

CONFIDENTIAL AND SENSITIVE INFORMATION

As foster carers you will be entrusted with a lot of confidential and personal information. Initially, information is given to help you assess whether you can meet the needs of a particular child. Later more information is given to help you respond to their needs. This information should always be treated as highly confidential and should not be shared with others. You will know from your training that you must be careful how much of the child's background you reveal to your own immediate family circle. It is natural for friends and neighbours to be curious. Polite, tactful and firm refusal to discuss the child's affairs usually ensures that further questioning will not occur.

The Child's Story You may need to discuss, together with your social worker, fostering social worker and your foster child, how they can explain to new school friends, your own children and relatives the reason they are living with you instead of their own parents.

Paperwork All paperwork relating to the children in your care must be kept securely. Any copies of placement agreement forms, planning meetings, case conference notes etc. must be given to the child's social worker at the end of the child's placement with you. Although we understand that foster carers like to keep a record of children placed with them these documents are Children and Young People's Service property. They are only "loaned" to you to help with your care of the child whilst they are with you.

The Access to Records Policy means that young people have a right to see records that are written about them (please read the section on Access to Records), so it is a good idea to share everything you write with the young person as you go along. This can also be a helpful way to discuss difficult issues and to build up trust with a child. But you will appreciate that information lent to you in relation to any one young person must be kept in a safe and confidential place and not be available for family members or friends to read. Please remember confidentiality is important and information about a child "slipping out" can be very upsetting and unsettling to the child placed with you. They need to feel that they can trust you.

Confidential Information from Children On occasions children may ask to tell you something if you promise not to tell anyone else. **You must never agree to this as the information they give you may be a child protection issue or may be relevant during care proceedings.** Show that you support the child and that you are willing to listen to them whilst letting them know that you may have to let their social worker know what they have said. If a child does disclose abuse try to listen to the child but do not press them for further information. **Let the child's social worker know as soon as possible.** Make a careful note of what the child has said in your recording log.