

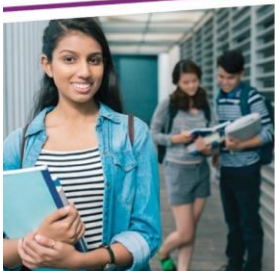
# Croydon Council Fostering Service

## Foster Carers handbook of policies and procedures

be the change

for children and young people in croydon

#bethechangecroydon



OUR DESTINATION



OUR PRINCIPLES



OUR PRACTICE  
FRAMEWORK



May 2021

**CROYDON**  
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## Welcome / Introduction

As Corporate Parents, Croydon Council wants to achieve the same best outcomes for our looked after children as any parent would wish for their children.

We want our looked after children to have similar opportunities and chances in life to those of children growing up in their own families

As Corporate Parents, the London Borough of Croydon has the same aspirations for looked after children as that of any good parent for their child; we want our children and young people to be safe, healthy, happy, integrated and contributing members of their local communities and of our society.

We believe that by us all working together towards the best interests of our looked after children, we will produce better outcomes for Croydon's looked after population; this handbook is built on these aims.

Foster Care is frequently the preferred way of providing care and nurture for children who need to be looked after by Croydon Council. The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Government National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 underpin the way in which the Fostering Service in Croydon operates.

The aim of the foster placement and the skills required can be varied and wide-ranging. The nature and purposes of different types of placements need to be identified and understood so that the need for foster homes as resources can be assessed and Foster Carers recruited and prepared and so that clear agreements with Foster Carers about the aim of placement can be reached to avoid mistaken expectations.

The continuing role of the parent in the child's life and the arrangements to ensure that parental responsibility is not diminished must be explained and agreed. Planning needs to address the aim of the foster placement and any specific tasks associated with the aim and the expected duration of the placement for each individual child.

Croydon Council's Foster Carers' Handbook is designed to identify ways foster carers and the department can work together to produce the best outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

# 1. Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards

## 1.1 The fostering services regulations 2011

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 provides the legal framework within which all fostering service providers must work. This includes regulations governing the assessment and approval of carers and the placement of children in foster care.

You can access the actual Fostering Services Regulations 2011 here:

[The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

## 1.2 National minimum standards (Fostering)

Alongside the Fostering Services Regulations are the National Minimum Standards (Fostering). These are 'minimum' standards rather than 'best possible' practice and are designed to ensure that all providers of fostering services are providing services that will safeguard children and lead to successful outcomes for them. The National Minimum Standards are used by OFSTED during inspections to measure how well fostering services are performing.

You can access the actual National Minimum Standards (Fostering) here:

[Fostering Guidance - MASTER \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

## 1.3 Ofsted

Ofsted is the relevant inspection body for children's services in England.

Fostering services are inspected in different ways as defined by the inspection framework governing the service type, whether that's public sector services such as local authorities or health and social care trusts or independent fostering providers. In England the regulatory body, Ofsted, inspects local authority fostering services as part of the Independent Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection of the whole of children's' services in the authority.

You should be aware that you may be interviewed or visited periodically as part of the Commission's inspection process (as set out in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Regulations 2011).

There could be occasions when you feel concerned about some aspect of our fostering service. We would hope that you would be able to discuss this with your supervising social worker or one of their managers in the first instance. However, you are able to draw your concerns to the attention of OFSTED by contacting them at:

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) Telephone: 0300 123 1231

## 1.4 Statement of Purpose

Croydon has produced a Statement of Purpose that sets out in detail the services that are provided for children and young people in foster placements.

The following is a summary of the key service aims and objectives:

- To provide safe and appropriate foster care placements for children Looked After by the London Borough of Croydon in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- To identify and co-ordinate placements of Looked After Children based on referrals from Children's & Families' Services
- To recruit, assess, train and support carers who reflect the needs of Croydon's Looked After Children
- To raise the profile of fostering in Croydon

You should have been given a copy of the full Statement of Purpose during your assessment as a carer. However, if you do not have one ask your supervising social worker to provide you with one or you can find it here: [Fostering Statement of Purpose 2021-2022.pdf \(croydon.gov.uk\)](https://www.croydon.gov.uk/media/1000000/fostering-statement-of-purpose-2021-2022.pdf)

## 2. The Teams in Children's Social Care

### 2.1 The Children's Social Work Teams

Responsibility for the provision of social work support for children and families in Croydon rests with the Children's Services, which is part of the Early Help and Children's Social Care directorate.

Children placed with foster carers are 'looked after' by London Borough of Croydon Children, (Children's Services) and have their own social workers, who are based in one of the following child care teams:

Adoption Team (Adopt London South - ALS)

Fostering Team

Children Looked After

Care Leavers

Croydon Supporting Families

Social Work with Families

Youth Offending Team

Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Team

### 2.2 Children's Social Workers' Responsibilities

On behalf of the child's responsible local authority, the child's social worker is responsible for their care plan and for ensuring that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted, that they are being properly cared for and appropriately educated, and that they are receiving good health care and maintaining appropriate contact with their family. They have a duty to visit the child or young person in placement at regular, specified intervals and good practice indicates that they should form a meaningful relationship with the child so they may better understand them.

Further details around visits by the child's social worker can be found here:

[Social Worker Visits to Looked After Children \(proceduresonline.com\)](https://proceduresonline.com)

Further details around decision to look after a child and care planning can be found here:

[Decision to Look After and Care Planning \(proceduresonline.com\)](https://proceduresonline.com)



## 2.3 Supervising Social Workers' Responsibilities

All approved foster carers will have an allocated, suitably qualified supervising social worker. The allocated supervising social worker is responsible for supervising and supporting carers, ensuring that they have the necessary guidance, support and direction to maintain a quality service, including safe caring practices. This will include an understanding that they must work within the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and the agency's policies, procedures and guidance.

The supervising social worker must also ensure that the foster carers' training and development needs are identified, and that newly approved carers work towards completing the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers Workbook. They also have the responsibility to ensure foster carers are familiar and made aware of new policies and guidance.

Further details around visits by the supervising social worker can be found here:

[Supervision and Support of Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## 2.4 Adoption and Permanence service

The London Borough of Croydon is now part of Adopt London South, a new regionalised adoption agency formed as part of the Government's plans to improve adoption services for children and adopters. Adopt London South is made up of Sutton, Merton, Kingston, Richmond, Croydon, Wandsworth, Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark.

If you are thinking about adopting please:

- Visit our website: [www.adoptlondon.org.uk](http://www.adoptlondon.org.uk);
- E-mail us: [adoptoptionals@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:adoptoptionals@southwark.gov.uk);
- Phone us: 020 7525 1746.

If you are an adoptive family living in Croydon and need support, please e-mail us on [postadoptionssupportals@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:postadoptionssupportals@southwark.gov.uk).

More information can be found here:

[Assessment and Approvals of Prospective Adopters \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## **2.5 Your Relationship with Children's Services**

The relationship between you and the Children's Services is one in which the Local Authority delegates to you the task of caring for some of its looked after children on its behalf in return for an allowance. This is not the same as a contract of employment and foster carers are not employed by Children's Services or Croydon Council.

While this creates a different status for carers than for salaried employees such as social workers, Children's Services sees and values foster carers as partners in our shared tasks of caring for children looked after and ensuring successful outcomes for them.

## **3. The Foster Carer**

The fostering service recruits, assesses and support a range of foster carers to meet the needs of children they provide care for. Prospective foster carers are therefore prepared to become foster carers in a way which addresses, and give practical techniques to manage the issues they are likely to encounter and identifies the competencies and strengths they have or need to develop.

### **3.1 Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers**

Information pertaining to the assessment and approval of foster carers can be found here:

[Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

### **3.2 The Fostering Panel**

Information pertaining to the Fostering Panel can be found here:

[Fostering Panel \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

### **3.3 Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers**

Information pertaining to the review and termination of approval of foster carers, including foster carer resignation can be found here:

[Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## 3.4 Delegation of Authority

It is essential to fulfilling the local authority's duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare that, wherever possible, the most appropriate person to take a decision about the child has the authority to do so, and that there is clarity about who has the authority to decide what.

Where a particular decision is not delegated to a child's carer and rests with the local authority, there is a clear system in place for ensuring that decisions can be made by the appropriate person in a timely way, with arrangements in place to cover sickness and annual leave. Details of these arrangements are given to parents, carers and children (subject to age and understanding).

More information can be found here:

[Delegation of Authority to Foster Carers and Residential Workers \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## 3.5 Fostering Limit

Under the 1989 Children Act, Schedule 7 - Standard 5.46 (Guidance and Regulations – Volume 4: Fostering) foster carers can only foster up to 3 children at any one time. This is known as the usual fostering limit. Normally, if anyone is looking after more than 3 children at one time they need to be treated as running a children's home and registered as such. The one exception to this is if all the children placed with the foster carer are siblings for which there is no upper limit. However, it is always advisable to ensure that all children placed will be safely cared for and that foster carers will not be put under undue stress.

However, in limited circumstances you can foster more than 3 unrelated children by being granted an exemption from the usual fostering limit. Exemptions can only be given by the Local Authority in whose area the carer lives. If you live outside of Croydon and we need to place more than 3 unrelated children with you, we will approach your own Local Authority to seek an exemption on your behalf. Exemption will only last for six days and there after a new placement would need to be found for the extra child/children.

Some of the issues that we (or your home authority if you live outside of Croydon) will need to consider are:

- The number of children we are proposing to place
- The period of time that the placements are likely to last
- The arrangements for the care of the children and whether this is the best way to safeguard and promote their welfare

### 3.6 Foster Carer Agreement

You will be asked to sign a Foster Care Agreement before you start fostering, which outlines the basic details of the fostering tasks and both your roles and responsibilities, and those of Croydon Children, Families and Learning Services. It will also include your range of approval and any other specification or limitations the agency decision maker has made. The Agreement will be signed by your supervising social worker on behalf of the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 requires an approving Local Authority to enter into a written agreement with foster carers at the time of approval, referred to as the Foster Care Agreement. The purpose of the Foster Care Agreement is to provide written information about general terms and conditions of the partnership between the Authority and foster carers.

The matters and obligations to be covered in the Foster Care Agreement are set out in Schedule 5 to the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and cover such issues as:

- Support and training, procedures for foster carers' reviews
- Terms of approval
- Procedures for placement of children and the matters to be included in any placement plan.
- Arrangements for meeting any legal liabilities of the foster carers arising from, or by reason of a placement
- Procedures for foster carers to make complaints and representations, and
- Prohibition on corporal punishment

Foster carers are also obliged to give the approving authority written notice of:

- Any intended change of address
- Any change in household composition

- Any change in personal circumstances, for example, the start of a new relationship or intention to have long term relationship or other events which may affect their capacity to care for a child or young person and/or the suitability of the household, and
- Any request or application made by household members in connection with fostering, adoption or childminding

These are regarded as the minimum requirements and Local authorities should ensure that foster carers have a full understanding of what is expected on behalf of both foster carers and the authority when a child/young person is placed, and in relation to any other relevant policies, procedures and practice guidelines.

## 3.7 The Role of the Foster Carer

Some newly approved foster carers have a child placed almost immediately while others have to wait a while. Although you will find it difficult not to become impatient and wonder why you are not being used, remember that supervising social workers try very hard to find the most suitable foster carers possible for each individual child. In addition, although you may be experienced parents you will be inexperienced foster carers. It would not be fair for anybody to present you with a difficult situation the first time, so we will do our best to avoid putting you in that predicament!

While you are waiting, you will find it helpful to meet other foster carers at the Croydon foster carers' group meetings, attend recommended training and look at some books on fostering and talk to your family about how you receive a child into your home.

### 3.7.1 Specific Responsibilities and Tasks

The specific tasks and responsibilities of foster carers fall into three main categories:

#### **Caring for Children**

- To provide day-to-day care for the children being looked after, with the understanding that children separated from their families have particular and different needs to those living at home.

- To actively participate in the implementation of the child's Care Plan, which may include specific tasks, and facilitation of contact with parents and others who are important to the child.
- To promote the healthy physical and emotional growth and development of the child, with particular emphasis on encouraging a healthy lifestyle and a positive attitude towards education.
- To ensure that the children being looked after are encouraged to have a positive understanding of their culture, heritage and religion.
- To assist children in developing and sustaining positive relationships with their parents, relatives and other significant people.
- To set boundaries and manage children's behaviour with the use of appropriate praise and sanctions.
- To assist children in moving on to a new placement or rehabilitated home in a positive manner.
- To assist young people in learning independence skills, enabling them to maximise their chances of moving on successfully.
- To value diversity and work with children and their families in an anti-discriminatory way.

### **Providing a Safe, Secure and Caring Environment**

- To ensure that children are kept safe from harm and abuse.
- To help children to learn how to keep themselves safe and who they can talk to should they feel unsafe or require advice and help.
- To promote the secure attachment of children to adults who are able to provide safe and effective care.
- To act as advocate for children placed with them.
- To recognise the vulnerability to abuse and discrimination of particular groups of children e.g. disabled children and children from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- To acknowledge the vulnerability and functioning of those children who have experienced trauma.
- To be flexible and adaptable in your approach to providing care, so it is consistent with the needs of the children in your care.

### **Working as Part of a Team**

- To work within the Local Authority guidelines, policies and procedures.

- To play an active role as part of the team around the child, working with the children placed with them.
- To actively participate in all reviews, case conferences, personal education plan meetings (PEP), and other relevant meetings and Court hearings as required.
- To keep daily written records of placements and contribute to reports when required.
- To deal responsibly with confidential information and to adhere to Croydon's confidentiality policy.
- To actively promote positive communication between those working with the child, both professionals and the family of the child.
- To maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service.
- To evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) have been attained within 12 months of approval (or within 18 months for family and friends foster carers) in line with Guidance and Regulations.
- To ensure that the personal development plan is developed and maintained with the supervising social worker.
- To have an understanding of how personal experiences have affected their family and the impact that fostering is likely to have on them.
- To develop links within the community and the fostering service, to ensure that ongoing support is available.

## 4. Recording

The main recording policy and guidelines, including access to the Case Records and Retention Procedure, Access to Records/Subject Access Requests Procedure and the Confidentiality Policy can be found here:

[Recording Policy and Guidelines \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

Recording for carers and all involved in the child/young person looked after has a number of important purposes including:

- Maintaining a history for the child - a 'coherent narrative'.
- Provides continuity for the child when social workers are unavailable or changed
- Protects a foster carer from allegations
- Provides an opportunity to reflect on the placement and learn from mistakes and good ideas

- Highlights a carer's training and development needs
- Underlines issues for the child
- Saves time and energy by providing a future reference for carers and staff
- Allows analysis of patterns of behaviour and to spot improvements and problems early on.

## 4.1 Key Issues and Events to Record

The following are the key issues and events you should consider recording (it is appreciated that you may have others you wish to record):

- Day-to-day record
- Improvements and achievements of the child
- Any changes or concerns in behaviour or mood – including details of actual behaviour observed, what was happening before it started and your or other people's response to it
- Dates and times the child is away from your home – friends, away with birth family, missing (*please also see Missing Procedure*)
- Specific incidents, events or changes in circumstances of family members
- Disagreements or complaints concerning any birth family members and how you dealt with them
- Accidents or injuries (even if slight) to the child
- Dates of meetings, attendance and decisions (sometimes these will be part of minutes sent out to you)
- Any medical, dental and optician appointments and treatments/decisions from these – you need to inform the child's social worker about statutory medical appointments and dental checks as s/he has to record this information on the child's file.
- Contacts with school, social worker, birth family.
- Contact visits, child's responses before and after.
- Requests for help or assistance.
- Times when alternative care have been given, e.g. Babysitters, with detail of who they were and what they did.
- Details of any damage or theft by the foster child.
- Involvement with police – reasons and outcome.



You need to ensure you make the child's social worker and your supervising social worker aware of the key events you are recording. Recording sheets are in appendix 5.

You should record accidents and incidents in the appropriate accident/incident sheet keeping a copy for yourself as well as emailing a copy to your Supervising Social Worker (SSW) and the Child's Social Worker (CSW) immediately.

All recordings should be up to date and available for inspection by your Supervising Social Worker and other relevant persons when they visit the home.

Over time your recording should reveal trends and patterns in the child's behaviour and development. Your recording may well underline the improvements and progress that have occurred and enhance your satisfaction in a job well done.

The strictest confidentiality of your recording should be maintained and diaries/notebooks and other documents you record in should be kept in a secure place such as a locked cabinet.

If you have difficulties with reading and writing please feel free to raise this with your supervising social worker who will advise and provide you with additional support if necessary.

## **4.2 Separate Record for Each Child**

Each foster carer is encouraged to develop an electronic folder for recording and storing information relating to the child placed. This folder need to be kept safe as it will contain confidential information, and the folder and its contents belong to Croydon. Moreover within these folders you will need to record, daily on each child, activities, any accidents, and medication. Further discussion can be had with the Supervising Social Worker on when and how you can email the documents in the folder to your Supervising Social Worker.

Parent and baby carers' recording has to be particularly precise, as developmental changes in the child and any change in parental care has to be charted. Parent and baby carers' records are part of an assessment, which a Children's Guardian from the court may wish to read and copy for use in a hearing. Though attendance at court is rare, parent and baby

carers need to be prepared for this and will receive support from the child's social worker and their supervising social worker to attend court.

### **4.3 Computer Records**

With the increased use of electronic forms of communication, we recognise that you may be in email correspondence with your child's social worker, your supervising social worker and other professionals. Electronic copies of key e-mails should be kept on the folder you maintain for each child in placement. If you hold children's information on a personal computer you should check with your supervising social worker to ensure it conforms to the requirements of the Data Protection Act (see para 4.4), is kept confidential and access to information on the child is restricted to you. Once a child moves on, a copy is sent to your supervising social worker and the document deleted from the computer. The computer folders must be secured with passwords at all times.

### **4.4 Data Protection**

Everyone working with looked after children and their families are involved in recording in different ways. Recording is an essential part of the service provided to children and families. It is important to understand its importance and that recording supports positive care of children.

Information pertaining to Data Protection and GDPR can be found here:

[Introduction to data protection | ICO](#)

### **4.5 Key Records to Keep**

The following are key documents and written information about the child placed which should be kept in a secure place:

- Background Information Record
- Placement Information Record
- Care Plan
- Diary or diary sheets clearly written, dated and signed
- Special reports as appropriate such as educational and psychiatric
- Correspondence with the child's social worker and your supervising social worker.

- Copy of CLA reviews.
- Specific work done by the foster child and yourself (this would usually belong to the child).
- Court Orders.
- Birth Certificate
- Passports
- Home Office documents
- Contact details – arrangements and correspondence and meeting minutes.
- Any important certificates, awards, school reports and photos.
- Health and safety – accident/injury records.
- Medical, dental and optical appointments and outcomes.
- Life story books do NOT need to be kept securely but should be available to children so that they can use them when they need to.

## 4.6 Eight Tips for Effective Recording

- 1) Before you start be clear about why you are recording.
- 2) Record as soon as possible after an event or observation.
- 3) Use plain language and avoid jargon.
- 4) Wherever possible stick to the facts; be descriptive if you can.
- 5) When you give an opinion separate it from the facts and explain why you have come to that particular opinion.
- 6) Be sensitive. Record in a way that you would be happy for the child or family to read what you have written.
- 7) Don't forget to sign and date each record.
- 8) Completing regular summaries on younger children and with young people can be a good way of monitoring the child or young person's progress.

## 4.7 What happens to records when a child moves?

When the child is no longer in your care your recording and other documents on the child have to be returned to the child's social worker. You should keep a record of the child's name, date s/he arrived and left and of when the all information was returned/handed over.

## 5. Health and Safety Assessments

### 5.1 Statutory Framework

Children's Services are required by Regulation 26 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 to obtain a range of information before considering whether an applicant is suitable to act as a foster carer and that their household is suitable for any child in respect of which approval may be given. This includes details of the applicant's accommodation.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services requires that the foster home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated, is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and is in good order throughout. Outdoor spaces which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained (Standard 10.2).

Standard 10.5 requires that the foster home is inspected annually, without appointment (**unannounced visit**) by the fostering service to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children. The assessing social worker would during your assessment, ascertain if your accommodation is suitable to enable you to provide safe and stimulating care. In reaching such a decision, a number of factors would have been taken into account, not least the age, gender and numbers of children proposed to be fostered. (Regulation 26 Assessment of prospective foster parents – Schedule 3.)

What may be appropriate for someone who is proposing to foster one baby for pre-adoptive placements may not be appropriate for someone who is proposing to care for teenagers through to independence.

The guidelines are therefore considered afresh for each new application/review rather than applying a rigid minimum standard for all applicants/carers.

Croydon Council is committed to ensuring that any child or young person placed in foster care or with short break carers will be placed in a home that has been assessed and approved to a standard that is safe for children and young people to live in. (Regulations 2011 - Regulation 26 Assessment of prospective foster parents – Schedule 3.)

The Service is also committed to ensure that social work staff who are involved in fostering and short break arrangements are sufficiently experienced and competent to make a

professional judgment in connection with the placing of children and young people in a caring home environment.

The service will also ensure that approved foster and short break carers fulfill the expected competency to provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

The supervising social worker will gather evidence to satisfy the Fostering Panel that the foster carer has an ability to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.

The service will inspect the foster home annually to ensure, via an unannounced visit, it can comfortably accommodate all who live there and that it meets health and safety standards.

Statutory visits to the foster and short break homes will satisfy the service that homes are warm, adequately furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. This process will ensure:

- Every child placed will have her/his own bed and the accommodation arrangements will reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or for any specific need resulting from a disability
- Each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible alternative arrangements must be agreed. (Standard 10.6.)
- The foster or short break home and immediate environment are free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contain safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age, development and level of ability

The service is committed to providing carers with adequate preparation and training which will cover health and safety issues. Carers will also be provided with written guidelines which outline their health and safety responsibilities (Standard 10.3).

The service will provide information on the safety requirements of vehicles used by foster carers for the transport of children in their care (Standard 10.4).

A health and safety assessment will be completed at the following times:

- During the assessment of potential carers, prior to the presentation of the application to Fostering Panel.
- When carrying out the annual unannounced health and safety assessment, which must be attached to the completed annual review form.
- Whenever a carer moves house or carries out major structural works or other changes to their existing property and its immediate environment.
- Where there are major changes to the immediate environment surrounding the home, for example new building works or the creation of a new road.
- Whenever the carer changes their car (in such circumstances it will only be necessary to complete the relevant sections of the assessment).

## 5.2 Risks Children Looked After

As a foster carer, you may feel at times that some of our expectations seem unreasonable and are there just for bureaucratic reasons. In reality, everything we do is child led and we always strive to put the needs of children first and there is nothing more important than ensuring their safety.

There are a number of reasons why children looked after are particularly at risk of accidents. Your own children will be aware of the potential hazards in your house, as they would have grown up with them. A number of children looked after joining your household will wish to investigate their new surroundings and the absence of good safety measures will increase the risk of injury.

Some children looked after may be developmentally immature and if this is not taken into account and assumptions are made about their abilities, they are likely to be more at risk from similar hazards than their peers. Others may not have received appropriate guidance in this area from their own parents and will be unaware of potential dangers.

A smaller but not insignificant number may have a tendency to self-harm and particular attention will be needed to minimise the potential risk to such children.

## 6. Connected Persons (Family and Friends Foster Carer)

A 'connected person', also referred to as 'family and friends' means a relative such as grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, friend of or other person connected with the child. Before a child is placed a temporary approval of the connected person must take place in line with Regulation 24 of The 2010 Regulations and related Schedule 4. This temporary assessment will be carried out by the child's social work team. The temporary placement will be for 16 weeks with provision for this to be extended by a further 8 weeks, if necessary.

Once the child has been placed a full assessment of the connected person will be undertaken by the fostering team within the 16 week period to be presented at the fostering panel.

Following approval at the fostering panel the regulatory expectations of connected carers are the same as for 'generic' foster carers.

## 7. Equipment

When you are approved as a foster carer, you will be given a startup grant of up to **£500.00** to purchase essential items relevant to your registration. Please refer to the financial policy for the most up to date information.

It is expected that you will then budget for replacement and maintenance of equipment from the weekly fostering allowance.

All equipment must comply with the relevant British Safety Standards, and in the case of baby and toddler, equipment must be purchased from approved retailers.

Your supervising social worker has a responsibility to ensure that any equipment is of a good standard and to inform you of any concerns, giving you a clear time scale for rectifying any problems.

## 8. Training

Training is a requirement for continued foster carer approval, so all registered foster carers in the household are expected to undertake a minimum of 4 days equivalent training each review year.

Foster carers are in a unique position in the children's workforce, caring for children in their own homes every day. This training program aims to address your particular learning needs and it is part of our on-going commitment to support you in the demanding work you do.

All foster carers are also welcome to attend the multi-agency training offered by the Safeguarding Partnership which is detailed at the end of the training calendar. Some of this training is E-learning while some are face-to-face.

Fostering is becoming an ever more complex task and although many of the skills you utilise in caring for children cannot be taught, there are always new skills and learning to be acquired and all carers are expected to complete a core training programme. Where there are two carers in a household, both are expected to attend such mandatory training.

Mandatory training topics are:

- Introduction to Croydon (must be completed in first year post approval)
- First Aid (must be completed in first year post approval)
- Safer Caring (must be completed in first year post approval)
- Safer Caring for Men (must be completed in first year post approval)
- Internet Safety (must be completed in first year post approval)
- Managing challenging behavior (must be completed in first year post approval, for approval of 5 years old and over)
- Separation and Attachment (must be completed in first year post approval)
- Recording (must be completed in first year post approval)
- Tsds
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Health & Safety
- Education
- Working with Difference/Cultural Awareness
- Youth Gangs and Exploitation (for those caring for teenagers)
- Supporting carers through allegation



We will also expect you to undertake further training and development as identified in discussion with your supervising social worker or during your annual review of registration.

All carers are expected to maintain a personal development plan. This should include details of training and development undertaken and future training needs. Your supervising social worker will help you produce and maintain this during their regular supervisory visits.

We will ensure that you are notified of available training and development opportunities on a regular basis. We will also ensure that all mandatory training is accessible to all carers and endeavour to ensure that all other training and development activity is accessible to all carers.

## **9. Respite Care**

Respite care is required in a number of different circumstances. For example, a full time foster carer may need a holiday or they may have urgent family commitments meaning they need to travel overseas. Sometimes if a fostering placement is particularly challenging the fostering service in conjunction with the child's social worker, may arrange for them to have a short break from the placement. This can also sometimes be the case with birth families, where a child has a disability or a particularly challenging behavioral issues which will mean that the parents are under considerable pressure and would benefit from a short break.

### **9.1 What is involved in Respite Care?**

Respite care involves working closely with the full time carer who is usually responsible for the child. It is also important to reassure a child that the respite placement will only be for a short time period and that they will be able to return to their usual home afterwards. This can often be a stressful period for a foster child who may already be feeling the effects of previously disruptive changes.

### **9.2 What are the benefits of Respite Care?**

Respite care is extremely important to the well-being of many foster families. This is because this type of placement can:

- Provide vital support to parents or long term foster carers

- Allow carers to enrich the lives of children or young people on a short term basis
- Have a huge impact on a child and a foster carer's quality of life, giving the respite foster carer the chance to make a real difference in the lives of both parties.

Arrangements for respite is sometimes also agreed as part of the child's care plan.

## 10. Mentoring

Peer Mentoring refers to approved foster carers in a structured one-to-one relationship with other approved foster carers. Peer mentoring is delivered by a more experienced foster carer (the mentor) to a newly approved foster care, or a carer in need of support (the mentee), outside of any line management relationship. Mentors offer support from a position of understanding as foster carers themselves.

### 10.1 Aim and Objective of Mentoring

To contribute to the fostering service's programme of support to foster carers, through a professionally managed scheme that offers a supportive relationship to carers and support through training and managing new situations facing difficulties. This further seeks to:

- Support the recruitment and retention of foster carers
- Provide a problem solving resource for foster carers in difficulty
- Personal Development for experienced foster carers
- Promote Local Authority policy
- Enhancement to the quality of care to children through increased skills, confidence and motivation of carers and thus:
- Improvement to placement stability
- Provide an enhanced support service to foster carers, with the aim of developing the skills and understanding of the foster carers, and thereby sustaining placements and improving outcomes for children
- Provide the mentor with an opportunity for experience and personal development.

## 10.2 Summary of Core Responsibilities and Duties

To contribute to the wider fostering task by:

- Providing one-to-one support to newly approved foster carers, or to other foster carers when placements become challenging, for a planned period of six months, with the possibility of extension if agreed by the mentoring co-ordinator.
- Maintaining contact with the foster carer (mentee) at the agreed times and dates.
- Providing telephone and email support to mentored foster carers, but may involve face-to-face contact if required.
- Helping foster carers (mentees) to identify appropriate goals and tasks and to work towards achieving these.
- Supporting one or more mentees at any one time.
- Attending regular training sessions for mentors combined with opportunities to network (minimum of 6 meetings annually)
- Expected to attend all mentoring meetings which are compulsory for the role.
- Attending supervision sessions every six weeks with the Supervising Social Worker.
- Complying with fostering service policies and procedures, and in particular the confidentiality and recording policies relating to the peer mentoring scheme.
- Promoting the peer mentoring scheme and participating in related events.
- Participating actively in evaluation of the peer mentoring scheme.
- Mentors responsible for ensuring that the mentoring agreement is held within two weeks of allocation.
- Mentors must remain up to date with own training and development.

## 10.3 Additional tasks

In addition to the above, and by agreement with the mentoring scheme co-ordinator, to:

- Attend information sessions and other recruitment events.
- Support mentees with the TSD workbook within their first year of approval.
- Participate in *The Skills to Foster* training courses.
- Undertake specific training tasks with identified foster carers.

## 10.4 Beginning a Mentoring Relationship

The relationship between mentor and mentee is likely to be most successful if the mentee understands what to expect and feels confident in the mentor. The mentor needs to be

protected as far as possible from unrealistic expectations. A basic written contract or agreement between the mentor and mentee can cover aspects such as:

- Purpose of the relationship
- Specific skills and knowledge identified as development goals for the mentee
- Ground rules, including behaviour and personal responsibility
- Method/s and frequency of contact
- Role of others, such as the mentoring scheme co-ordinator
- Boundaries
- Recording
- Confidentiality
- Problem resolution.

The mentoring agreement will be completed face-to-face within two weeks of allocation or when the mentee has got their first placement, with the involvement of the supervising social worker for the mentee. The practical arrangements for mentoring will be discussed and agreed by all parties and the agreement formed and signed. The mentor and mentee can each have a copy of the agreement.

## 10.5 Duration and endings

Duration of relationship between mentor and mentee depends on the purpose of the mentoring.

- **For a new foster carer** – Minimum of 6 months mentoring support.
- **For a specific purpose** – Minimum of 6 months mentoring support.

It is acknowledged that in the most extreme case, mentors will need to take a break from mentoring, such as allegations or for personal circumstances.

## 11. Support Groups

Croydon Fostering believes that support groups can make a valuable contribution to the range of support services available for carers. The Croydon Foster Care Association (CFCA) currently runs support groups for all registered foster carers in the Borough. Some support groups are facilitated by supervising social workers.

Current and planned support groups include:

- Male carers group
- Long term placements support group
- New carers support group
- CWD support group
- Backup carers support group
- UASC support group
- Black and Asian support group
- Sons and Daughters support group
- Connected carers support group

It is an expectation that foster carers should attend these groups so as to share experiences, and also as another source of support.

## **12. Croydon's Foster Carers' Association (CFCA)**

There is an established Croydon Foster Carers Association that is run and managed by the foster carers through a management committee. The Fostering Service Manager and other team managers attend meetings with the association approximately four times a year and the annual general meeting

The contribution that a thriving independent foster care association can play in the fostering service is invaluable.

Once approved as foster carers for Croydon you automatically become members of the Croydon Foster Carers' Association and we encourage all carers to take an active part in its activities.

## **13. Foster Talk**

Fostertalk is a non-profit organisation created in 2004. It originated out of the demand from foster carers for more focussed and dedicated support services. Fostertalk prides itself on delivering high quality, independent support that really makes a positive difference to the fostering task.

All approved fosters for Croydon are registered as members of the fostertalk; the membership fees are paid by the fostering service.

If you have not received your copy of the fostertalk membership guide please speak to your supervising social worker. You can also make direct contact with Fostertalk:

**Telephone:** 01527 836910

**Email:** [enquiries@fostertalk.org](mailto:enquiries@fostertalk.org)

**Website:** [www.fostertalk.org](http://www.fostertalk.org)

## 14. Moving house

You must give us advance notice if you are moving house. This will not usually have any major impact on your registration unless you are moving a long way from Croydon. Your supervising social worker will need to carry out a fresh Health and Safety inspection and possibly bring forward your annual review. This will be necessary where your new accommodation has implications for your registration. For example, if you are moving to a smaller accommodation, we might need to change the number of children you are approved to foster.

The children's social worker will also need to discuss with you (and the children) the implications of your move.

## 15. Fostering Allowances and Finance

Croydon fostering has a detailed financial policy for fostering carers. This can be accessed here: [Financial Policy for Croydon Foster Carers - 2021/22](#)

Some of the highlights you might find immediately useful are:

### 15.1 Discretion and Accountability

Foster carers are responsible for using their discretion to ensure that the child or young person's overall needs are met. However, if asked you should be able to account for how

you have used the weekly maintenance allowance to meet the needs of the child in your care.

## 15.2 Incurring Costs

Other than the costs that are covered by the weekly maintenance allowance and the payments for birthdays, festivals, etc. All other costs should only be incurred AFTER agreement has been sought and given. You should have a discussion with your supervising social worker before incurring cost. Your supervising social will first explore with you whether the maintenance allowance should cover the cost. If it does not, then your supervising social worker should seek approval from the Spending Control Panel.

Receipts must be retained and presented for any claim for expenditure to be reimbursed. Failure to present a valid receipt could result in a claim for reimbursement not being agreed. Please sure that receipts are sent to [fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk) and ensure that your supervising social worker is included in the email.

## 15.3 Giving money to Young People

Where it is decided that a young person should be placed on a programme of independence in preparation for a move to independent living, the carer will provide them a fixed weekly allowance. During this time, the expectation is that the young person, carer and respective social workers will agree a fixed amount from the maintenance allowance to be paid into the young person's bank account. This is a very individual arrangement for each child and must be tailored to meet their needs and is detailed in their Pathway Plan. A meeting between the child's social worker, supervising social worker, foster carer and young person should be held to plan how and what parts of its own care the young person will meet, as well as what weekly allowance is provided.

## 16. State Benefits

You are not entitled to claim state benefits or universal credits and allowances for fostered children such as Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

Any taxable 'profit' you make from fostering (on which you pay income tax) will be taken into account for any Child Tax Credit you may be entitled to in respect of your own children and in calculating Working Tax Credit entitlement.

## 17. Insurance and Damage Claims

**It is your responsibility to advise your household and car insurers that you are fostering.** Premiums are not usually affected and most household content policies include accidental damage.

Croydon's own insurance covers major expenses arising from loss or damage caused deliberately or recklessly by a foster child. If a criminal offence has led to loss or damage, this must be reported to the Police. Any accusation of serious loss or damage caused by a foster child must be investigated by their social worker and your supervising social worker immediately. You must not wait until the child has left the placement before making a claim.

Goods that are maliciously damaged by foster children will be covered by the Croydon's own Insurance Policy for Foster Carers, provided that carers' household insurance company refuses to cover. Croydon Council will consider reimbursement, through an ex-gratia payment, of any loss suffered by foster carers as a result of theft or damage to their property by a foster child looked after by Croydon Council and placed by them. This does not include normal wear and tear.

It is the responsibility of the foster carer to inform their insurance company that they are foster carers for Croydon Council. Where a foster carer wishes to make a claim, the claim form must be completed and returned to the Supervising Social Worker. Any reimbursement will be offered on a "like of like" basis for items or the same value. Supervising Social Workers are responsible for preparing a report to support any claim.

Unfortunately we cannot guarantee that our own insurers will cover the full cost of any claim and we strongly advise you to ensure that you have adequate insurance in place, in particular for accidental damage. **In instances where you are considering making a claim via the council's insurers, you must produce evidence that your own insurers have refused to pay.**

If you are using your car to transport foster children you must have a fully comprehensive insurance cover.



## 18. Placements in Foster Care

Where a decision has been made that a child requires a foster placement, the child's social worker should request a placement by contacting the duty social worker at the Fostering Service.

More information and the procedures, including information about matching and placement planning can be found here: [Placements in Foster Care \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

### 18.1 Exemptions

It may sometimes be necessary to ask you to consider taking a placement outside of your normal range of approval. This might for example mean asking you to take placements over your approval numbers in order to keep a sibling group together. This must be agreed by a senior manager and if the placement is to last for more than 6 days, thereafter you will need to have a foster carer review undertaken to consider a change of approval, and this can be presented to the Agency Decision Maker for approval.

### 18.2 Placements Made Out of Office Hours

Placements sometimes need to be made outside of office hours and if you have indicated that you are willing to take such placements you may be approached by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT). You will be expected to keep the child until a placement is identified for the young person. In the case of a long bank holiday weekend, such as Easter, it may be 3 or 4 days before fresh arrangements can be made. However, if you have a vacancy then after consideration of matching criteria with your SSW, you may be asked to keep the child for a longer period.

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## 18.3 Accepting or rejecting a placement request

The final decision about accepting a placement rests with you. While the social worker who contacts you may feel that you are the best available carer for the child, you need to be satisfied that you are able to meet the child's needs and the social worker should provide you with the information you need to make this decision.

The following are some of the things that the duty social worker will inform you about:

- The child's name
- The child's date of birth
- The child's gender
- Why the child needs to be looked after
- The child's race, cultural background and religion
- The child's language
- The child's home address.
- Details of the child's family and other significant figures in the child's life
- Whether the child has been looked after before
- How long the placement is expected to last
- Whether the child is to be accommodated or subject to a court order
- Whether the child is subject to a child protection plan.
- Whether the child is known to have been abused
- What contact arrangements are expected
- What school the child attends and whether s/he will be expected to continue to attend the same school
- The child's health history, including details of any medical conditions, medication allergies or special dietary requirements
- Any clubs or activities that the child attends
- Any specific behavioral issues which may be of concern
- Offending history (if any)
- Things that the child enjoys, what they like to do.

While information may be scarce if the child is placed in an emergency or out of hours, in most cases it is reasonable to expect the social worker to be able **to provide you with most of the above information.**

You will need to consider the implications of the information available for your own family as well as for any other foster children in the home with you. You will also need to consider whether you are confident that you are able to meet the child's needs. If you feel you need more information or you have reservations about taking the child then you should tell the social worker rather than agree to a placement that you are unsure about.

## 18.4 Preparing for a Placement

While you will need to prepare household guidelines in advance of the experience of a placement, you will also need to consider these afresh in advance of each individual placement.

**Some of the issues you will need to consider are:**

- How will you explain to the child what is expected of them and other household members?
- Do you have all the information you need to care for the child safely?
- Do you have all the equipment and sundries you need?
- Is the child known to have been abused?
- Do the particular needs of the child mean that the usual household guidelines need to be revised?
- If so is this achievable and acceptable to all other members of the household?
- What are the most important household rules that must be adhered to and which are less significant?
- How will unacceptable behaviour be dealt with, whoever displays it?

## 18.5 Settling the child into your home

Whenever and however a child comes to you, the settling-in process is likely to be stressful for the child and their family, as well as you and your family. As you gain in experience, you will discover a variety of different techniques that work for you and can be applied according to the needs of different children.

You will need to go at the child's pace, but some of the things you might consider to help them feel comfortable include:

- Show them around your house and garden – it might help to ask any other children in placement or your own children to do this.
- Show them where their bedroom is and where they can keep their belongings.
- Show them where your toys are and make sure they know which of your possessions they can use and which they cannot.
- Make sure they know who everyone else is in your household and what they should call them.
- Explain the rules of the house.
- Ask them about their likes and dislikes, especially what they like to eat and what they cannot stand.

Many things will be different for the child when they walk through the doors of your house for the first time. Some of these differences will be exciting and welcomed but others will be a further cause of anxiety for the child alongside what is already a stressful time. Differences may include the size of your house, the number of people who live with you; that you have pets and the child has never had pets and just the general way in which your family lives from day to day. Attention to the following issues will help the child cope with these differences without losing their own identity:

- What was their lunch box like?
- Would they like a similar or different one?
- Are they used to doing jobs around the house; would they like to help and if so what do they think they would be good at?
- Are they used to having pocket money; are they used to having a regular magazine or comic?
- Do they have any pets; or they like animals?
- Are they used to playing with other children; where did they play – at home or at friend's houses?
- Do they have a comfort toy or object? What is it called? You may need to resist the temptation to wash soft toys or comfort blankets. Smells are particularly important to children and may not want their comforters or soft toys to be washed.
- What sort of clothes does the child like to wear? If the child is old enough, let them help you choose what they wear and what clothes to buy. Do not throw away clothes they have brought with them. Try to let the child wear as many of these clothes as they wish, especially in the early days.

- Do not cut the child's hair or otherwise change their appearance without first discussing this with their parents and seeking their written agreement in consultation with the child social worker. Remember that for some children there are religious restrictions on cutting hair and styles of dress and appearances
- Be particularly sensitive with regards to bathing and sleeping. A child may be uncomfortable undressing in front of you and these times of day may cause particular distress for children who have been sexually abused.
- School - enable them to go to the same school if at all possible, and discuss any difficulties in doing so with the child's social worker.

Many children are resilient and will cope well with move to your house. For others, however sensitive you are during these early days, there may be an unwelcome reaction which may include:

- Rejection of you and your family
- Challenging your authority
- Aggression to you, other children or themselves
- Constant attention seeking
- Withdrawal or distancing themselves
- Bedwetting
- Disturbed sleep patterns and/or nightmares
- School refusal
- Imagined (fabricated) or real illness

Given time, patience and your skills as a carer, these difficulties will ease. Do not expect this to happen overnight. You will need to keep talking to the child and allow them to express their feelings, even negative ones. Make sure that you talk to others, especially the child's social worker and your supervising social worker or mentor. There will be times that you feel you are coping with the weight of all these problems on your own but you are not. As a foster carer you are part of a team and by working together we can overcome these difficult periods and make a positive difference in the life of the child.

## 19. Contact Arrangements

Research shows that it is beneficial and desirable for most children to continue to have regular contact with their parents, relatives and friends. Positive, regular contact will help a child to settle in placement, especially where the child sees the foster carer promotes and respects this contact. Where a child is to be permanently placed, contact can have benefits to a child such as promoting a child's identity and keeping alive options for relationships later on in their life.

The procedures relating to Contact with Parents/Adults and Siblings can be found here: [Contact with Parents/Adults and Siblings \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

Contact is a key part of the fostering role and can be very different for each placement and thus be very time consuming to the Foster carer. Some form of contact is expected for most placements and you will have a significant role to play in this. You will therefore need to discuss the proposed arrangements with the child's social worker and consider these in the light of your own circumstances.

**Please note that generally you will be expected to transport the child to and from contact.**

## 20. Child Looked After (CLA) Reviews

Each child in our care has regular Child Looked After meetings to review the progress of their care plan. These are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The first meeting is held within 20 working days of the start of the child's placement, the second within 3 months of the first meeting and the third and subsequent meeting are to be held no more than 6 months after the previous meeting.

You will be involved in these meetings (they are often held in your home) and you are expected to provide a written report. These meetings should make sure that there is a Permanence Plan in place for the child, which details all of the options being explored for the child's future.

Full procedures around CLA reviews can be found here: [Looked After Reviews \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## 21. Other Professionals

During your career as a foster carer you will come across many different types of professionals who work with the children you are caring for. Some of these you will be familiar with, such as GPs, Teachers and Health Visitors. There are others that you are unlikely to have come across before.

### 21.1 Children's Guardians

A Children's Guardian is an independent court appointed social worker who looks after the interests of children subject to Court proceedings, such as the Local Authority applying for a Care Order. They are appointed by and report to the Court. Their job is to advise the Court as to what they think is in best interest of the child. They will:

- Listen to what the child wants.
- Talk to everyone who is important to the child such as their parents and grandparents.
- Talk to Health Visitors, Teachers, social workers and anyone else with relevant information.
- Read all the paperwork that we have relating to the child and their family.
- Work out what they think is best for the child.
- Make recommendations to the Court.

It is probable that as part of this process they will want to talk to you to find out how the child is progressing and possibly to seek your views over issues such as your observation of how contact between the child and their parents has been.

Children's Guardians have considerable influence on the final outcome of any Court hearing.

### 21.2 Out of Hours Team

As family problems do not always arise during office hours, Croydon Council has an Emergency Duty Team (EDT), who are on call overnight, at weekends and during Bank Holidays. The Emergency Duty Team should be your first port of call outside of office hours if there is a major problem relating to a child in your care such as a child going missing. You can contact the Emergency Duty Team on:

**Telephone:** 020 8686 4433

**Email:** [SSD-EMERGENCY-DUTY-TEAM@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:SSD-EMERGENCY-DUTY-TEAM@croydon.gov.uk)

It is expected that Croydon fostering provides out of hours support and you will be supported by one of the supervising social workers. They are available from Mon-Friday 5pm-9am, weekends (Sat-Sun) and during bank holidays 9am-9am the following day. This rota is sent out every month via email to all Croydon foster carers.

On occasions you may be contacted by the Emergency Duty Team. This could happen if you are showing as having a vacancy and we need to place a child with you in an emergency outside of office hours.

## 21.3 Independent Visitors

Where a child has been looked after for some time and they are not in contact or hardly see their parents, an Independent Visitor may be appointed. This will usually be decided at the child's review and must be with the agreement of the child. Independent Visitors are not paid employees, rather they are volunteers recruited and trained to befriend children and are able to:

- Advise and support the child.
- Help the child in their social, emotional, religious and cultural development. This can be particularly helpful if the child is from a different cultural background to you, where the Independent Visitor may act as a link to the child's own community, helping them to maintain and develop their own culture.
- Act as an advocate for the child and at the child's request, speak for them at meetings such as the child's review.

## 21.4 Police

While we are all aware of the role of the Police, many of us will go through our lives with no direct contact with a Police officer. As a carer there may be times when you need to contact the Police and you should not be afraid to do so should the need arise. In most instances where Police involvement is necessary, (a missing child for example) there will be time to talk to the child's social worker or the Emergency Duty Team first to agree that the Police do need to be contacted and also agree about who will do this. However, in an emergency and



especially where someone is at physical risk of harm, you should not delay in contacting the Police immediately.

You will need to advise the Police that the child is looked after and what their legal status is (i.e. If they on a Care Order or accommodated). If the child is subject to a legal order such as a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order, the Police may need to see a copy of the order. They will also need other information such as the child's home address and details of who has parental responsibility so you should always try to keep relevant details, including a photo of the child close to hand.

## **21.5 Appropriate Adult**

If a young person is to be questioned at a Police station they must be accompanied by an appropriate adult who must observe the interview and should ensure that the interview is carried out fairly, advising the young person as necessary and facilitating communication between the Police and the young person.

An appropriate adult can be a parent, social worker, foster carer or any other responsible adult other than a Police officer or someone employed by the Police. However, the foster carer is expected to be the appropriate adult for children in their care unless in exceptional circumstances. It is possible therefore that you could be called upon to act as an appropriate adult; and if this happens you should first try and seek advice from the child's social worker or "Out of Hours" Emergency Duty Team if necessary. If this is not possible you should attend the interview and contact the social worker as soon as possible thereafter.

## **21.6 Children/Young People Advocate**

Young people deserve to have someone on their side, someone to stand up for them. Advocates are independent. They don't give their personal opinions. They're simply there to explain the wishes of the young person, and to argue their case. This could include:

- Helping the child/young person to say what you want;
- Making sure that the child/young person's voice, wishes, aspirations and feelings are heard;
- Listening to the child/young person;
- Helping the child/young person to make a complaint;

- Making sure the child/young person understand their rights and that help ensure that their rights are being respected;
- Getting the services the child/young person is entitled to;
- Supporting the child/young person at important meetings.

## 22. Parental Responsibility

The Children Act 1989 defines parental responsibility as, ‘all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law, a parent of a child has, in relation to the child and her/his property’.

Where a child's father and mother were married to each other at the time of her/his birth, they shall each have parental responsibility for the child or if the father is named on the birth certificate, and the child is born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003.

Where a child's father and mother were not married to each other at the time of her/his birth:

- The mother shall have parental responsibility for the child and
- The father shall not have parental responsibility for the child, unless he acquires it in accordance with the provisions of the Act

A father can acquire parental responsibility if:

- He becomes registered in the birth certificate as the child's father.
- He and the child's mother enter into a parental responsibility agreement providing for him to have parental responsibility for the child.
- A Court orders that he shall have parental responsibility for the child.

## 23. Legal Status of the Child

It is important that you know the legal status of any child placed with you and understand the implications of this legal status for all involved.

All children in care will be “looked after” by the Local Authority. This term is used to cover all children regardless of their legal status.

The following are the most important Acts of Parliament and other pieces of the law that foster carers will need to know about because they may affect your work as a foster carer.

## **23.1 Accommodation (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989)**

Accommodation is a purely voluntary arrangement under which the Local Authority enters an agreement with person(s) with parental responsibility, to care for the child.

The Local Authority does not acquire parental responsibility. However, anyone who does not have parental responsibility for a child but does have actual care of her/him may do what is reasonable in the circumstances to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (s3 (5) Children Act 1989).

A person with parental responsibility has the right to remove the child at any time.

While in practice arrangements for accommodated children are straightforward, contact arrangements can be more difficult to control as the Local Authority cannot restrict contact with anyone with parental responsibility.

It is worth noting that the person with parental responsibility has made this arrangement with the Local Authority (Croydon), and not you individually, so they will need to liaise with Croydon Children's Services to make any adjustments to the accommodation agreement.

## **23.2 Powers of Police Protection (s46 of the Children Act 1989)**

Where a Police officer has reason to believe that a child is suffering or might otherwise suffer significant harm, they may remove them to suitable accommodation, a place of safety.

A child can only be kept under Police Protection (PP) for a maximum of 72 hours, so within this time the local authority needs to decide:

- Either need to apply for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO), or
- Apply for an interim care order (ICO) with removal, or

- Seek the parents' consent under s.20 for the child/children to remain placed in foster care after 72 hours, or
- Return the child to the parents' care after the expiry of the 72 hours.

During the period of the PP the parents and other holders retain parental responsibility. The Police do **not** acquire parental responsibility.

The child can only be removed from Police Protection with the agreement of the Police.

Children subject to PP may have been removed from their parents in traumatic circumstances and may be extremely distressed. There may be a number of appointments, meetings and contact sessions as the Local Authority has only 72 hours in which to decide if it is safe for the child to go home or if further legal action is necessary.

### **23.3 Emergency Protection Order (s44 of the Children Act 1989)**

An Emergency Protection Order (EPO) is a Court Order made where the Court has reason to believe that the child is or is likely to suffer significant harm if s/he is not removed or does not remain where s/he is, or where the Local Authority believes the child is suffering significant harm and the parents/carers will not allow them to see the child.

An EPO will last up to 8 days with 1 possible extension for a further 7 days.

An EPO gives the Local Authority parental responsibility, which it shares with the parents and other holders of parental responsibility.

The child can only be removed with the agreement of the Local Authority or on the expiry of the Order (if no other Order has been made).

### **23.4 Interim Care Order (s38 of the Children Act 1989)**

The court can consider whether to make an Interim Care Order, which places the child temporarily under the care or supervision of the local authority whilst care proceedings are ongoing.

An Interim Care Order will be made where the court has reasonable grounds for believing the threshold criteria have been met.

An Interim Care Order can last up to 8 weeks on the first occasion and can be renewed for periods of up to 28 days. There is no limit to the number of interim care orders that can be made. The Local Authority acquire Parental Responsibility for the child when there is an Interim Care Order in place.

## **23.5 Full Care Order (s31 of the Children Act 1989)**

Where a child is made subject to a Care Order, the Local Authority is given Parental Responsibility and will share it with current Parental Responsibility holders, for example, the child's parents. However, the Local Authority can exercise their Parental Responsibility above that of current Parental Responsibility holders insofar as necessary to safeguard the welfare of a child.

A Care Order commits the child to the care of the Local Authority and lasts until the child is 18 years of age unless discharged by a Court or the making of an Adoption, Residence or Special Guardianship Order.

## **24. Virtual school**

The Virtual School for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, ensures that schools, social workers, carers and other professionals understand statutory responsibilities and are aware of the best practice.

It ensures that communication about our children is regular and constructive and that we are all working together successfully to help them to thrive.

The aim of the Virtual School is to ensure that Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers have the opportunity to fulfil their educational potentials.

### **24.1 Why do we need virtual schools?**

Many individual children and young people in care enjoy and do well at school. However, as a group, children in care do not perform as well in their education as their peers. Since April 2014, every Local Authority in England has had to appoint at least one person to fulfil the Local Authority's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of it's looked after

children, wherever they live or are educated. Within the Local Authority the Virtual School Head is the statutory lead [Children and Families Act 2014] with responsibility for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve educational experiences and outcomes.

## **24.2 Support Provided by Virtual School.**

- Monitor progress, provide management information and track data in order to highlight where support is needed.
- Monitor the daily school attendance of Looked after Children.
- Ensure that all children in care have an effective, high quality Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus is used effectively to improve educational outcomes.
- Provide guidance on individual situations to achieve the best possible outcomes for Looked After children.
- Provide direct support in school through designated teachers.
- Provide information and guidance on current legislation and practices in relation to looked after children.
- Build capacity, through modelling best practice, in settings, schools and colleges so that LAC and Care Leavers are prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The Virtual School is to support carers to identify an appropriate school place where there are difficulties.

## **25. Safe Caring**

A Safe Caring Policy must be provided and kept up to date for each foster home.

The assessing social worker should have ensured that guidelines were produced during the assessment process. They should have ensured that all members of the household were involved in this process and agreement reached on the final policy.

A copy of your safe caring policy should be retained by your supervising social worker on your file and these should be discussed with the child's social worker at the point of Placement Agreement Meeting. Consideration will need to be given at this stage to the needs of the child and implication of the policy. In some cases it may be apparent that the proposed match is not suitable and an alternative placement should be identified.

The policy should be shared with the child, in an age appropriate way, as early as possible in the placement. Ideally this will be prior to or at the point of placement, but in all cases must be done no later than the Placement Agreement meeting. In some cases the policy may need to be adjusted because of the specific needs or background of the child and the placement agreement meeting should be used as the opportunity to agree any required changes.

Safe caring policy will need to be revised as the circumstances of the household change.

This should be done immediately if there are significant changes such as someone joining the household or you move house. In such cases the revised policy will need to be cleared with the social worker of any child in placement.

The policy should also be considered at the point of every child's review or Placement Agreement review to ensure they remain up to date and appropriate.

## **25.1 The Need for Safe Caring Policy**

All families have strategies for day-to-day living. These will vary from family to family and will be more or less formal depending on the circumstances and preferences of each family. In most families, such strategies are unwritten and frequently unspoken. Children learn how the family operates as part of their day to day development and generally accept this as the 'norm' as they have limited experience of anything else.

You need to be aware of the strategies in operation in your household for three reasons. Firstly you need to consider the impact on the way the family functions and on a child joining the household. Adjustments are likely to be needed and you need to think about the ways of minimising the disruption to family routines.

Secondly, you need to consider the implications of your existing strategies for children joining the household. Such children will usually already have experience of family life and the strategies used in their own home may be very different from those in operation in yours. Some will come from chaotic households where there are few boundaries and adjusting to a more formal structure could be difficult. Others will come from a very rigid and structured background where they have had little control over their own lives and adjusting to new found freedoms may be problematic.

Thirdly, you will need to identify behaviour or practices within your own household that might be acceptable to you, but will increase risk in a foster home. Some perfectly acceptable routines in families could put both children and carers at risk in foster homes.

## **25.2 Developing Safe Caring Policies.**

All members of the household should be involved in agreeing the policy, in particular children of the household and if applicable the secondary carer.

While foster care has changed dramatically over recent years, there is still a tendency in coupled households for one to be seen as the primary carer and the other as the secondary carer and the secondary carer is frequently male.

In many occasions the secondary carer does not attend the same level of training or support groups as the main carer and may not be directly involved in planning meetings or reviews for individual children. This means that they might not have up to date information or be aware of all the issues that need to be considered to ensure safe caring.

Similar issues will apply to children of the household, but for men there are additional considerations. While children are abused by women or other children, the majority of abusers are heterosexual men and most allegations are made against male carers. This does not mean that men should pass all responsibility for fostering to female partners, but rather that men need to be fully involved in working out how to provide care safely.

Developing safe caring policies should not mean changing everything that you do. It is about considering which elements of the way the household operates might put children or household members at risk. Once these elements are identified, you will need to develop strategies that minimise this risk.

It is neither desirable nor our aim to produce a complicated, rigid set of rules for your household. Policies do need to be written down so that children joining the household, their parents and social workers understand the way the household operates. These should be as brief as possible however, and only include those elements that will enhance safe caring.



## 25.3 Transporting Children by Car

The carer may need to consider the appropriateness of transporting some children alone in a car, in particular if the child is known to have been abused. Where possible, this should be avoided, especially for men. If you have to travel alone with the child, then you may feel the need for the child to sit in the back of the car **AND ENSURE THAT THE CHILD LOCKS HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED.**

You must ensure that children traveling in your car are properly restrained using an approved car seat or booster seat and/or seat belt. Children under 1.35 metres in height or under the age of 12 years must use a car seat or booster seat designed for their age and weight. Young people over 1.35 metres tall or over the age of 12 years must always wear a seat belt. This is a legal requirement and if broken the carer may be personally responsible for the fine of £500. Carers must have a fully comprehensive Insurance cover.

## 25.4 Visitors and Lodgers

Your assessing social worker would have discussed with you who are regular visitors to your home and the implications of this during your assessment to be a foster carer. All those who live in your house **over the age of 18 years old**, including lodgers will need to provide a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. This will also be necessary for regular visitors to your house if they have significant contact with or are ever to be left in charge of fostered children.

## 25.5 Child Minding

Croydon Fostering Service does not allow simultaneous roles of a foster carer and a childminder. The social work visits, tasks around contact, etc. And the variety of fostering tasks linked to your fostered child will take up most days of a week in a lot of cases; you will not be available to provide quality care for childminded children at the same time as caring for the fostered child.

There is also the possibility that the foster children may need more attention than you can give whilst childminding. Also that sometimes it may be upsetting to see or hear what the

foster children can say (being explicit about drugs or sex or difficult family life) and this can be dealt with more easily with your own children who live with you and can talk to you about it and have it explained before a foster child arrives, but a child who is with you for a few hours a day may not be able to have it explained enough.

## 25.6 Babysitting/ Back up carers

As for any child, there will be times when fostered children need to be cared for by babysitters or a back-up carers while the foster carer is out. At the time of your assessment, you will identify back up carers, who will support you in your fostering role. The back-up carers can be your friends or part of your immediate or extended family.

Applicants for Back Up carers will be assessed and they are required to attend some key training i.e. First aid and the foster carer will help to ensure that they have an updated DBS check.

## 25.7 Technology

Laptops, phones [all kinds], X Box, and Play Stations all give full access to the world via the internet, and chat rooms and social media. The many positives of today's technology can also be a danger to many vulnerable young people and children who are in our care. Looked after children often have low self-esteem, can be isolated from their peers and may have experienced abuse. All of these factors can leave them open to risks associated with internet abuse.

Some of the ways you can protect children are:

- Talk to your child about their internet use and take an interest. Your involvement is the best way of keeping them safe.
- Place the computer where the whole family can use it, rather than out of sight in a bedroom.
- Talk to children to agree what kind of sites they are allowed to visit. Check regularly to make sure they stay within these agreed limits.
- Search out positive and fun sites. Many TV programmes and other children's media suggest good sites to visit, including their own.
- Tell children not to give out their personal details, including their name, address and telephone number or school to anyone over the internet.

- Be positive! The internet is a fantastic resource for learning, entertainment and communication. Just like in the real world you need to take a few precautions.
- Let children know they can come to you if something they don't like happens on line.
- Try not to overreact. This could make a child more secretive about their internet use and close down lines of communication between you.
- Remember that all the advice here also applies to going online over a mobile phone.
- If you decide to use internet filtering software, talk this over with the child. Any ground rules you then agree will be much more effective

*The above checklist includes material from the NSPCC*

You might want to consider the use of parental controls or internet filtering software. You will find a comprehensive list of what is available at [www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org)

The most important safety message of all is to ensure that children know never to go alone to meet someone they have met online and to never reveal any personal contact details.

## 26. Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggressive behaviour that can be physical, verbal, or relational, in-person or online. Bullies are often relentless, bullying over and over again for long periods of time. Children and young people may live in constant fear of where and when the bully will strike next, what they'll do, and how far they'll go.

No matter how much pain it causes, children and young people are often reluctant to tell parents, carers or teachers about bullying because they feel a sense of shame from being victimized. In the case of cyberbullying, they may also fear losing their cell phone or computer privileges. Bullies also tend to be adept at hiding their behaviour from adults, so if a child is being bullied it may not be obvious to a parent or teacher. Therefore, it's important to recognize the warning signs of bullying and cyberbullying.

For comprehensive information about bullying, please access Bullying UK here:

[Bullying advice | Bullying UK](#)

## 27. Children or Young People Missing from Care

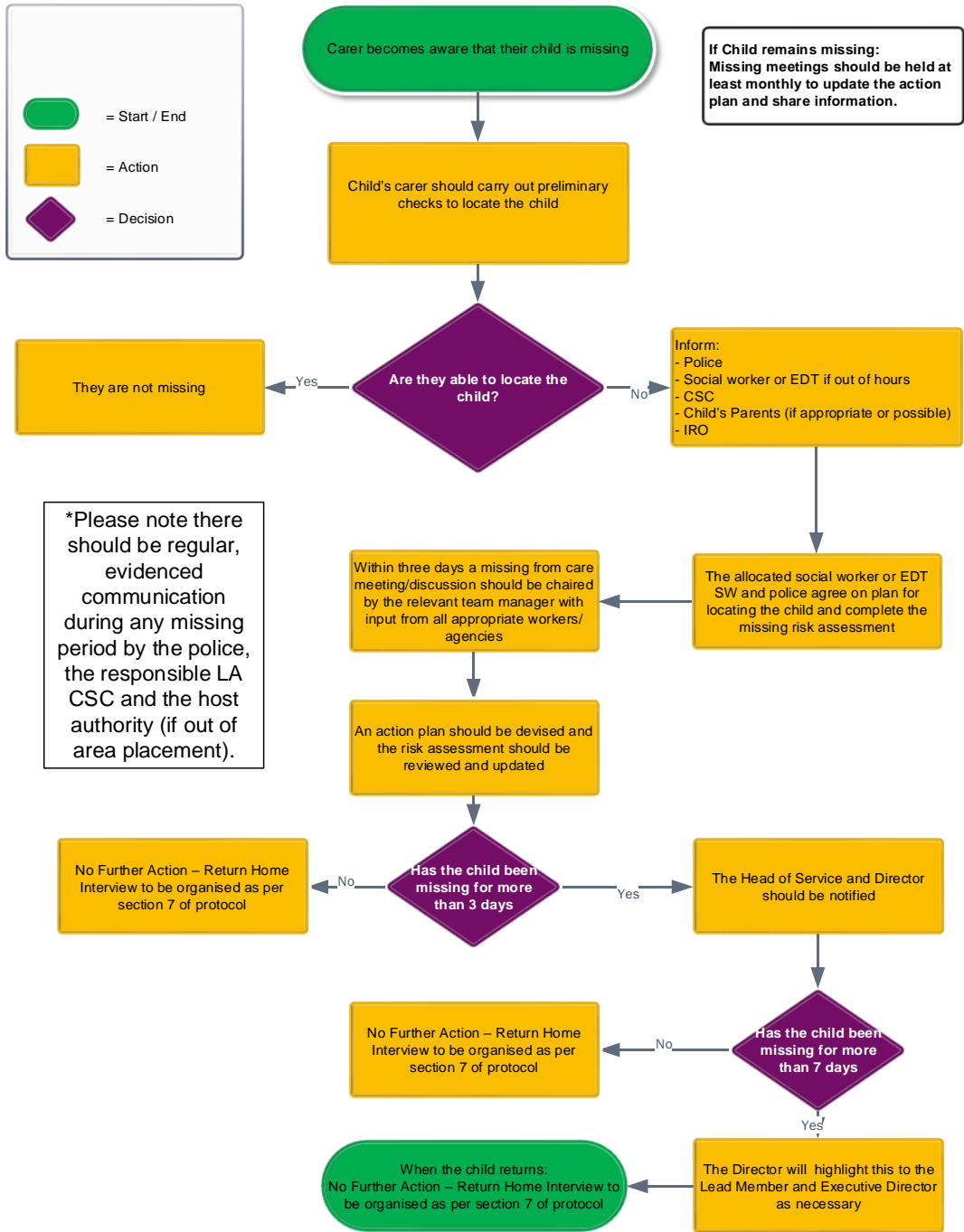
The procedures for when children/young people go missing from your care are in line with the **Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care**

**(January 2014).** You can access this guidance here: [Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264262/statutory-guidance-on-children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care.pdf)

The section of the guidance Runaway and Missing From Home and Care (RMFHC) protocol (pages 10-19) might be particularly useful to you.

This flowchart helps to inform on what you should do when a child/young person goes missing:

# Children missing from care



\*Please note there should be regular, evidenced communication during any missing period by the police, the responsible LA CSC and the host authority (if out of area placement).

If Child remains missing: Missing meetings should be held at least monthly to update the action plan and share information.

Please note that a missing risk assessment should be completed by the social worker at the point of placement for those children who are likely to go missing or who have been missing in the past.

## **28. Confidentiality**

This section is to be read in conjunction with section 4.4 (Data Protection).

As a carer you will often be in receipt of sensitive and personal information. We expect you to ensure that this is kept confidential and only shared with those that we have agreed with you need to know. You should also ensure that any written information on children is kept secure and not accessible to anyone who is not authorized to see it.

This duty of confidence is not absolute however and needs to be balanced against your common law duty to do all that is reasonable to care for children placed with you. It is conceivable for example that you have significant concerns about the actions and behaviour of a member of Croydon's staff or the way we are managing a child's case and feel that this needs to be brought to the attention of OFSTED or the Children's Commissioner. In such a case it may be claimed that disclosure was being made in the public interest and the interest of the child. Such justification might be challenged however and therefore needs to be soundly based. If the need ever arises where you need to consider disclosing confidential information because you believe it to be in the public or child's best interest, you should consider triggering the Escalation Policy at the relevant level.

## **29. Death of a Looked After Child**

The death of a child in foster care is an extremely rare event. When it does occur this will obviously be extremely distressing for all involved. We will ensure that you are given all the support you need to help you cope with the death of a child.

There are a number of steps that need to be taken if this were to happen but these would mainly be done by children's social care managers. Your only task would be to alert the child's social worker, your supervising social worker and/or EDT.

## 30. Care and Control of Children and Young People in Foster Care

It is inevitable that there will be times that you have to exercise some form of control over your foster child just as you do your own children. Hopefully such occasions will be few and far between, but when they do arise you will need to think carefully about what strategies to employ.

As a foster carer you have signed an agreement to say you will not use corporal punishment on any child placed in your care.

The term corporal punishment should be taken to cover an intentional application of force as punishment including smacking, slapping, pinching, squeezing, shaking, throwing missiles, rough handling and all other humiliating forms of treatment or punishment. It also includes punching or pushing in the heat of the moment in response to violence from young people.

This does not prevent you from taking necessary physical action where any other course of action would be likely to fail to avert an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person or to avoid immediate serious damage to property. All incidents must be recorded and reported to your social worker and the child's social worker immediately.

Denial of food must not happen. It is well established that the enjoyment of eating and drinking is fundamental to a child's healthy physical and emotional development. Meal times are an important social occasion in the life of a child and it would be inappropriate for a child to be refused meals. Deprivation of food and drink should be taken to include the denial of access to the amounts and range of foods and drinks normally available to children in your home.

This does not prevent you from withholding specific food or drinks on medical advice.

Personal medicines must continue to be administered as must going to the doctor or dentist as necessary. No other form of medicines such as drugs intended to quieten the child and no other unnecessary medical or dental treatment must be given.

No child should be deliberately deprived of sleep and children must not be kept locked up in their own or other rooms.

Fines (other than a Court fine) may not be used as a punishment, but up to two thirds of a child's pocket money may be withheld to pay for any damage they may have caused with the social workers consent. However, on any occasion where a child's pocket money is withheld as a sanction for non-compliance, the money should always be added to their savings.

Restriction of contact visits to and from the child's family and friends should not be used as a punishment nor should the withholding of receiving or sending of letters, or making telephone calls to such people. No children should be prevented from getting in contact with their social worker, Children's Guardian, solicitor, Independent Visitor or the Complaints Officer.

Children must not be made to wear clothes that draw attention to themselves, for example, pyjamas during the day.

There are many different techniques that you have or will acquire to help children who are not behaving as expected. The strategy to be used in any given situation will vary from child to child and situation to situation. Praising, positive re-enforcement and the use of rewards are often effective.

Whatever methods you employ, it is vital that you are consistent and give the child a clear message as to why their behaviour is unacceptable and what they must do. You will also need endless patience and good humour as well as the support of others. Your own family, friends and other carers will be important sources of support, but you should not hesitate to seek help from the child's social worker or your supervising social worker.

## **30.1 The use of physical interventions**

Physical intervention can take a number of forms. These can be defined as physical presence, non-restrictive contact, and restraint.

### ***Physical presence***

This is where a foster carer, through their physical presence, intervenes in order to influence a child or young person, but does not touch them or prevent them from leaving an area. This could include standing in their way or blocking an exit in order to try to engage in a conversation, but allowing the child or young person to pass if they insist.

### ***Non-restrictive contact***



This refers to situations where a foster carer has physical contact with a child against their will, but where the child retains a large degree of freedom and mobility and can break away from the carer if they wish. They are not overpowered and have options to move away from the carer. This might include taking a child's hand or putting an arm around their shoulder to physically guide them away from a situation, or pulling a child away from another child they are trying to hit in order to get between them.

It is important to understand that normal parenting activity with toddlers and younger children will inevitably involve non-restrictive contact, such as physically re-directing a toddler from trying to join his older sister as she plays in an organised school football match. Similarly, depending on their mood, amongst other things, a child might object and resist if a parent insists on holding their hand near road traffic. This describes routine parenting activity appropriate to the age and development of the child.

It is important to be absolutely clear that non-restrictive contact is permissible in law, and may need to be used by carers in a similar way to how it is used by birth parents. If a seven-year-old is told that they cannot have ice-cream until after their dinner, but refuses to accept this and tries to access the freezer, it is entirely appropriate to physically intervene and move them away. This is a proportionate response, and the behaviour of a good parent.

### ***Restraint***

Physical restraint refers to the foster carer using direct physical force to overpower and prevent or significantly restrict the movement of a child or young person against their will. Restraint must only ever be used for the purposes of preventing harm to the person being restrained, harm to other people, or to prevent significant damage to property. It might be used in an unpredicted emergency or as part of an agreed plan with a particular child or young person.

It is important to understand that babies and toddlers will be restrained by parents and foster carers in the course of normal family life. The most obvious example is using a car seat or booster chair to prevent injury to the child. On other occasions, a good parent will simply hold a small child securely for the purposes of keeping them safe. So restraint in the context of this procedure does not include this normal age-appropriate parenting with babies and toddlers.

More information, including case studies, legal context and additional reading can be viewed in the Coram/BAAF Practice Note 63: [Restraint and physical intervention in foster care](#).

## **30.2 Recording of physical restraints**

All incidents involving physical restraint must be recorded as detailed above.

You will need to exercise your own judgment as to when other forms of control and discipline warrant recording.

Some of the issues you need to take into account include:

- Did the child view the action taken as fair and appropriate?
- Was the action taken discussed with and/or witnessed by others?
- Was the action taken agreed by the child's social worker and/or birth parents?
- Could any other party misconstrue the action taken or view it as inappropriate?

If you are in any doubt about whether any action taken should be recorded or not, then this is probably an indication that it should. In such circumstances you should record the incident and bring it to the attention of the child's social worker at the earliest possible opportunity.

There will on very rare occasions be children who are so out of control that their behavior poses a risk to themselves or others or major damage to property. In such circumstances you should contact the Police as well as the child's social worker or, out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team.

## **31. Identity, race, culture and religion (social graces)**

We recognise that there are individuals and groups in society that face inequalities and discrimination. As an organisation that provides a range of services to a variety of people within the community Croydon Council is committed to creating a fair society through the services we provide, the people we employ and the money we spend. The Council's Commitment to Equality Statement sets out the council's commitment to equality. You can view this here:

[Equality statement.pdf \(croydon.gov.uk\)](#)

We expect all staff and carers to abide by this policy, but also expect staff and carers to actively promote equality of opportunity by valuing diversity in all its forms.

You should ensure that children are exposed to experiences that celebrate diversity. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- The provision of appropriate play and reading materials.
- Visits to museums and other appropriate places of interest.
- Encouraging the child to form relationships with a diverse circle of friends.
- Ensuring the avoidance of stereo-typical roles within the fostering household.

- Adults providing a positive role model and demonstrating a value and appreciation of difference.
- Encouraging the child to explore and develop their talents, interests and hobbies.

## 31.1 Race, Culture and Identity

It is a very emotional experience for a child to leave his or her family for whatever reason and be placed in Local Authority accommodation. All children will be unsettled by the experience but for a Black child this situation can be more confusing because of feelings of being undervalued. The term 'Black' in this context refers to any child who because of racial origin, culture, religion or language will experience racism.

Black children will need reassurance over their self-worth and need to feel valued and respected. Even very young children may need work to be carried out with them on their identity as a black person. This should be discussed with the child's social worker at the Placement Agreement meeting and at subsequent reviews.

Black children will also have particular practical needs, such as hair and skin care products, toys and educational material which help to promote a sense of a black identity.

Due consideration of racial origin, culture, religion and language should be the right of every child. We seek therefore to place children with families appropriate to their race and culture. This does not always happen and children are then placed transracially with a foster carer who does not reflect their racial origin.

As racial origin is central to our sense of self and our identity it is important that as a carer you explore and promote the child's sense of identity and address these needs especially for a child who is not of the same race or culture as you:

- Think very carefully before taking responsibility for a child from a different religion, race or culture. How will your family feel? What might the problems be? Will you be able to cope?
- Find out all you can about the child's religion, background, history and culture. Do this with the child if appropriate. Talk to the child's family. Use local libraries and specialist churches

- Remember to concentrate on the fun things as well as serious issues e.g. Celebrations, festivals, carnivals, music and restaurants. Talk with the child and her or his parents about what food they like to eat and then find ways of incorporating these foods into family menus. Make sure you have some images of black children in your home such as pictures, books and dolls. Encourage the child to take pride in being black and to feel and think positively about her or his race, colour and culture.
- Discuss with the child, birth parents and social workers how to deal with racism and discrimination. Find out from parents or others where the child can meet other children and young people of their own race and culture. Find out about a child's religious faith and observances, about attendance at religious services and ceremonies and religious education for the child.
- Participate in any training on racial awareness and how discrimination operates. Ask for training from your supervising social worker if it is not offered. Use your support groups to raise and discuss issues. Learn from other foster carers.
- Raise race, culture and religious matters in a proactive and constructive way at the child's review. Ensure that you and Children's Services are attending to the looked after child's identity needs.

## 31.2 Racism

It is very important for black children and young people to maintain knowledge of and contact with their own community.

Each individual will have a different understanding, awareness and experience of racism. However, as foster carers of black children it is important to be able to recognise racism if you are to effectively respond to it for the protection of black children.

The impact on their lives is dependent on many factors including the level of security and support young people have.

Black children also need positive role models to provide valuable guidance, experience and learning for adulthood.

Racial identity is a fundamental aspect of an individual's sense of identity and racism can damage a young person's ability to secure a strong racial identity.

Any incidents of racism directed towards a child in your care or towards yourself by organisations or individuals should be reported to the child's social worker or your

supervising social worker. This also applies to incidents you are not sure about.

Culture is part of a child's identity and heritage. All foster carers should aim to respect and value a child's cultural heritage. Discrimination does not just mean treating someone differently; it can mean using names or words which seek to put people down. People are not all the same and no one should be discriminated against because of their difference. Children in your household may need help to respect these differences.

### **31.3 Religion**

The Children Act identifies a child's religious upbringing as being of prime importance. The child and their parents have a right to express their views on this. We must always consider these views and meet the child's needs arising from their religious upbringing and background.

Many parents do not state any particular preferences, although it is recognised that many foster carers are regular attendees at religious services and hold strong beliefs.

Whilst religion is an integral part of their family life, it should also be recognised that the children have a right to their own views.

The child's religious background and the needs arising from this should be considered before the child is placed with you. Foster carers are expected to support a child in their own religion and the Placement Agreement and Care Plan should set out who is going to help the child practice their religion. If this conflicts with the needs of your own household (for example you might be unable to transport a child to church because of your own church attendance) then we will seek to make alternative provision to support the child in this respect.

## 31.4 Sexuality and Sexual Orientation.

Human sexuality is the capacity of humans to have erotic experiences and responses. A person's sexual orientation can influence their sexual interest and attraction for another person. Sexuality may be experienced and expressed in a variety of ways; including thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships.

Sexuality also affects and is affected by cultural, political, legal, moral, ethical, and religious aspects of life.

No matter how much we might wish it, children and young people are neither ignorant of sexuality and gender nor are they outside of its influence.

Giving children appropriate information, support, and opportunities to ask questions and talk about their thoughts and feelings is better than saying nothing.

It is so easy for silence to lead to kids being confused and feeling ashamed. More opportunities to talk to children and young people is a good thing.

Foster carers should be made aware that children with experience of gender transformation should be treated with extreme sensitivity and they should seek support if necessary.

## 31.5 Language

A child whose first language is not English may be placed with you. Language is an important part of a child's identity and culture. Every effort should be made to preserve a child's linguistic and communication skills, otherwise they may lose a large part of their culture.

You can get support from other foster carers who have knowledge of the language, or use the internet for translation sites to help you communicate

## 31.6 Names

Names are important as they are a major part of our sense of identity. You need to think carefully about what fostered children should call you. It is not acceptable that a child who has been separated from their parents should call you Mum or Dad. This gives a false impression of the relationship and will usually be seen as threatening by both the child and

their parents. The best approach for younger children may be to use the term “Auntie” or “Uncle”. For older children the use of your first name may be the most comfortable option.

In any event you need to consider what you feel comfortable with before a child is placed and discuss with the child what is most comfortable for them.

In many cultures names are an important aspect of the culture and identity, and many families give their children names that have significance either to the history of the family, circumstances of the child’s birth, or events that are of much importance to the family or clan. You should therefore not try to change these names or anglicise them to make it easy for you to pronounce.

It should be borne in mind that a Local Authority cannot decide that a child should be known by a different name or surname or be brought up in a religion other than the one they would have been brought up in had they not become looked after; therefore foster carers must not change a child’s name(s) who is placed with them.

## **32. Pets**

If you have pets of your own, your assessing social worker would have discussed with you the implications of this for foster children during your assessment. You will need to consider this again for each child placed with their social worker. Some children will have had little or no contact with animals and in extreme cases phobia of certain animals may be a reason for not placing a particular child with you.

The care of pets may be beneficial and therapeutic to children and if the child has a pet of their own you may be asked if the child can bring this with them to the placement. During your annual review, your supervising social worker will have to fill out a pet questionnaire that outlines the type, breed, and possible risks of the pet to all members of the household.

## **33. Birth Certificates**

There may be occasions when your foster child needs a copy of their birth certificate (school applications for example). The child’s social worker should be approached for a copy as one is normally held on the child’s file. If not the social worker will need to obtain one for you.

## 34. Photographs

You will need to be sensitive to the feelings of children and their parents in this area. Many children and adults will object to having their image recorded on film for religious or cultural reasons and their rights should be respected.

In some cases the use of photographs and/or videos will be an important part of the work being undertaken with the child, for example to help prepare an advertisement for a permanent family or as part of life-story work.

In all cases you should discuss the taking of photographs and videos with the child's social worker before doing so.

Many school/ nurseries now put the class year photos on line. This could be an issue, so again check with your child's social worker or see if the school can do the photo but not display it.

The permission of the child should also be sought and no child should be photographed or filmed in the bath, in their night-clothes or underwear or undressed.

**No photographs or images of children looked after should be put on any form of social media such as your Facebook page etc.**

## 35. Marriage

Marriage of young people who are looked after is extremely rare and if a young person is considering this you should alert their social worker as soon as possible. If the young person is accommodated they will need the consent of their parents. If they are subject to a Care Order they will need the agreement of the responsible officer in children's services.

## 36. Passports

The foster child may need a passport if you are considering a foreign holiday or they are going on a school holiday. If the child is accommodated this will need to be provided by the child's birth parents. If the child is in care, their social worker will need to make an application for a passport if they do not already have one. This can be a long winded



administrative process within the Department for Looked after Children. Don't book a holiday where a passport will be needed until you have the passport.

## **37. National Insurance Number**

When young people leave school and start work they need their own National Insurance (NI) number. This is normally sent to the person in receipt of Child Benefit after the young person reaches 15 years of age.

As Child Benefit is not payable for most children looked after, this may not happen for your foster child automatically, so their social worker may need to make an application on their behalf.

## **38. Tattoos and Piercing**

It is acknowledged that body piercing and tattoos are forms of self-expression and fashion, and that many children will experiment with them. Tattoos and piercing are commonplace amongst young people and will sometimes be done for cultural reasons. You should not allow any child in your care to have a tattoo or piercing without first discussing this with their social worker who will also need to seek the permission of their parents. If the child is accommodated then the parents' wishes must be respected.

Children who express an interest in body piercing or tattoos should be treated on a case by case basis depending on their age and level of understanding, but on principle, foster carers should discourage them, pointing out the possible implications and health care risks; for example, from unsafe materials, needles etc.

Under no circumstances may foster carers encourage or give consent for children to have their bodies pierced or tattooed. Children should be informed that it is illegal for tattooists to tattoo them, even with parental consent. If they appear determined, consideration should be given to making the tattooist aware of the age of the child. If children are likely to use materials to tattoo themselves, consideration should be given to confiscating them.

If children appear determined to have their bodies pierced, they should be asked to discuss the matter with their parent(s) and social worker beforehand.

If they continue to be determined, carers should ensure that measures used for piercing are as safe and hygienic as possible; preferably undertaken by a reputable person.

Piercings may not be undertaken or in any way supported by carers. If necessary, carers must confiscate any materials or equipment that may be used for it.

If a child does allow their body to be pierced or tattooed, the social worker must be informed and asked to decide whether to notify the parents.

Occurrences should be noted in the child's Daily Record.

### **39. Complaints and Allegations of Abuse or Neglect against Foster Carers**

All children are entitled to the same level and standard of protection from harm including those receiving services from statutory or other agencies. For this reason, enquiries and investigations relating to children in receipt of such services must be dealt with under the [London Child Protection Procedures](#).

Allegations or suspicions that a foster carer has caused harm to a child will be investigated thoroughly, speedily and sensitively under those procedures and will involve open and honest communication with and support to all those affected. In addition these procedures will be applied where the behaviour of a foster carer raises questions as to their suitability to foster, or where there are similar concerns regarding other members of the household.

The full procedures can be accessed here:

[Allegations Against Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)

## 40. Permanence Planning for CLA

Permanence is the long term plan for the child's upbringing and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families from family support through to adoption. It aims to ensure a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that will give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging.

The objective of planning for permanence is to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond and to give them a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging. It is also important to remember that older children and young people also need to achieve permanence in their lives although they may not wish (for a variety of reasons) to be in a foster home or to be adopted. For example, they may prefer to live in a children's home where they can also achieve a sense of security and belonging.

The options for permanence are:

- Staying/Returning Home
- Placement with Family or Friends/Connected Persons
- Adoption
- Fostering for Adoption, Concurrent Planning and Temporary Approval as Foster Carers of Approved Prospective Adopters
- Special Guardianship
- Child Arrangements Orders
- Long-term Fostering

The full guidance on permanence planning for CLA can be found here:

[Permanence Planning Guidance \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## 41. Independence/Leaving Care at 18

Some young people do not return home, and are placed with long term carers and therefore remain looked after until they reach 18 years of age.

On their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday the young Person is no longer a child looked after and your role as a foster carer ends on the day of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Fostering payments end on that day unless other arrangements have been made prior to the young person becoming 18 years old.

There are 2 options for the young person:

1. To leave your home
2. Stay in your home under a Staying Put Arrangement

The comprehensive policies and procedures relating to young people preparing to leave care and for care leavers (including Staying Put) can be accessed here:

[Leaving Care and Transition \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## 42. Unplanned endings

Not all foster placements work. Placement breakdown is the term used to describe a placement that has “disrupted” or not worked out. Changes in placement can occur at the instigation of the Department, the foster carers or the child. The Department may decide that the placement is not meeting the child’s needs and an alternative would be preferable. You may decide that the child is too difficult for you to care for and incorporate into your family. The child may fail to settle and become unhappy and upset. Older children may ‘vote with their feet’ and decide to leave the placement.

Normally placements which have disrupted or broken down arouse strong feelings in everyone involved; carers, children and social workers. But it is important and helpful to identify why and where things might have gone wrong.

If anyone involved in a placement thinks there are serious problems, the issue should be raised and discussed at reviews or with your supervising social worker in order to look for

ways of providing additional support to the placement. This is done at a placement Stability meeting attended by both the child's social worker and your supervising social worker.

In a small number of situations, the placement ends in a crisis or an emergency. You may decide that you want the child removed from your home immediately, either to safeguard yourself and your family, to safeguard the child or because you can no longer cope.

In some situations placements cannot be sustained and then it is important to plan for the ending of the placement. This is done through a "disruption meeting" to be chaired by the Team Manager of your Supervising social worker. The decision to end the placement will be decided by the Placement Stability Panel. If this is the case you will be expected to help the child to move on into another placement in a planned and appropriate manner.

The procedures around placement planning and disruption meetings can be found here:

[Placement Planning and Disruption Meetings \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

### **43. Helping children move on in a positive way**

It can be difficult to help children move on in a positive way. Many conflicting emotions are aroused. As a foster carer you may not feel entirely happy about the future plans for the child, whether it is a planned move back home to parents or on to an adoptive placement or to another foster placement.

It is important that you openly share any concerns you may have with the child's social worker and your supervising social worker, and you will be involved in the decision-making and development of the Care Plan. However, once the decision has been made for a child to move on from you, it is important for the child's welfare that everybody is seen as working together in a positive way. It is not helpful for the child to see or be involved in any conflicts between the adults in their lives.

Encourage the child to talk about any worries they might have about a future move. It's okay to tell them that you will miss them - this shows them that you care, but it is also an opportunity for them to know that you support the plan, that you think it is the right thing for them, as they will need your approval.

You may be moving children onto an adoptive family or to another foster family, it is important that you discuss the planning around when the social worker will tell the children that they will be moving and this should be done in an open but age appropriate way. You can support this process by assisting with the life story book and using this as a tool to explain this to the child.

It can be difficult for foster children to move in a positive way, as they may have had many difficult changes in the past. They have been used to being rejected and may start to behave in a very rejecting way to you, showing that they can reject first rather than wait to be rejected. This may be hard for you. It is important to try and understand how the child may be feeling and not to take it as a personal attack on yourself. Try and be patient and help the child through this difficult time. Give them space to share how they might be feeling. Talk to the child's social worker and your supervising social worker - they may have positive suggestions about how to work with the foster child during this time.

## **44. Impact on the Fostering Family**

While the focus is rightly on the child or young person leaving your home and how it will affect them it is recognised that ending of placements can be as traumatic for the carer and siblings as well as the young person. Time should be taken by the foster carer and their partners to consider the impact it will have on all the family members when a fostered child or young person leaves your home positively or negatively.

Discuss your feeling amongst the family members and your supervising social worker.

## **45. Maintaining contact with children**

Many foster carers find that they have ongoing contact with children they have looked after. This can depend on the length of the placement and quality of the relationship but even where children have only been with you for a short period of time, you may find that they wish to maintain contact with you or even re-establish contact after a number of years.

It is important for all of us to know and understand how we became the people we are. Most of us have the advantage of being able to call on family and friends to tell us what we were like as a child or to discuss shared memories. This is not always possible for children who

have been looked after and they may feel the need to contact you to fill in some of these gaps.

Younger children who have moved on to permanent placement may need the reassurance of ongoing contact with you to help them settle into their new placement. Children sometimes need to know that it is okay with you to attach to their new carers. It is important that children moving on to permanent placements do not feel that they have been rejected by you or that you have completely disappeared from their life. There is a balance to be struck in such cases as too much contact with you, particularly in the early days of permanent placements, can undermine the relationship with the new carers and make it harder for the child to settle with them.

With other children it might simply be the case that you have both established a positive and lasting friendship and wish to maintain contact with each other. Adoptive placements are meant to be relationships for life, but you will find that some foster placements may also lead to lifelong friendship.

Regardless of the above it is essential that discussions are had with the child's social worker and your supervising social worker regarding any contact plans that may be deemed suitable between the foster carer and the child's new family/birth family.

## 46. Useful Addresses and Telephone Numbers

### Carers Support Centre (Carer Information Service)

The Carers Information Service provides information, advice and support to carers looking after someone due to illness, disability or old age in Croydon.

24 George Street  
Croydon CR0 1BD  
Tel: 0208 649 9339

### Childline

Tel: 0800 1111

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

A service that works with children, young people and their families where there are issues or concerns with emotional, psychological and mental health.

Christopher Wren House  
113 High Street,  
Croydon Surrey CR0 1QG  
Fax: 020 8700 8843  
Telephone: 020 3228 0000

<http://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/families/camhs>

### Citizens Advice Bureau

<https://www.citizensadvicecroydon.org/>

Citizen Advice Bureau  
48 – 90 Portland Road  
London SE25 4PQ  
Tel: 0300 330 9095

### Coram Children's Legal Centre

Part of the Coram group of charities, promotes and protects the rights of children in the UK and internationally in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Offers email advice from a specialist solicitor on all issues affecting migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people, whether they are separated or in families.



London Office:  
Coram Children's Legal Centre  
Coram Campus  
41 Brunswick Square  
LONDON  
WC1N 1AZ

Email: [mcpadvice@coramclc.org.uk](mailto:mcpadvice@coramclc.org.uk); [info@coramclc.org.uk](mailto:info@coramclc.org.uk)

### **Community Mediation Croydon**

29-33 Church Street,  
Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RF  
020 8686 6084

### **Croydon Council Welfare Benefits Project**

Provides assistance with application forms (DLA etc.), benefit appeals, overpayments.

Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk  
Croydon  
CR0 1EA

Tel: 0208 760 5441

### **Croydon Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)**

Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk  
Croydon  
CR0 1EA  
020 8726 7750

Telephone: 020 8726 7750

E-mail: [daat.admin@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:daat.admin@croydon.gov.uk)

### **Croydon Domestic Violence Advocacy Service**

0208 688 0100

7am to midnight - Offers help and support for people experiencing domestic violence.

24 Hour National Domestic Violence Freephone helpline: 0808 2000247

### **Croydon Virtual School**

Bernard Weatherill House

8 Mint Walk

Croydon

CR0 1EA

Tel: 0208 726 6000

### **Education Psychology Service**

Provides advice and direct support for children with special educational needs and their families.

Victoria House,

Southbridge Place,

Croydon, Surrey CR0 4HA

Tel: 020 8686 0393

### **Family Lives**

Provides targeted early intervention and crisis support to families who are struggling. The issues we support families with include family breakdown, challenging relationships and behaviour, debt, and emotional and mental wellbeing.

Email: [askus@familylives.org.uk](mailto:askus@familylives.org.uk)

Tel: 0808 800 2222

### **Friends Meeting House**

One of the local meeting venues used by the fostering service.

60 Park Lane

Croydon CR0 1JE

Tel: 0208 655 0169

### **FJC (formally Family Justice Centre)**

Offering support, comfort and understanding to domestic violence victims and their families - along with easy access to essential services.

Tel: 0208 688 0100

Email: [fjc@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:fjc@croydon.gov.uk)

### **Fostering Team in Croydon**

Bernard Weatherill House

4<sup>th</sup> Floor

8, Mint Walk.

Croydon.

CR0 1EA.

Tel: 0208 726 6000

Email: [fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk)

### **Fostertalk**

Foster Talk is an independent, non-profit organisation providing professional support services to foster carers across the UK.

5 Highfield Road

Edgbaston

Birmingham

B15 3ED

Advice line: 08000407675/ 0121 758 5013

[Enquiries@fostertalk.org](mailto:Enquiries@fostertalk.org)

### **Heathfield Training Centre (also known as Stones Farm, Heathfield Estate)**

Features of Heathfield include ornamental gardens, woodland walks and rhododendron walks. The former orchard is now an ecology centre. One of Croydon Council's training venues.

3 Coombe Lane

Croydon CR0 5RH

Tel: 0208 651 1046

### **Independent Visitors for Looked After Children**

Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service

Bernard Weatherill House

8 Mint Walk

Croydon

CR0 1EA

Tel: 0208 726 6000 ext.: 63243

### **MIND Service**

Christopher Wren House

113 High Street

Croydon CR0 1QG

Telephone:

0203 228 0030

0203 228 0070

0203 228 0059

[www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/families/CAMHS](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/families/CAMHS)

### **NSPCC**

NSPCC Croydon Service Centre

The Courtyard

254 High Street

Croydon

CR0 1NF

Telephone: 020 8253 1850

### **Off the Record Youth Counselling**

Confidential counselling, life coaching, drugs, alcohol, support. For young people aged 14 -25.

72 Queens Road,

Croydon

CR0 2PR

Tel: 0208 251 0251

Email: [info@offtherecordcroydon.org](mailto:info@offtherecordcroydon.org)

### **Refugee Council**

Tel: 0207 346 6700. Own language telephone advice service: 0808 808 2255

### **Samaritans of Croydon and Sutton**

2b, Kidderminster Road,

West Croydon,

CR9 2BQ

Tel: 0208 681 6666

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### **Somali Community Association - Croydon**

Cornerstone House

14 Willis Road,

CR0 2XX

Tel: 0208 665 0921

E-mail: [csc512@hotmail.com](mailto:csc512@hotmail.com)

### **Turnaround Centre**

51-55 South End Road,  
Croydon,  
CR0 1BF

Services targeted as those who are not in education or employment. This service has an SEN advisor, for carer / education advice for those with Special educational Needs

Tel: 0208 760 5530

### **The London LGBT Voluntary & Community Sector**

Unit 1 10-11 Archer Street  
Soho  
London W1D 7AZ

Telephone 0207 437 6063

Website: [www.kairosinsoho.org.uk](http://www.kairosinsoho.org.uk)

### **The National AIDS Helpline**

0800 567 123. For speakers of other languages, 0800 717 2227

### **The Children's Trust**

Care, education, therapy and rehabilitation for children with multiple disabilities

Tadworth Court

Tadworth

Surrey

KT20 5RU

Tel: 01737 365 000

Email: [enquiries@thechildrenstrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thechildrenstrust.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk/>

### **Victim Support**

Trained volunteers offering free support and practical advice to victims of crime.

Tel: 0808 168 9291

Out of hours support line: 0808 168 9111

### **Young Croydon**

Access to a range of services for young people

Web: <https://youngcroydon.org.uk/>

### **Youth Offending Team YOT Croydon**

Turnaround Centre  
51-55 South End  
Croydon  
Surrey CR0 1BF  
020 8404 5800

### **National Autistic Society**

Helps people with autism of all ages to enjoy life and to find out more about what autism means to them.

Mansfield House  
Mansfield Place  
Croydon, Surrey  
CR2 6HP  
Tel: 01483 521743  
Email: [seresourcecentres@nas.org.uk](mailto:seresourcecentres@nas.org.uk)

### **OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES**

[Www.corambaaf.org.uk](http://www.corambaaf.org.uk)

[Www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

[Www.fostertalk.org](http://www.fostertalk.org)

[Www.london.gov.uk/young-london/kids](http://www.london.gov.uk/young-london/kids)

[Www.londonkidz.com](http://www.londonkidz.com)

# Frequently Asked Questions about the Foster Carer's Allowance

## How often will I get paid?

The foster carer's allowance is paid on weekly basis and the allowance goes into the carer's account every Friday.

## How will I be paid?

The foster carer's allowance will be paid directly into the carer's bank account.

Newly approved foster carers needs to complete a Bank Form and submit it to their Supervising Social worker for processing.

## When will I receive my first payment after a child is placed in my care?

The first payment into a carer's bank account will be made a Friday, of a week after placement is made. This is subject Children Placements Team completing and submitting the relevant finance forms to Finance Team before 12pm on a Friday of the same week that a child has been placed.

## Is the carers allowance ever reviewed?

The carers allowance is reviewed annually by Croydon Council in line with the DFE recommended payments. The review might not necessarily result in an increase.

## Who should I contact if am having financial difficulties and/or have not received my carers allowance?

If you are having financial difficulties and/or haven't received your payment you should contact the Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible. In the event that your supervising social worker is not available you can contact the relevant unit manager or email Fostering Service at: [fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk). Fostering Business Support Team will receive the email and pass it to the relevant unit manager.

## What is Standard Allowance?

The Standard allowance is paid to foster carers caring for our children in care.

It comprises of Maintenance allowance to meet all the needs of a foster child and a Skills Fee based on the principle that foster carers are working in delivering the fostering tasks.

## What is the fostering Skills Fee?

It is based on the principle that foster carers are delivering the fostering tasks and meeting the children's needs. The Skills Fee is paid to all Foster Carers, including the connected carers as soon as the new policy is implemented.

## What is Maintenance Allowance?

The Maintenance Allowance is designated for the care of the child and to meet all the needs of a child.

The allowance is payable to all foster carers who are subject to Fostering Regulations and are caring for a Croydon Looked After Child. This includes Connected Person Carers. This should be used to meet the child need and to enhance their life experiences.

### **Do I need to use the Maintenance Allowance as indicate in the policy?**

The policy gives carers a guide as to how they can use the maintenance to meet a child needs. The guide is an indication and the carers should use their discretion in how the allowance is used. The only expectations is that the children needs are met in all those aspects. Individual conversations can take place with carers when there are concerns around standards of care or when carers need support with planning.

### **What is Enhanced Allowance?**

The Enhanced allowance will normally apply when children have recognized additional needs that are severe and complex. All our children in care will have at time needs above those of children who have not experienced any adversities but those needs are recognized and cater for as part of the maintenance standard allowance. Croydon considers each application for an enhanced allowance on its merit and there is no relation between the number of children who are supported and further decisions on new children.

### **What other support can I access?**

All financial support available is included in the policy. Any exceptional circumstances not covered should be discussed with the allocated Social Workers.

### **How can I access respite?**

Respite for children is currently arranged as per policy published within Foster Carers Handbook.

### **How are the carers informed of plans regarding children savings?**

All Foster carers will receive a letter detailing the plans for transfer to a system where the savings for children will be taken at source. Individual letter will be send to carers thereafter about arrangements for individual children to have their savings joined into one account.

### **Do I need to give pocket money to a child even if they cannot use the money independently?**

We would like foster carers to give children pocket money. When they cannot manage (due to age or needs) the money can be saved and a decision about how are used can be made jointly with the Child and Supervising Social Worker and recorded in the child's file.