

Confidentiality

Essential Information for Foster Parents

ISP is obliged, both legally and ethically, to keep in confidence personal information that we hold about children and young people. Children have a right to privacy and the confidentiality of information about their background and experiences.

As a foster parent, you will receive information about young people and their families, in writing and by word of mouth. It is essential that this information is kept confidential as part of building an environment of trust and safety for children and young people.

What does this mean?

1. You should not discuss the child/young person's circumstances with anybody who does not need to know. This includes your friends and members of your extended family. However, you may need to share some information with those who will have regular contact with the child/young person and your supervising social worker will help you to decide what is necessary to share and what is not appropriate to share.
2. You should not discuss details of the child/ young person's history with other foster parents, other than in the process of preparing them to look after the child. Whilst you may have a 'case discussion' within training or support group settings, you must not disclose specific details about the child's history or that of their parents and should avoid identifying the child wherever possible.
3. When passing on confidential information in conversation, it is important that this is not overheard by anyone who should not have a right to hear that information.
4. Your own children should be given a general understanding around the reasons for a child being in foster care, e.g. the family has some problems or cannot provide care at the moment. If your own children are old enough, make sure that they also understand the idea of confidentiality. Your Supervising Social Worker should be able to provide you with guidance on this.
5. Information about children and young people should not be shared on social networking websites and apps.
6. You must keep paper documents about the young person's history and current circumstances locked away. You might use a locked filing box or cabinet.
7. If you receive electronic copies of documents, these must be stored securely:
 - a. You should not store documents on the hard drive of your computer unless you protect them with a password.

- b. You can store documents on a password-protected memory stick.
 - c. If ISP has uploaded a copy of the document to the child's CHARMS record then this can be shared with you and you should delete your stored copy.
8. If you need to send a document that contains personal information about a young person by email, you should only do so using a secure email service. ISP uses 'Egress'.
9. All documents must be passed to ISP at the end of the placement.

Managing disclosures from children and young people

Not everything a child says to you needs to be shared with the social worker. You may need to seek clarification from your supervising social worker, and some judgement will be required on your part.

However, some information given to you by the child cannot be confidential. You should explain to them that some information may need to be shared with ISP and their social worker to keep them safe. If a child tells you something which you believe is new information and may mean that the child has experienced harm in the past or is at risk of harm now or in the future, you must always contact your supervising social worker for guidance. We must share any information which may have safeguarding implications with the child's social worker, manager or duty manager.

Breach of confidentiality

Confidentiality is a priority concern within social care, and any breach of confidentiality is a serious matter that can affect a foster parent's approval.

Any concerns or complaints regarding breach of confidentiality will be investigated through our complaints and/or Standards of Care procedures and may involve a review of approval.