



Early Permanence Carer Introduction to Fostering

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WELCOME AND THANKYOU!

Congratulations on becoming an Early Permanence Foster Carer!

We are delighted and grateful to have you as an EP carer. The role is an extremely important one, and we thank you for your child centred approach to caring for children.

As you start your fostering role, we thought it might be useful to revisit some of the key tasks that you will do as a foster carer, as well as explain (in a little more detail) about what fostering may look like for you.

This handy introduction will help give you the heads up on what fostering entails, as well as providing you with some useful questions you may wish to ask the fostering service.

Please do ask your social workers if you are unsure about anything.

Thanks again and we hope you enjoy being a foster carer!

"The Paperwork"



One thing is for sure when it comes to the fostering paperwork, there is A LOT!

It can feel a little strange when you are initially presented with all the fostering documents at the beginning of becoming an Early Permanence Foster Carer.

In some Local Authorities, these fostering documents will look the same for all foster carers (both traditional foster carers and EP Carers).

This means that when you are reading and signing fostering paperwork it may seem that information is generic and aimed at children of all ages.

The fostering service have an important job to do in ensuring that you have all the tools and knowledge needed to fulfil the role of fostering.

By preparing you properly this ensures that you are protected by giving you a thorough understanding what your new fostering role entails!

If there are any fostering documents that you wish to understand their purpose in more detail, please contact your fostering service for support.

Here are some of the more common fostering documents that you will be introduced to at the start of your fostering approval.

They will vary depending on which Local Authority is responsible for your fostering role.

The list could be a useful "tick off" to help you work through necessary paperwork -

- Foster Care Agreement
- Safer Caring Policy
- Delegated Authority
- Fostering Specific H&S Checklist (not all LAs require this document)
- Fostering Specific Pet Assessment (not all LAs require this document)



Safer Caring

As a new foster carer, you will be introduced to the term

"Safer Caring".

Your Fostering Social Worker will complete a "Safer Caring Policy" with you as part of your introduction to your new role.

Foster Carers have Safer Caring Policies to help protect the child, themselves, and other family members.



The Safer Caring Policy helps with understanding how to approach caring for a child who is in foster care and how certain daily tasks may differ.

The Safer Caring Policy looks at how foster carers act to safeguard children, and protects carers from the risks of allegations and complaints.

Safer Caring Policies can be generic in some sections and unique to your family in other sections.

Here is a list of the areas that will likely be covered within your Safer Caring Policy -

- Bedtime Routines
- Transporting Children
- Babysitters
- Behaviours
- Confidentiality
- Language
- Touch
- Privacy
- Dress
- Family Rules
- Internet Safety
- Allegations
- Injury



Daily Records

Why do we ask for daily records?

Whilst caring for a child under fostering regulations it will mean that the Local Authority and Birth Parent/s have Parental Responsibility.

This means that it is important that everyone involved knows what is happening.

Record keeping helps provide written information about a child's day to day care and routines.

Having these daily records also gives foster carers a place to store information and share with the fostering team.

Daily records can be viewed by many individuals including court. It is important that they are written factually and accurately.

Each fostering service will have their own unique way.

It may be helpful to ask your newly allocated fostering service these questions to help understand their policy -

- Can I see an example?
- Where shall I store daily records?
- Who can see them/where do I send them?
- What format shall I use?
 - book / official pages / email
 - typed / handwritten



Going to Family Time

By now you will have attended your Early Permanence Training and have a good understanding of why family time is an important part of the fostering role.

We know that family time can be full of unpredictable scenarios, and you may have some questions to help better prepare.

Please do ask questions to build your confidence about family time before your start -

- The area you are travelling
- What the building looks like and where to park
- Where do you go when you arrive and how do you sign in
- Names of family workers
- What to do in an emergency (e.g. car breakdown/illness)
- How to travel safely with a young child (e.g. car seat safety)

The answers to all of these points may not be available due to the short notice of you becoming a foster carer. However, having a list of things that you may want to ask could assist in readiness for family time.

Here is a helpful checklist -

- I am insured for business use on my car
- I know what to do if I/child is unwell on the day of family time
- I know what to take to family time (Inc. bigger items like the pram)
- I know if a communication book is needed and what to write.
- I know whether I am needed to stay in the area (in case I am called back).
- I know what to do with my time waiting (looking at using it in a positive way to help my own wellbeing)
- I know who to contact at the family centre
- I have an idea of what birth family look like so that I can appropriately respond when seeing them



"Out of The Loop"

EP carers share their struggle with "being out of the loop" ... especially around -

- Details of court proceedings
- Specifics of family time
- Results of assessment work
- General day to day information about birth family circumstances

It's understandable to want to know everything. Having as much information as possible helps us all feel more in control of a situation and reduces anxiety.

Being an EP carer will mean that detailed information is not shared with you.

Care proceedings are a complex and sensitive process which requires the strictest confidentiality.

Receiving limited information from professionals is not intended to make you feel excluded. It is essential to ensure everyone is protected.



Thinking about the statements below can help put things into perspective and help manage your own expectations -

- Birth families have a right to confidentiality just the same as EP carers do.
- Outcomes are not known and therefore personal information must be protected.
- EP carers are not invited to be part of the court process. Anyone outside of court have no rights to what is being said in the court room.
- Information can change at court. Sharing information that may change would cause confusion.
- Sometimes less is more!
This can help EP carers focus on enjoying the day to day care of being with a child rather than fixating on a process they have no control over.



Be Prepared

When meeting your new fostering social worker these simple questions may help you feel more prepared for fostering -

- Contact numbers (save in your phone)
 - Fostering Social Worker
 - Family Time Centre
 - Emergency Duty Team
 - Out of Office Fostering (if available)
- If I needed a family member to care for the child (e.g. in an emergency) would my family require a DBS check?
- Are there any online fostering courses that would help me fulfil the fostering role?
- Are there support groups available to help me in my fostering role?

You may find it useful to add some additional questions to use when you meet your fostering social worker -

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Language and terminology change all the time. This is because professionals are working hard to ensure that the terminology that is used shows respect and sensitivity. Some of the terminology below is already being replaced to be more inclusive.

Glossary of Terms

Supervising Social Worker

Fostering Social Worker - Will support you in your role as a Foster Carer. For some agencies, this worker is also your adoption Social Worker.

LAC / CLA / Looked After Child / Cared for Child

Some Local Authorities use this term for a child who they hold Parental Responsibility for.

LAC (or CLA) Review/ Cared for Review

Some Local Authorities use the term 'CLA review', which stands for Child Looked After Review. Children have regular review meetings to make sure their care plan is still in their best interests. All professionals, birth parents and foster carers will be invited. The first meeting should be held within four weeks of the child being placed, then another after three months and then every six months.

IRO/Independent Reviewing Officer/Reviewing Officer

The above review meetings are chaired by an IRO. They work for the Local Authority but are independent from the child's Social Worker. They make sure the care plan is being adhered to, tasks are completed in a timely manner and that the plan remains the right one for the child.

LA

Local Authority

Children's Guardian

Children's Guardians are qualified social workers, trained and experienced in working with children and families. They are appointed as experts by the court to represent the rights and interests of the child and to provide the court with independent advice about the child's best interests.



Glossary of Terms

Cont 'd

- EP** Early Permanence
Umbrella term for Fostering for Adoption & Concurrent Placements.
- CP** Concurrent Placement or Child Protection
If a child is placed with Early Permanence carers, CP is more likely to mean Concurrent placement.
If CP is used in relation to concerns it is more likely to mean Child Protection.
- FfA** Fostering for Adoption
- IRH** Issues Resolution Hearing
This hearing will take place before a final hearing to determine what evidence the Judge needs to make a final decision.
- ICO or CO** Interim Care Order and Care Order
"Interim" means that the Local Authority temporarily share Parental Responsibility with birth parents whilst final decisions are made.
- PO** Placement Order
This gives the Local Authority permission to place a child for the purpose of adoption. If a child is in an Early Permanence placement, the placement remains a foster placement until the match has been considered at panel and ratified by the ADM.
- CPR** Child Permanence Report
This is a large report that details a child's history. It is used to help make future decisions and is also available to adoptive parents to share with their child life long.



Glossary of Terms

Cont 'd

AO Adoption Order
This severs the birth parents' and Local Authorities PR and gives full PR to the adoptive parents.

PR Parental Responsibility
This is the legal term used for having the rights, duties, powers, and responsibility for a child.

Delegated Responsibility

Whilst the LA and birth parents share PR for a child, some defined responsibilities can be delegated to the EP carer. Make yourself familiar with what responsibilities have been delegated to you and what you need to ask the Local Authority permission for. You should be provided with paperwork that sets all of this out clearly when the child is placed with you.

ADM Agency Decision Maker
This is a senior person in the Local Authority who signs off final decisions about a child's plan.

SHOBPA Should Be Placed For Adoption (SHOBPA)
Once all assessments have been completed, the ADM within the child's LA will consider all the evidence and make a final decision about the Care Plan the LA will be submitting to Court.

SWET Social Work Evidence Template
This is the document where the child's Social Worker sets out the outcome of the assessments and then presents the evidence for their final recommendation..

