

WORCESTERSHIRE  
**CHILDREN FIRST**  
Fostering



Worcestershire Children First Fostering

**Why Children and Young People need to be looked after and  
the Roles and Responsibilities of the Professionals Involved**

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Children and young people may need to be looked after for many different reasons and each individual child or young person will have their own care plan to take into account their own personal needs and support as well as future planning. As foster carers you may be looking after a child with a plan to return home, moving towards independence, adoption, special guardianship, or long-term foster care.

As foster carers you will hear references that a child or young person has come into the care of the local authority as they have suffered from physical, emotional or sexual abuse or from neglect. Here are some definitions of the different types of abuse and possible indicators. It does not mean that all children in a certain category will have the relevant indicators and Equally, some children and young people who have been abused may present differently. We do not always know what the child or young person has experienced in the past so it is important that you are aware of possible indicators and you alert the social worker of the child or young person if you see evidence of them. It is important to record these in your foster carer records as, however insignificant they may appear it can help to piece together the whole picture.

### **1. Physical abuse:**

Occurs when parents or adults deliberately inflict injuries on a child, or do not protect the child from injury.

Possible indicators of physical abuse are:

- Unexplained injuries – bruises, scars, bites or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- injuries of varying ages and types or in unusual places
- Child shows fear about returning home
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Bruising on very young babies

### **2. Neglect:**

Occurs when a parent or carer fails to meet a child's essential needs for food, clothing, shelter or medical care, or when children are left without proper supervision that leaves them unsafe or unprotected.

Possible indicators of neglect are:

- Consistently unkempt, dirty appearance
- Medical needs of child unmet
- Delay in the child's development without other clear cause
- Lack of responsiveness with peers or adults in everyday social situations
- Behaviour such as head banging or rocking
- Repeated failure by parents/carers to prevent injury
- Consistently inappropriately clothed for the weather
- Hazardous living conditions

- Failure to attend any sort of appointments
- Non-organic failure to thrive

### **3. Sexual abuse:**

Occurs when an adult or older child involves a child in sexual activity to which the child does not or cannot consent, because of his or her age or understanding.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse are:

- Withdrawn, fearful or aggressive behaviour to other children or adults.
- Poor concentration at school or learning problems which do not match intellectual ability.
- Behaviour with sexual overtones inappropriate to age.
- Complaints of genital itching or pain
- Unexplained abdominal pain
- Distrust of a familiar adult or anxiety about being left with a particular person, relative, babysitter or lodger
- Unexplained gifts or money
- Apparent secrecy
- Wetting day or night when previously dry and clean
- Severe sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Chronic illness, especially throat infections
- Venereal disease or other sexually transmitted diseases
- Marked reluctance to take part in physical activity or to change clothes for PE etc.
- Phobias or panic attacks
- Self-mutilation or attempted suicide
- Running away from home

### **4. Sexual exploitation:**

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that affects children and young people every year in the UK. It can happen to any young person whatever their background, gender and age. Many victims of Child Sexual Exploitation have been groomed by an abusing adult who may befriend them and make them feel special in some way e.g. gifts. Victims may be targeted both in person and online.

Possible indicators of sexual exploitation are:

- Going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- Regularly missing school or not taking part in education
- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- Having older boyfriends and girlfriends

- Suffering from sexually transmitted infections
- Mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour

## **5. Emotional abuse:**

Occurs when parents or carers fail to show their children sufficient love or attention or when they threaten, taunt or belittle them, causing them to become nervous, withdrawn, aggressive, or disturbed in their behaviour.

Possible indicators of emotional abuse are:

- Very low self-esteem
- Lack of any sense of fun
- Excessively clingy or attention seeking behaviour
- Over reactions to mistakes or over anxious to please
- Substantial failure to reach potential in learning
- Self-harming
- Compulsive rituals
- Unusual patterns of response to others showing emotion

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

### 6.1 The role of the Foster Carer

Foster carers have many responsibilities. The legislative framework aims to ensure that foster carers and fostering providers are clear about their roles and that foster carers get the recognition and support that they require to undertake this complex task.

As a foster carer you are expected to:

- Protect children and young people in your care from coming to harm and help them to look after themselves
- Teach children and young people to recognise inappropriate behaviour from adults and make sure that they know how to get help if they feel unsafe
- Build relationships with the children and young people in your care and help them to relate to and trust others
- Help children and young people to keep links with their family and friends and actively promote contact in line with the care plan
- Help children to understand and feel positive about their religion, origin and culture
- Follow an agreed care plan and keep written records of the progress of all children and young people in your care
- Work alongside other professionals who are involved with the child or young person
- Promote the education and development of a child or young person placed with you
- Actively promote a healthy lifestyle for any child or young person placed with you and ensure that their regular health appointments are kept up to date
- Be an advocate for the child or young person, listening to them and their views and help them to be able to articulate their views appropriately
- Attend statutory reviews for any child or young person placed
- To keep up to date with practice and legislation relevant to the role of a foster carer
- Maintain your Learning and Development portfolio
- To have regular supervision with your allocated supervising social worker
- You may also be asked to be an 'Appropriate Adult' if a child or young person you are looking after is called to the police station (see below)

### 6.2 The role of the Appropriate Adult

An Appropriate Adult is responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of a child or 'mentally vulnerable' adult who is detained by police or is interviewed under caution voluntarily. The role was created alongside the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984.

The role of the Appropriate Adult is to assist the detainee to ensure that they understand what is happening at the police station during an interview and investigative stages. In

particular the Appropriate Adult should:

- Support, advise and assist the detainee
- Ensure that the police act fairly and respect the rights of the detainee
- Help communication between the detainee, the police and others
- The Appropriate Adult is not present to provide the detainee with legal advice.

More information about this role and a Guide for parents and carers in their role as an Appropriate Adult is available on the National Appropriate Adult Network website: [appropriateadult.org.uk](http://appropriateadult.org.uk)

### 6.3. The role of the Supervising Social Worker (SSW)

The supervising social worker is responsible for supervising and supporting the foster carer, and their household.

This could include:

- Making regular supervision visits at times and dates as agreed.
- Supporting all those in the fostering household when required. This could mean telephone/email support as well as face to face contact
- To undertake a minimum of two unannounced visits a year
- Provide the foster carer with emotional and practical support
- Supporting the sons and daughters of foster carers if applicable
- Liaise with other professionals
- Chair placement planning meetings
- Supporting the foster carer at other meetings e.g. statutory review
- Maintain a foster carer file which includes all electronic records and relevant documents
- Complete reports and recommendations for the foster carer's Annual Review of approval
- Work with each foster carer regarding their personal professional development and monitor how this is maintained.

### 6.4 The role of the child or young person's Social Worker

The child's or young person's social worker is responsible for the individual Care Plan for the particular child or young person. They will need to work closely with the child or young person placed with you as well as with you as the foster carer.

They should:

- Ensure that that you as the foster carer has all the information you need to care for the child or young person, including the Care Plan. This is an on-going process as new information may become known during the placement
- Visit the child or young person on a regular basis

- Be part of the placement planning meeting and ensure that agreement is reached regarding the areas of responsibility. This includes any delegated authority which may be given to the foster carer
- Working with the family of the child or young person in line with the care plan.
- Preparation of paperwork and attendance at the child or young person's statutory (LAC) Review
- Liaise with other professionals who may be involved with the child or young person. This may include arranging or undertaking therapy or direct work with the child or young person
- Clarify frequency of arrangements for contact with the child or young person's family and/or significant others.

### 6.5 The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

The IRO is responsible for reviewing the Care Plan for each child or young person who is looked after. No significant change to the care plan can be made unless it has been considered first at a statutory (LAC) Review, unless this is not reasonably practicable. The IRO will chair the statutory review for the child or young person. They need to be informed of any significant changes which may occur between reviews. Such changes, as stated in the Care Planning Regulations (2010), include:

- A proposed change of care plan, for example, arising at short notice in the course of proceedings following directions from the court
- Where agreed decisions from the review are not carried out within the specified Timescale
- Major change to the contact arrangements
- Changes of the child's allocated social worker
- Any safeguarding concerns involving the child, which may lead to enquiries being made under section 47 of the 1989 Act (child protection enquiries) and outcomes of child protection conferences, or other meetings that are not attended by the IRO
- Complaints from or on behalf of the child, parent or carer
- Unexpected changes in the child's placement provision which may significantly impact on placement stability or safeguarding arrangements
- Significant changes in birth family circumstances, for example, births, marriages or deaths which may have a particular impact on the child
- If the child is charged with any offence leading to referral to youth offending services, pending criminal proceedings and any convictions or sentences as a result of such proceedings
- If the child is excluded from school
- If the child has run away or is missing from an approved placement

- Significant health, medical events, diagnoses, illnesses, hospitalisations, or serious accidents
- Panel decisions in relation to permanency.

As foster carers you should be given the name of the IRO for the child or young person you are looking after. Although the social worker should inform the IRO of such changes, as the foster carer you are also able to contact the IRO direct if you have any concerns or you consider that actions are not being undertaken when they should be. The IRO can request that an early review should be convened if the changes are significant.

#### 6.6 The role of the Personal Advisor (for young people leaving care)

When young people leave care the local authority does not have to provide them with a social worker but do have to provide the young person with a personal advisor (PA). The role of the personal advisor (as stated in the Care Planning Regulations 2010) is to:

- Provide the young person with advice and support (this will include direct practical help to prepare them for the time when they move or cease to be looked after as well as emotional support)
- Participate in reviews of the pathway plan which for an eligible child will include the care plan
- Liaise with the responsible authority about the provision of services, for example education and housing services
- Co-ordinate the provision of services, ensuring that these are responsive to the young person's needs and that s/he is able to access and make constructive use of them
- Remain informed about the young person's progress and keep in touch with him/her – visiting at no less than the statutory intervals
- Maintain a record of their involvement with the young person.

#### 6.7 The role of the Guardian

A Guardian will be appointed by the court for a particular child or young person when the local authority is seeking a legal order in respect of a child. If a Guardian is appointed, they are likely to wish to meet with you as the foster carer, as well as the child or young person they have been appointed for.

Guardians are employed by CAFCASS – Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. Guardians are qualified social workers completely independent from Children's Social Care. Guardians are appointed by the court when the local authority is seeking a legal order in respect of a child.

The Guardian

- appoints a solicitor for the child who specialises in working with children and families

- advises the court about what work needs to be completed and information gained before the court makes its decisions
- writes a report for the court saying what he/she considers would be best for the child. The report must tell the court about the wishes and feelings of the child
- the Guardian has to ensure the interests and needs of the child are always put first

The Guardian will spend time getting to know the child and members of the family. He or she will visit the child, talk to foster carers and any other people who can help inform what is the best plan for the child.

The Guardian may recommend to the court that other professionals are asked to help, such as a psychologist or a paediatrician.

### 6.8 The role of the Virtual School Head

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Looked After Children, wherever they are placed. The VSH ensures that the educational attainment and progress of children looked after by the local authority is monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school. This includes, amongst many other responsibilities:

- Ensuring that an effective Personal Education Plan (PEP) system is in place which focuses on achieving good outcomes for individual children
- Ensuring that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in creating high quality PEPs and in promoting good educational outcomes more generally
- Ensuring that children are admitted to suitable schools in a timely way and that systems are in place to support regular attendance.

### 6.9 The role of the Health Services

The NHS has the major role in ensuring timely and effective healthcare to Looked After Children and Young People. The NHS has a duty to comply with requests from the local authority to help them provide support and services to children in need.

**Designated Doctors and Nurses** – are the key health professionals who provide strategic advice and guidance to health organisations and local authorities as commissioners of services to improve the health of Looked After Children.

**GP's** – are the primary health care professional. All Looked After Children must have full registration with a GP near to where they are placed.