

## **Record Keeping Policy for Foster Parents**

This policy concerns all records that contain personal information about young people in placement with ISP. These records may have been made by the Local Authority, ISP or foster parents.

### **Legal Framework**

- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (NMS)
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018

### **The purpose of recording**

Records made and kept during a child's time in foster care provide several functions:

- They provide a record of the child's life events and experiences. This can help a child to understand their history and why important decisions were made in their life.
- They allow adults working with the child to monitor their progress.
- They provide information that can assist professionals when completing assessments of the child's abilities and needs.
- They provide evidence for court proceedings and Care Plan Reviews.
- They provide a record of birth family contact.
- They provide information for life story work.
- They can provide information and evidence when investigating allegations

### **Managing paper records**

Foster parents will receive various documents in paper form during the child's placement, including their Care Plan and subsequent review documents, education reports and Health Plans.

Paper records should be stored in a locked container/cupboard to prevent accidental loss, and to ensure that they are not seen by somebody who does not have permission to view them.

If paper records need to be sent by post, the address to which they are being sent needs to be confirmed in advance, a return address needs to be written on the back of the envelope in case of non-delivery and wherever possible a tracked delivery service should be used.

The disposal of paper records should be by use of cross-cut shredder. Foster parents who do not have access to an appropriate shredder should take the documents to their ISP Centre for disposal.

### **Sending records electronically**

Encrypted e-mail systems should be used wherever possible, e.g. Egress. Documents sent by unsecured e-mail must be password protected (and the password must be sent in a separate email).

### **Storing electronic records**

Children's records stored on a home computer must be password-protected to ensure confidentiality and comply with data protection law. Children's records stored this way must be kept in separate folders for each named child. USB memory sticks must not be used unless they are password protected.

Photographs taken on mobile phones and digital cameras should be transferred as soon as possible to a secure computer-based folder and deleted from the device. Photographs of the child should not be uploaded to social networking sites or other non-secure internet-based applications.

### **Using the CHARMS online database**

The CHARMS database is secure and compliant with data protection law. Foster parents are advised to make records wherever possible within the CHARMS database to ensure that they are accessible only by those who have the right to view them, and that they are securely stored to protect against data breach.

Foster parents are asked to record the following details within the child's 'progress' record:

- Achievements (e.g. developmental milestones, school awards, certificates)
- Incidents (e.g. disclosures, abusive behaviour, complaints). These incidents should also be notified to the relevant ISP Centre.
- Accidents or injuries. These should be notified to the relevant ISP Centre if they required a hospital visit.
- Activities and outings (with school or home)
- Visits from the child's social worker
- Birth family contact
- Medical appointments
- Medication administered in the home
- School events (e.g. parent's evening, school report)

Reports of incidents should be made as soon as possible after the event, using plain language and avoiding jargon. When reporting something that a child has said, their actual words should be quoted wherever possible, and the report should be a factual account of what was observed. If information has been supplied by another person, the report must state that this is third-party information, and who it originated from.

## **Carer logs**

The carer log will contain information about the child's life events and behaviour during placement.

ISP asks foster parents to use the CHARMS database to make recordings as it is compliant with data protection law. The carer log should be written daily, unless different arrangements have been made with the child's Local Authority.

The log should be a brief record of the child's activities that day, using clear language and avoiding jargon. We advise writing the log to the child, and consider the following questions when writing the log:

- Where did the child go?
- Who did they see?
- Did anyone visit the home?
- What did the child do today?
- Has the child's behaviour or mood changed? Report observations, including details of what happened immediately beforehand, and explain how the behaviour was managed
- Has the child been unwell? Have they needed any medication?
- Did you have any problems or disagreements with the child today?

When writing the log, the following principles should be followed:

- Be specific. Rather than saying "you had a good day today", explain what it was that made it a 'good day'. Include events, behaviour and feelings.
- Record facts and observations. Opinions should be clearly labelled as such.
- Third-party information should be clearly labelled as such (e.g. information given by a teacher).
- Reports of what a child has said should quote their actual words, wherever possible.
- Record in a way that you would be happy for the child/their parent/their social worker to read what you have written both now and in the future.

The log should be signed by the author, and if its content covers more than one day, the relevant dates should be clearly stated at the start of the log. The log on CHARMS will be signed electronically by the Supervising Social Worker once submitted by the foster parent.

## **End of placement**

At the end of placement, foster parents should return all documentation they hold about the child to ISP for either return to the Local Authority, or destruction, including any copies of the 'carer log'. The GDPR does not permit foster parents to retain any records relating to children formerly placed with them.