

A-Z GUIDE TO FOSTERING

ACCIDENTS

If a foster child/young person has an accident that requires medical or hospital treatment, please contact the child's Social Worker or their Manager as soon as possible especially if the child/young person is likely to need an operation, as you are "not" authorised to sign the consent form yourself. If your child/young person has an accident out of normal office hours you will need to contact the Fostering Team Out of Hours Support Service on 01495 233251 or the Emergency Duty Team on 0800 328 4432. Authorisation for treatment needs to be made at Service Manager level. You will be asked to complete a form giving details of injury, treatment and outcome.

ACCOMMODATION

Your accommodation should be suitable for the needs of your own family and a foster child/young person. From time to time it is necessary for the social worker to see the sleeping arrangements for a foster child and you should draw the workers attention to any permanent change. If you move house it will also be necessary for your social worker to visit your new accommodation before the Department can agree to child moving home with you.

ADOPTION

Adoption is a legal process by which all the rights and duties of *birth parent(s)* are permanently transferred to the adopters. The child/young person takes the adoptive parents' surname and inherits from them. In the past, children/young persons generally lost all ties with their birth families; this is increasingly becoming the exception. It is now more likely that a child/young person will keep some form of contact with their birth parent(s). (*see also Guardian ad Litem*).

ADVOCATE

An individual who helps and supports a child to speak up for what they want. This can involve expressing their views or acting on their behalf to secure services that they require or rights to which they are entitled. The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) can be contacted to act on behalf of children in placement. If you or the child you are looking after think this would be of benefit, please speak to the social worker who will provide you with further information.

AGREEMENTS

Foster carers agreement: Upon approval, foster carers sign an agreement which outlines the number and ages of children whom they are approved to foster and the terms under which they foster for the Local Authority. A copy is placed on file and one is also sent to the Foster Carer. Placement Agreements: At the time of placement of a child with the foster carers, a 'Placement Plan' is drawn up between birth parents, social worker, foster family and child (if old enough to participate) outlining the plan and purpose of the placement and detailing issues such as arrangements for contact with members of the natural family and specific needs of the child.

ALLEGATIONS

If a child or parent makes an allegation against you as a foster carer or a member of your family, it has to be investigated. A strategy discussion/meeting is likely to be initiated where professionals

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involved will discuss how to proceed and what is required to safeguard the child(ren) involved. This will include a plan of the enquiries that need to take place and allocate responsibilities to workers involved. Your link worker will not be able to share specifics of any allegation with yourselves, and their contact may need to be limited due to the ongoing investigations. But there is support you can access from the Fostering Network's free legal advice line and they can provide information regarding the 2008 All Wales Child Protection Procedures. Fosterline Wales can be contacted on 0800 316 7664 for any advice, not just for allegations.

ALLOWANCES

All carers should be in receipt of allowances. You can arrange to have your allowances paid into your bank account. Please refer to section 5 – Finances, for further information.

BEHAVIOUR

Many foster carers will be involved in helping the Department assess the needs and difficulties of a child in their care. Please do not be afraid to tell your social worker about the child's behaviour; many things you may feel are not worth mentioning but may hold important pointers for the child's future. It often helps to write them down and also make notes of any habits that disappear during the course of their stay with you, as this may also be significant.

BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

There are a number of problems which your foster child/young person may present you with, but hopefully only one or two at a time. Do not panic, most things will ease off as the child/young person settles and if they do not you will be able to get help from your social worker or doctor. Some of the common problems encountered are:-

Bodily functions e.g. Bedwetting/soiling/smearing

Food refusal/compulsive eating

Tantrums/Destructiveness/Violence

Stealing/Lying/Swearing

Obsessiveness e.g neatness, cleanliness

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

If you need the birth certificate of the child you are looking after, ask the child's social worker as the Social Services Department should retain a copy.

CAR INSURANCE

It is an expectation of Caerphilly County Borough Council that foster carers are insured for carrying passengers for business use. Please contact your insurance company to inform them of your role as foster carers.

CARE PLAN

Every foster child will have a care plan which sets out the plan for the child's future. For example the care plan may be 'adoption', 'long term fostering' or 'time limited assessment'. The care plan is subject to review as it may be that a family's situation changes or once assessments are completed, the long-term plan changes. The plan can only be changed at the child's LAC review.

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CARERS BANDINGS

There are 3 different bandings in Caerphilly. Newly approved foster carers are probationary carers for a minimum of 6 months and if after this time the task descriptions have been met and specific training has been undertaken, consideration will be given to whether you are able to move from probationary to mainstream. Mainstream carers are expected to fulfil their task descriptions in caring for vulnerable children and young people in their care. If an experienced carer wants to develop and progress in their role it is possible that they can complete an NVQ level 3 in childcare and work their way up to a career carer. There is an expectation on a career carer to be involved on a regular basis with additional tasks, outside of the fostering role such as recruitment, training and support of foster carers.

CHILD ABUSE

Some children come into care because of abuse inflicted by a parent or member of the family. Many of these children will experience feelings of guilt, worthlessness and anger, and will need very skilled help from foster carers, social workers and sometimes child psychologists/psychiatrists in order to express and overcome these feelings. Foster carers will need to give comfort and support to such children and not be shocked when a child begins to talk about their experiences. Abused children need to know their feelings are accepted and that they were not to blame for what has happened.

CHILDREN ACT 1989

It has been suggested by the National Foster Carers Association that all caring adults – Social worker and foster carers alike, should adopt the following memorandum as a Charter for foster children. It is worth having around and reading occasionally as it holds lots of reminders for us all:

A memorandum from a Foster Child

- 1). Don't spoil me. I know quite well that I ought not to have all I ask for. I am testing you.
- 2). Don't let me form bad habits, I have to rely on you to detect them in the early stages
- 3). Don't be afraid to be firm with me, I prefer it. It makes me feel more secure.
- 4). Don't make me feel smaller than I am. It only makes me act 'big'.
- 5). Don't correct me in front of people if you can help it. I'll take more notice if you talk quietly with me in private.
- 6). Don't make me feel that mistakes are sins. It upsets my sense of values.
- 7). Don't be upset when I say, "I hate you". It is not you I hate, but your power to hurt me.
- 8). Don't protect me from consequence. I need to learn the painful way sometimes.
- 9). Don't take too much notice of my small ailments. Sometimes they get me the attention I need
- 10). Don't nag. If you do, I protect myself by being stubborn. Don't put me off when I ask questions. If you do, you will find that I will stop asking.

The children Act begins from the standpoint that, when a Local Authority has to arrange for a child/young person to live away from home, this should preferably be under Voluntary arrangements (Section 20). The parent(s) should participate in the child/young person's care and retain contact, so that the child/young person can return as soon as it is in their interests to do so.

The Act prohibits a Court from making any Court Order unless it is satisfied that the Order will positively contribute to the child/young person's Welfare.(see *Legal Status for an explanation of Orders*).

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CHILDRENS RIGHTS

All children whether they live at home with their own families, or in the care of a Local Authority, are subject to the laws of the land. If they are over the age of 10 and commit an offence, they may be prosecuted under the Criminal Law, and they also have right under Civil Law, such as being able to gain their own consent for medical treatment at the age of 16.

Also, at the age of 16, a young person can leave his family home, providing he has somewhere suitable to live. He can request in his own right to be accommodated, he may also exercise his right to discharge himself from accommodation at that age if he wishes in these circumstances, although most move into independence gradually and continue to receive support and remain in the legal care of the Department.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS OFFICER

The Children's Rights Officer is responsible for developing a service to ensure that children/young people who are receiving services or are denied access to services are listened to by all professionals with It also provides the following:-

Upholding the rights of children/young people and ensuring that their welfare is attended to in accordance with legislation & relevant policies and procedures.

Facilitating the resolution process in relation to complaints and to ensure that each child or young person complainant will be offered an advocate.

Ensuring that information (in all formats) concerning services for children and child and young people is available and accessible to them.

Seeking out the views of children and young people by developing improved participation by children and young people in planning services and monitoring outcomes.

CLOTHING

When a child comes into care they should bring their own clothes with them. These may, or may not be suitable, but if they are unsuitable please remember they are important to that child and you should let them give them up in their own time. An initial clothing allowance may be provided when a child comes into your care with very little clothing to enable you to purchase appropriate items.

COMPLAINTS

All foster carers are issued with complaints procedures for themselves and for children in placement. Children are also provided with information in various formats which will be contained in their LAC pack. (*Complaints Department contact number 01443 864555*).

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your social worker will tell you a great many details about you foster child and their family that are very personal and private. You need to know all these details if you are able to deal properly with your child and his difficulties. It is important to remember that these details are very private and are given to you in strictest confidence as a member of a caring team. As this information is confidential, it obviously should not be passed to neighbours, friends or relatives, as gossip gets around in a small community. In a close-knit family, however, it may be necessary to share certain information with your closest relatives because they are likely to be involved in the care of your foster child.

CONTACT

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The Children Act 1989 imposes a duty to promote contact between a child/young person who is being looked after and those who are connected with them. These people include the child/young person's parents, brothers, sisters and sometimes other family members or friends, unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child/young person's welfare to do so. You may be asked to help with contact arrangements but no planned visits will be made to your home without your permission and co-operation.

CONTRACEPTION

Young people over the age of 16 years have the right to seek advice and treatment without parental consent. When considering obtaining contraceptive treatment for your foster child, it is important that the young person has had the opportunity to discuss this fully with you, their social worker and your Doctor so that they are helped to understand the moral, social and emotional implications. However where the child is subject to a Full Care Order, the consent of the Authority to contraceptive treatment is sufficient. Remember boys may need contraceptive advice too.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Under *no* circumstances should Foster Carers be using corporal punishment to manage a foster child's behaviour. This is not an appropriate form of punishment in any situation and would be damaging to a child in placement.

The term '*corporal punishment*' should be taken to cover any intentional application of force as punishment, including slapping, pinching, squeezing, shaking, throwing missiles and rough handling. It would also include punching or pushing in the heat of the moment in response to violence from young people.

COURT

You may be required to give evidence in a Court concerning a child in your care. This could mean appearing at Court. Appearing as a witness in Court, particularly for the first time, can make you feel very anxious and it can help to go over the Court Procedures beforehand with the child's social worker. On occasion the court may ask for your recording logs to be submitted.

DENTIST

You are responsible for ensuring that your fostered child/young person's teeth are regularly checked. Consent from parents or the Local Authority is needed for treatment, particularly that requiring injection or anaesthetic.

DESIGNATED TEACHER

Schools in all Local Authorities should designate a teacher to act as a resource and advocate for looked after children and young people. The Designated teacher should ensure speedy transfer of educational information between agencies and individuals, and that each child has a PEP (see personal education plan). In primary schools the designated teacher is usually the Head. In the Secondary school a named designated teacher is identified.

DISCIPLINE

Disciplining a child is not just a negative act. The foster parent should try to discipline as a positive act – discipline can be used as an opportunity to develop a child's sense of self-esteem.

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DOCTOR

All children/young person may be registered with your Doctor or if practical they may remain with their previous Doctor. If you have any difficulty, let your link worker know.

DOCUMENTATION

Foster carers are supplied with a great deal of confidential information relating to the child/young person in their home, therefore foster carers are required to return any confidential paperwork to the social worker when the child leaves their home.

DRUG ABUSE

Any child/young person can be exposed to the danger of drug taking and/or solvent abuse.

Therefore, it is important that these areas are open to discussion within the foster home.

If you suspect a child/young person you are fostering is misusing drugs, discuss your fears with their social worker who may seek medical help. *National Drugs Helpline Tel. 0800 776600*

WHAT TO LOOK FOR!

Sudden and regular changes in mood

Unusual aggression

Gradual loss of interest in school/hobbies/sport/friends etc

Uncharacteristically drowsy and sleepy

Increasing evidence of lying or furtive behaviour

Loss of money or other objects from the house.

There are a large range of drugs – some illegal and some not – that can be misused in with the varying effects.(see also *Solvent Abuse*)

EDUCATION

When a child is 'Looked After' or is moving to a new foster home, his education may be disrupted.

You should discuss plans for education both now and in the future with the social worker and should be involved in meeting the teachers and introducing a child to his new school. Some foster children will have special educational needs, this will include disabled children and children with learning difficulties. Education Authorities should secure a suitable education placement for a looked after child within twenty school days after the child becomes Looked After. It will be a full-time place in a local mainstream school unless the circumstances of the child make full-time or local or mainstream provision unsuitable.

EDUCATION SUPPORT WORKER

The department employs support Workers. If you feel that the child/young person in your care requires extra help with their education, you will be able to discuss this with the child/young person's social worker who will then need to request additional support from the team.

EMERGENCIES

The Fostering Team offer an out of hours service 7 days a week from 6pm-10pm. If you have an emergency and you need advice or assistance from the team please call 01495 233251. There is also an Emergency Duty Team (EDT) who cover the Gwent area of Wales and are available outside of office hours each evening and all day at weekends (including bank holidays) and they can be contacted on 0800 328 4432.

END OF PLACEMENTS

A placement may come to an end in a variety of ways:

A move to another placement

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Return to a child/young person's family

Moving on to Independent Living

Disruption of placement

The aim should be to achieve a planned ending to a placement with careful preparation and transition, whether to another placement in care, an adoptive placement or to the child/young person's family.

Foster parents have an important role to play in preparing and reassuring the child/young person, assisting in gradual introductions by taking the child/young person on visits to the new carers and receiving visits from them, and by helping the new carers to understand the child/young person's habits, routines and needs.

Unplanned endings may happen where a crisis leads the Authority to remove the child/young person immediately or the foster parents request they are removed or that the child insists on moving. There is a need in all circumstances for a brief report on the placement to be completed; foster carers can have assistance from their Fostering support worker.

Foster carers are required to return all relevant documentation relating to a child/young person who leaves their home to their social worker (*see also Documentation*).

FACEBOOK

Children in foster care should not access facebook if they are under the age of 13. It is advisable that foster carers are able to monitor the use of this and your computer needs to be positioned in the house where this is possible. Please ensure that you speak with the foster child about keeping themselves safe when using facebook or any other social networking site by not giving away personal information or making 'friends' with people they are not familiar with.

FOOD

Be sure that any information on the child/young persons dietary needs are given to you on placement.

Food can be important to a child/young person who has been deprived and is insecure and you may expect all kinds of behaviour from overeating, hoarding and fussiness. It is best to treat the situation calmly in front of the child/young person and not to be too worried about it unless the child/young person's health seems to be suffering.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM

This is the name given to an officer appointed by the Court in adoption cases, Care and Contact Proceedings and to make a report to the Court. The Guardian ad Litem officer has no involvement in the placement. If you have a child placed with you who is subject to Care Proceedings or a child whom you are applying to adopt, the Guardian ad Litem may wish to visit your home and to meet the child.

HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

Health plays an important part in any fostering placement and we have a responsibility to ensure that all foster children receive all necessary medical and dental care.

You should register any new foster child with your own family G.P. & Dental Surgery. The child/young person's medical records will then be transferred.

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In Caerphilly County Borough these statutory examinations are carried out by professional based in the LAC Team, and could take place in the most appropriate setting for the child/young person. Appointments should be kept but in exceptional circumstances, if attendance is impossible please notify the child/young person's social worker and/or the LAC Clinical Team who will attempt to arrange. *(see section 1 contact numbers for contact details.)*

All looked after children should have a statutory health assessment in the following timescales:-
Within 2 weeks of becoming looked after.
Thereafter at least once in six months if under 5 years of age.
At least once a year for children over the age of 5 years.

Teenagers often resent having regular medicals and the Department prefers to follow a line of friendly persuasion on the basis that an annual check up is essential for everyone and not an invasion of teenage privacy.

H.I.V/AIDS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) causes the illness Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). This syndrome destroys part of the body's immune system so the body cannot defend itself against illness people do not usually get.

HIV is transmitted in three main ways:
Unprotected sexual intercourse
Injecting drug users sharing equipment
Infected mother to her unborn child

It is not passed on by sharing objects used by an infected person e.g. cups, cutlery, towels, toilet seats, nor by sneezing or coughing.

If you have any concerns about your foster child's sexual activities then raise it with them or speak to their social worker. There is a free confidential, 24-hour National AIDS helpline. *Tel: 0800 567123*

HOLIDAYS

You must inform the child's social worker in good time when you are making holiday plans. The department will need to know the full details of the holiday including the address. Permission from birth parents is necessary although the department may over-rule any objection if the child/young person is on a Care Order. If you are taking a child abroad, you will also need a letter from the child's social worker in order to take the child outside and return to the UK.

As a foster carer you are entitled to 2 weeks holiday a year. Please let your social worker know when you would like to take this, as your payments will be altered accordingly.

If you are having a short break away and make arrangements for family/friends to provide care for the foster child/ren, there needs to be checks completed in advance. Please let your fostering worker know of your plans as soon as you make the arrangements so they can progress with these checks at the earliest opportunity.

HOSPITAL TREATMENT

When a child is "Looked After" the parents will have given written consent to routine medical appointments but if an operation or anaesthetic is needed, a parents signature is required. The

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Department will try to obtain consent from the birth parent/s, if they cannot be contacted the Department will take full responsibility. In a medical emergency, get medical help first and then contact the Social Services Department.

Foster Carers must not sign any consent in these circumstances.

IDENTITY

Identity is to do with a child's past, confidence in the present and faith in the future. Foster children need help to understand what has happened to them, which is very complicated. This can be very painful for a child because they feel their family has rejected them at some time in their lives. None of us like to feel we are not worth having and so, with help from social workers who know the reasons why each child has come into care, foster carers can help foster children to understand their own story. Any information about a child/young person's life will need to be given to him in a sensitive way and also a way in which they can understand. Telling a child/young person about their past is not a once and for all event, it will need to be developed and expanded as the child/young person grows and understands more and more. (*see also life story book*).

ILLNESS

Obviously you would treat any child exactly as you would your own if they are unwell. But do not forget that it may be more upsetting for a child who is not with his/her family. It may also be a sign of unhappiness or a response to stress.

In dire emergencies, do not delay getting medical advice or treatment.

IMMUNISATION

Foster carers should ensure that the children placed with them receive their full programme of immunisations. Consent should be obtained from the birth parent/s. The child's medical history may not always be easily obtainable but your social worker should give you as much information as is available. It is important that the children in care have a careful record kept of their medical history and that this is passed on. The LAC clinical Team will provide a Parent Child Health Record (Red Book), which will include relevant medical history about the child. The foster carer should keep this safe and take it to all health assessment appointments.

INCOME SUPPORT

Fostering allowance does not affect Income Support. For further advice please contact the Departments Welfare Benefits Officer or your local Social Security Office.

INCOME TAX

As the basic fostering allowance is for the maintenance of the child and there is no element of payment to you for the service you offer, this is not taxed. The fee element of the allowance may be taxable however, as this can be viewed as the foster carers' personal income.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW MECHANISM

The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a review process, which prospective or existing foster carers can use when they do not agree with the decision given to them by their fostering service provider. This review process can be accessed where panel proposes to terminate or change the terms of the foster carers approval. (See IRM leaflet included in the metal box you were provided with when approved).

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INSURANCE

From time to time requests have been made for the reimbursement of damage done in the home by foster children. Foster carers are advised to notify their own insurers of your fostering activities. If you find it necessary to make a claim, the Department's expectation is that you approach your own insurance company in the first instance. If you are unsuccessful you should obtain confirmation in writing from your insurers, so that this can then be passed onto your Social Worker with the appropriate claim form and detailed report. Your claim will then be considered.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEW

A LAC Review is a statutory meeting, which forms part of the continuous care planning process for each child that is looked after. The first LAC review must be held within 28 days of the child becoming looked after. The second review must be carried out within three months of the child becoming accommodated and from then on LAC reviews must be carried out every six months. At the LAC review the chair of the meeting (Independent Reviewing Officer) will look at whether the necessary support is in place to ensure every child has the opportunity to develop to their full potential in a safe and stable environment. Some of the areas covered within the review include the child's health, education, placement and contact. As the foster carer, you will be asked to contribute to the meeting by providing information about how the child has settled in placement, dates of any recent health appointments and raise any concerns you may have about the child.

LEGAL STATUS

There are 2 ways a child can enter the care system.

A looked after child can be voluntarily accommodated which means that their parents have given consent or asked for them to become looked after. This is referred to as section 20 of the Children Act 1989. In this situation a parent retains their full parental responsibility.

The other way a child can become looked after is when there is no parental consent and either the police have invoked powers of police protection or the local authority has gone through court and obtained an interim or full care order. In this situation the local authority shares parental responsibility with the parent.

LIFESTORY BOOK

Many children who have been in care most of their lives need a lot of help in putting their past together. Making a life story book is one way of helping foster children to sort and shape the pieces of their background and to make sense of them. There are not any hard or fast rules about making life story books; some children may feel comfortable with a foster carer, others with a social worker.

LOOKED AFTER

The phrase '*Looked After*' is important. It refers to children/young persons who are in care of the local authority who are provided with accommodation.

Many receptions into care are, however, last minute emergencies and there may not necessarily be time to prepare children or collect their belongings. Some foster carers may agree to take emergency placements during the night, in which case they should discuss this carefully with their family and fostering worker. Whether the placement is on a planned or unplanned basis the child/young person's social worker should provide you with vital details such as name of child's doctor, school and where they can be contacted. Other vital information should include sleeping arrangements to which they are accustomed, any illnesses, food fads, allergies and medical conditions.

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LONG TERM FOSTERING

Long term fostering means caring for a child/young person for years rather than months. When a child first becomes looked after he/she will be placed in short term foster care whilst plans are being made for his/her future.

For some children this may mean rehabilitation to their own family, adoption by a new family, or even their foster family. The child has a right to be a permanent member of a family which long term fostering does not necessarily ensure. For some children long term fostering may be the only achievable option. Generally, there are careful planned introductions when a child joins a foster family on a long term basis taking into account the age and level of understanding in order to give all concerned an opportunity to get to know each other. The pace of introductions must suit the need of the child.

Some birth parents have regular contact with their children but others have contact infrequently or can even lose touch completely. It is essential for a foster child/young person's own sense of identity that such links are maintained where possible. In the absence of contact with the birth family, it is important for foster children/young persons to be encouraged to discuss their background and experiences before they are accommodated.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Knowing your own medical history is something we tend to take for granted. For children in care their medical history is often incomplete. It is important for the child to have as full medical information as possible. Parent Child Health Record (PCHR red book) must remain with the child at all times, therefore the book must be handed to the child's social worker if they move to an alternative foster placement.

If the child moves onto an adoption placement the red book should be returned to the Clinical Nurse Specialist for Looked After Children. (see section 1 for contact details).

MEETINGS

As a foster carer, you will be invited to attend a range of meetings, which can be held at various venues.

These meetings range from Planning Meetings, Child Protection Case Conferences, Review Meetings for children and Personal Education Plan (PEP) Meetings. There is an expectation on you to make yourself available to attend these meetings as your contribution to discussions will be valuable in terms of plans for the child/ren. Your fostering worker will provide you with more details about these meetings and you should have dates in advance.

MOVING A FOSTER CHILD ONTO PERMANENCE

Any move is disturbing for a child/young person and the more difficult and disturbed he/she is likely to be. Children in care have often had to cope with many moves and we must try to make these as comfortable and secure as possible. You and the child's social worker need to work together to achieve this.

Some Golden Rules when children have to move:

Prepare the child as much as possible for what is going to happen to them, where they are going and why.

Enable them to take clothes, toys and belongings that they are fond of.

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Introductory period can be quite lengthy depending on the age and needs of the child/young person. The new carers or adopters can visit the child in your home and take them to theirs over a period of weeks.

Try to pass onto new carers as much information as possible – all the things that you have learned about them during their stay with you. This will make it easier for them to settle into their family. Remember that a foster child leaving your family is likely to have an effect on not only you but also your children.

OFFENDERS/OFFENCES

A child/young person aged between 10-17 years, who commits a criminal offence can be arrested and interviewed by the police. The police will then decide to reprimand, give a final warning or charge the young person to Youth Court. After this age a young person is not deemed to be a juvenile and is dealt with by the Magistrates Court.

As a Foster carer you may be asked to attend the Police station for the young person to get his/her final warning or attend court as a supporter.

Children aged 10-16 yrs must always have an appropriate adult with them when questioned by the police and you should always notify the child/young person's social worker or if out of office hours you will need to contact the Emergency Duty Team. If you are acting as the appropriate adult you must ensure that a solicitor is present the police will contact the Duty solicitor if the child doesn't have one.

Foster carers must not sign consent forms for finger printing, photographing or breath tests of young people in their care. Contact the social worker or Emergency Duty Team. If the child is taken to Court and found guilty, the Magistrates require reports from a Youth Offending Team Officer and the child's school, they may also request psychiatric reports.

This information helps them to make an appropriate decision within a wide range of possibilities from a possible Absolute Discharge to Custody.

When a young person appears in Court for the first time and they plead guilty they may get a Referral Order. This means they will have to attend a community panel meeting to negotiate a contract of work whilst on the order to address their offending behaviour you may attend as their supporter if any young person placed with you is going through the criminal justice system someone from the YOT will always advise you.

OMBUDSMAN

Caerphilly County Borough Council has its own complaints procedure (see complaints)
The Commissioner for Local Administration in Wales (Ombudsman) can be contacted at:
Derwen House, Court Road, Bridgend, CF31 1BN
Telephone: 01656 661325
Mail to: enquiries@ombudsman-wales.org

Complaints to the Ombudsman must be in writing and must specify what the complainant thinks the authority has done wrong and how that has caused personal injustice. The complainant will be encouraged first to use the appropriate complaints procedure and the complainant can appoint someone to complain on his or her behalf.

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If the Ombudsman feels that the complaint appears to be one he should investigate, he will write to the authority and ask for information and comments.

On completion of the investigation, the Ombudsman will let the complainant and the authority have a copy of the report containing his decision. The report will be made available to the public however, it will not contain anything which would enable the complainant to be identified.

Representations and complaints can also be made to the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW). Their address is South East Region, 6th Floor, Civic Centre, Pontypool, NP4 6YB, telephone 01495 766500.

OVERNIGHT STAYS

An overnight stay is defined as a visit away from the placement of a child or young person who is looked after for a period of 24 hours or less but which covers an overnight period with a friend, relative or a relative of the foster family.

If a child or young person asks to stay with a friend overnight, you should inform the child or young person's allocated worker so that enquiries can be made.

Your responsibility is no different from what would be expected from a reasonable parent and would include:

Previously meeting the friend.

Being assured that a responsible adult would be present in the friend's home during the stay.

Agreeing the arrangement with the friend's parent/foster carer.

Knowing the name, address and telephone number of the friend's home.

Having some indication of what the child or young person will be doing during the stay.

Ensuring that any health needs will be met during the stay.

Advising the responsible adult who to contact in the event of an emergency.

What if the child or young person wishes to stay out for 48 hours or more?

The child or young person's allocated worker must seek permission from the appropriate Service Manager after the allocated worker has made appropriate checks.

PANELS

1. Fostering Panel considers the approval of fostering applicants, annual reviews of approved foster carers, terminations and resignations. Fostering panels are organised efficiently & effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote & safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.(National Minimum Standards 2002).

2. Adoption Panel is a legally constituted panel that considers the appropriateness of the approval of adoption applicants, recommendation to place children for adoption and placement of particular children with particular families.

PASSPORTS

Foster children cannot be put onto your own passports.

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Children 'Looked After' must have a full passport, which may be obtained in consultation with the child/young person's social worker. The social worker will then complete the usual passport application form. The Service Manager of Social Services or their representative (Team Manager) must sign if child/ren are subject to Care Orders. You will need to give plenty of notice (at least 9 weeks) if you intend to take your foster child abroad, as this can be a lengthy process, and on occasions birth certificates may need to be obtained.

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN (PEP)

Every Looked After child/young person should have a PEP within 20 days of becoming looked after. You will be invited to the PEP meeting which will set target's for the child/young person in your care to achieve. You should also take an active part in care and education planning, and have clear information about who to contact at school. All schools will have what is called a '*Designated Teacher*'. A designated teacher should be an advocate for the child, accessing services and support.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Children/young persons who are in your care are not to be photographed for publication. You can take photographs of your foster child/ren for inclusion in their life story book (*see also life story book*).

POCKET MONEY

A child/young person in your care has a pocket money allowance included within the fostering allowance. If you need guidance on the level of pocket money please speak to your fostering worker.

PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENCE CHECKLIST

The checklist has been developed to provide information that can be used as a guide to prepare children and young people for eventual independent living. It aims to help to equip children and young people with practical and self-care skills to build and strengthen emotional development. The checklist is divided into tasks appropriate to different age groups and looks at how skills can be built upon as the individual child matures. This checklist should be provided to foster carers at the child's first LAC review. If you have not received one, please speak to your worker who will provide you with a copy.

RECORDING LOGS

It is an expectation that foster carers will make daily recordings of their foster child's progress, at the social workers or for your own benefit. This is to include succinct notes of significant events, behaviour, changes, things said by the child or what happens on contact visits. Always note the date and time, and discuss with the child's social worker how much detail is needed. Occasionally these notes will be part of vital evidence in Care proceedings and they will always be useful to you when preparing to attend Case conference/Review.

RECRUITMENT

It is evident that one of the main sources of foster carers comes from their knowing existing carers. Your role as representatives of the fostering service is an important one. We value your input particularly in getting involved in the recruitment of new foster carers. Your fostering worker will talk to you further about this.

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RELATIVES

One of the important aspects of fostering there is helping a child/young person to develop and retain a sense of their own identity. For this reason, where possible, sound links are maintained between children/young persons who are fostered and their relatives, particularly parents, brothers and sisters. Foster carers can play an active part both in encouraging and undertaking such family visits.

SUPPORTED LODGINGS

Supported lodgings providers are carers who provide accommodation for teenagers over the age of 18. Some supported lodgings providers have applied specifically to provide accommodation and support to a young person of this age. Others have been approved foster carers with a teenager in placement, and have made the decision that they would like to continue to provide them with accommodation beyond their 18th birthday. You will be subject to an assessment but this will not be as in-depth as your original fostering assessment.

If you would like further information please speak to your fostering worker.

SUPPORT GROUPS

There are a number of support groups for approved foster carers.

For probationary/mainstream carers there is a support group which meets

For career carers there is a support group that meets 4 times a year and has a training element as well as a chance to meet other foster carers. Please speak to your fostering worker about future dates.

The men who care group for male foster carers meets monthly in Foxes Lane

The children who care group for foster carers own children meets 4 times a year and is a good opportunity for your children to meet others.

TRAINING

There is an expectation that foster carers will attend training to further their knowledge and skills when providing care for foster children. There are a number of induction courses for foster carers to attend. These include 'Listening and Communication', 'Education from Nursery to Independence', 'Health and Wellbeing of Looked after Children', 'Improving Outcomes for Looked after Children', 'Understanding development and behaviour', 'Paediatric First Aid for Foster Carers' and 'Safeguarding Looked after Children in Need of Protection'. These training courses will run twice a year and will need to be completed in the first 18 months of your approval.

There are further training courses made available for foster carers and your fostering worker will provide you with details of each of them. Your worker will then be able to nominate you for courses you are interested in attending.