

Top Tips for EP carers

- ❖ When emailing Social Workers, other professionals etc. due to you not having a secure source of information exchange, do not use the child's first name. Write 'Child and the initial of their first name as the heading.' Please don't give identifiable information away in the email and refer to the child by his/her initial throughout the email.
- ❖ Store any unwanted or ill-fitting clothes/presents. The child is 'looked after' by the Local Authority and the plan may be to return to their birth family, so you will need to return these items. Also, these items may seem irrelevant to you but may be the only few things the child has related to their birth parents and will be significant to them.
- ❖ Never refer to yourself as Mum or Dad. If the child is not registered with a name, you are not responsible for or able to legally give them a name. They remain as 'baby' officially until the parent (or after 6 weeks the LA does this).

Family Time

- ❖ When bringing children to family time, sign in using your first name and then foster carer next to it to ensure confidentiality (don't use your surname).
- ❖ Before your first family time session you should have a plan that the family time supervisor has completed with the child's social worker. Hopefully you will have the opportunity to meet the birth parents first. You may also have the opportunity to look around the family centre before the first session. The plan will include what time to arrive and to collect the child. You may wish to trial the journey before the first session.



- ❖ You can be issued with an identity card via the LA fostering team; and will need to provide a passport sized photograph for this. This should only be shown when requested by a professional.
- ❖ Dress the child in clothes provided by the parents – this shows respect and supports the development of a relationship.
- ❖ Think of three things on the way to contact that you are going to share, e.g. last nap, blew a raspberry, trip to the zoo – this helps to guide the conversation, particularly at the beginning
- ❖ Keep a separate bag for contact – this avoids bills and confidential information ending up in there – keep it stocked with nappies, toys, food, etc.
- ❖ Aim to create as consistent and positive an experience for the child as possible – the family time supervisor will support maintaining routines where possible.
- ❖ A positive relationship between the carers and parents at handover is important for the child.
- ❖ Bring a familiar toy/blanket from home for the child to have while they are spending time with their family – this is comforting for the child.
- ❖ We acknowledge that the child will experience different styles of care and this can be confusing. The family time supervisor will aim to support the parents and child to minimise the impact of this.
- ❖ When they are younger, and if their care needs are being met, babies can manage family time more easily. As they get older, separations from their primary carers can become more difficult.
- ❖ The family time supervisor will keep a record for the Local Authority, including how parents are managing – strengths and difficulties, child's experience, as well as attendance, etc.



- ❖ If the parents struggle to be on time or find it difficult to attend at all, this will be reviewed by the Local Authority.
- ❖ Alternative arrangements may be made in discussion with the parents, e.g. a reduced number of sessions, or parents confirming attendance on the day to avoid unnecessary disruption for the child.
- ❖ Remember parents miss and want to see their child, but there may be many challenges standing in the way of them achieving this. It is disempowering to have had their child removed and hard to see them being cared for by another person.
- ❖ Family time can be a very positive experience – family time workers are there to support them in their parenting.
- ❖ Parents will have their own views on parenting that may not align with yours and may sometimes appear critical; parents understandably want to claim their rights as parents – it is up to the family time supervisor to negotiate any differences, as well as:
 - To create a friendly, honest, respectful environment
 - To ensure boundaries are adhered to
 - To support all parties at the handovers
 - To praise parents when appropriate
 - To model parenting skills during contact and feed into the assessment

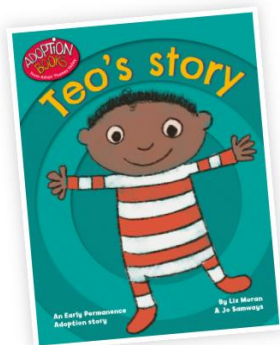
<https://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

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Teo's story

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