

INFORMATION ABOUT FOSTER CHILDREN - “Looking After Children (LAC) FORMS”

For some time there has been concern about the quality of information that is available to young adults who have left the “care system”. In response to these concerns the Department of Health has been working on a national system to record such information. It is also important that foster carers receive sufficient information to enable them to be able to care for a child. Social workers refer to the forms that have been produced as the “LAC” forms.

Make sure you have enough information before you agree to offer a placement to a child or young person. Use the checklist (3.32)

There are a number of different types of forms that you will become familiar with. The forms are: -

1 Essential Information Part 1

This must accompany the child when they are first placed with you. Ask for this form if it is not offered to you. This form should give you enough basic information to care for a child for the first few days. They are usually hand - written on pre-carbonated paper. You should look through this form to see if you have enough basic information. If the child were to go missing shortly after the social worker leaves would you know who to contact? What would you tell the Police? What would you do if a parent rang or the child asks to phone their ‘aunty’?

2. Placement Plan Part 1 – Placement Agreement

Contains the consents that you will need to legalise your care of the child. It also contains the foster carer agreement. You should read and sign this on the day the child is placed. Ask for a copy of this form if it is not offered to you.

3. Essential Information Part 2

This contains more detailed information about the child. You should receive it within 28 days of starting to look after a child

4. Placement Plan Part 2

This covers the day to day arrangements for the child e.g., which school they should attend and how they are going to get there.

A placement agreement meeting should be held within a few days of your starting to look after a child. This is the chance for everyone to get together especially if you took the child in an emergency. The child’s social worker and your fostering social worker should attend the meeting. The young person, their parents, a youth

offending worker may also attend depending on individual circumstances. This meeting provides a good opportunity for you to be clear about the reason why the child needs a placement with you, what the expectations are of the placement, who the child can and cannot see. The meeting should also cover practical arrangements about school, contact and medical issues. **Feel free to ask about anything that you need to know to help you care for the child. Ask if a contact risk assessment has been carried out.** This risk assessment should look to see if there is any risk to you or your family if contact is going to take place in your home or if the child's parents are going to be given your name and address.

5. Review of Arrangements

This form is used when the child's care plan is being reviewed. You and the child will be asked to contribute to the information that is provided on this review form.

6. Assessment and Action Records

These are very detailed forms that are used when it appears that a child is likely to be looked after for a considerable period, usually more than a year. There are different forms for different age groups. They are not widely used but a foster carer may be asked to contribute to these forms as they are in the best position to know a child's day-to-day routines and abilities.

7. Initial and Core Assessments

If social workers are completing assessments on children in your care they may ask you to provide certain pieces of information to support their assessment. Assessments should be

- Child centred
- Be based on an understanding of child development
- Take into account the three domains identified in The Assessment framework "Triangle". The child's developmental needs; parenting capacity; family and environmental factors. **See 5.2**
- Ensure equality of opportunity
- Involve working with children and families.

You will see from this that foster carers are in a good position to contribute to an assessment. Assessments have to be completed within very tight timescales. If an assessment has been completed on a child you should ask to see a copy of it.

Ask to see blank copies of any of these forms if you are unfamiliar with them. It is helpful if you know where key information is recorded so that you can find it quickly. Tell your fostering social worker if you have not been given any basic information about a child.

8. The Placement Pack

When a child is placed you will start to receive written information about that child. It is important that all the information is stored securely together in one folder with the child's name on it. When the child comes to leave you please give all the information in the folder to the worker who is moving the child.