self-esteem
- Bullying
- Respecting diversity
- Listening to children
- Communicating with children
- Recording
- Promoting education
- Preparing for adult life
- Life History work with children
- Medication policy
- Child development
- Sexual health
- Leisure plans
- Complaints and advocacy
- Promoting and managing contact
- Understanding the law
- Assessment and action records
- Missing from care
- Care and control
- Self-care for Foster Carers
- Men and foster care

Other specific training is available to carers who need it to meet the specific needs of the child they are caring for, or in which carers are interested. Information about training courses available is sent out to carers from the Fostering Services Team and sometimes through other agencies. Foster Carers can then contact the person directly to book themselves a place.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS)

TSDS exists to improve the lives of children, young people, their families and carers by ensuring that all people working with them have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice.

The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers have been designed to support carers from the stages of pre-approval through to their first year of fostering. The standards set out what Foster carers should know and be able to do in a clear way. These standards apply to new Foster Carers and to those who are already caring for children and young people, including long-term and Family and Friend's Foster Carers.

Following on from approval, Foster Carers are helped to achieve the workbook portfolio by a mixture of workshops, training and working with their Supervising Social Worker. The workbook will be signed off by the Supervising Social Worker and when completed, verified by a Manager. A certificate of completion will then be issued. The Foster Carer's portfolio must be completed before their first review.

Transport/ Taxis

Children in foster care often feel different and stigmatised. This can have a negative effect on the way they feel about themselves and their self-esteem suffers. Being taken to school by taxi or transport can compound these feelings. It is important their Foster Carer takes and collects the child from school, or, if they are old enough and able, they need to walk or use public transport to school.

Foster Carers meeting these needs can also improve the child's feeling of stability and confidence. The child can rely on the knowledge that their carer will be there for them when they come out of school, instead of the child not knowing or not having the certainty that the same driver will be there for them after school.

This practical care is, in fact, providing very important emotional support to the child. On this basis it should be very rare transport/ taxis are used to take children to school and every consideration of how you can do this must be given when you are asked to have a child placed with you. Foster Carers can claim a mileage allowance or bus pass for themselves or the child if public transport is used.

Also See - [Placement of a Child](#)

Whistle Blowing

Whistle blowing is the action of raising concern. If you have any worries about the council's work such as; if you believe people are being mistreated, that there is financial malpractice, a miscarriage of justice, abuse in care, dangers to Health and Safety; risks to the environment, cover ups, you must contact the council, which will always endeavour to act in the public interest.

W.I.R.E.D.

Wirral Information Resource for Equality and Disability (W.I.R.E.D.) provides a person centred service that can help children or young people with any disability, who is or has been a Wirral service user, up to the age of 25 (in line with Leaving Care legislation). This can take place in a variety of settings according to the individual's requirements (e.g. school, home, respite centres).

The Children's Advocacy Service can:

Help children / young people to make informed choices and decisions to enable them to participate fully in the wider community.

Provide independent advice, support and representation that are appropriate to the age and maturity of the child / young person.

Help children / young people to access the services offered to them by Agencies in ways that ensure maximum benefit to their self-esteem and overall development.

Ensure that children/ young people are involved in any plans made about their lives.

Negotiate with parents, carers and Social Workers the views, wishes and feelings of children/ young people on their behalf.

Enable and promote the confidence and knowledge for a child/ young person to develop their own advocacy skills.

Give children/ young people a voice and ensure that it is heard.

For more information on the Children's Advocacy Service [click here](#)

Wirral Multicultural Organisation

The Wirral Multicultural Organisation encourages multicultural understanding and acts as a focus for all multicultural activities in Wirral.

The Organisation has its own purpose built centre and has staff that helps Wirral's ethnic minority communities to access services, employment, and training and meets their general needs.

For more information on Wirral Multicultural Organisation [click here](#)

Youth Offending Team

The Wirral Youth Offending Team aims to prevent offending by children and young people. It was established by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and is made up of staff from numerous agencies, including the Local Authority, Police, Health, Probation Service, Career Advisors, and other Voluntary Organisations.

The new co-ordinated way of working attempts to take a holistic approach to tackling the problems that young people present when they are in trouble. This can mean offence focused work, victim work, drug/ alcohol work, education, training and employment work, and family work.

The Courts or Police send most of the young people and their families to the Youth Offending Team but the Youth Offending Team is developing its preventative work with initiatives such as On Track and Youth Inclusion Programme. These initiatives aim to work with young people and their families at an early stage to reduce the risk of future offending.

For more information on Wirral Youth Offending Team [click here](#)

