

A-Z Quick Reference Guide 2020

Contents

A	Page No.
Access to records request	8
Activities and advice	8
Advice and Mediation Worker	9
Advocacy	9
Aids, HIV and Hepatitis B	9
Alcohol misuse	9
Allegations/serious concerns/complaints	10
Allergies	12
Allowances	12
Appropriate adult	12
B	
Babysitting	13
Bedroom Sharing	13
Belongings	13
Benefits	14
Books/resources	14

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Buddy Scheme 14

C

Care Plan 15

Careers advice for young people 15

Children's Guide 15

Children in Care Council 16

Confidentiality 16

Contact 16

Court 18

Culture, value and beliefs 18

D

Data Protection Act 1998 20

Death of a child in placement 20

Delegated authority 20

Disability 21

Disclosures 22

Disruption to placement 23

Diversity 24

Documents 24

Drugs and substance misuse 25

E

Education	26
Emergency Duty Team (EDT)	28
E-safety advice and cyber bullying	28

F

Family Service	28
First aid and medications	28
Food and diet	29
Foster Carer Agreements	30
'Fostering News' emailme bulletin	30
Fostering Liaison and Advisory Group (FLAG)	30
Fosterline	30
Fostering Network	31
Fostering Panel	32
Fostering Service Regulations 2011	33

H

Health and Wellbeing	33
Health and Safety	37
Holidays	38

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

I

Income Tax and National Insurance	39
Identity Cards	40
Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)	40
Independent Visitors	40
Interpreters	41

L

Leaving Care	41
Life story	42

M

Matching a child to a family	43
Missing from care	44
Mobile phone guidance	44

N

Names	45
National Minimum Standards for Foster Carers	45

O

Ofsted	45
Out of Hours Support	46
Outcomes for children:	46
SHEEP	47
Overnight stays	48

P

Parental responsibility	48
Parenting	48
Passports	49
Play and toys	49
Pocket Money	50
Police	50

R

Racism and discrimination	50
Religion	50
Risk Assessment	51

S

Safeguarding children	52
School trips	52
Self-harm	53
Sexual health and relationships education	53
Sexuality	54
Sleepovers	54
Smoking	54
Special Guardianship Orders	57
Support foster care	58
Support Hubs	59

T

Tattoos and body piercing	59
Transporting children	59
Truancy	60

U

Unannounced visits	60
--------------------	----

W

Wetting and soiling	60
---------------------	----

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Working together guidance 60

Y

Young people looked after team 60

Youth Justice Service 62



Access to records request

A subject access request (SAR) is simply a written request made by or on behalf of an individual for the personal information which the Council holds about them, to which he or she is entitled to ask for in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

People can ask to see the information the Council holds about them by making a 'subject access request' in **writing**. An emailed request is as valid as one sent in hard copy. The following link <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/freedom-of-information/requesting-personal-information> directs you to our online Subject Access Request Form making it easier for the individual to include all the details we need to process and locate information which we may hold, but you should make clear to the requester that this form is not compulsory. All requests received must be directed to acessto.records@nottscc.gov.uk

Some types of personal data are exempt from the right of subject access and so cannot be obtained by making a SAR. Information may be exempt because of its nature or because of the effect its disclosure is likely to have. There are also some restrictions on disclosing information in response to a SAR where this would involve disclosing information about another individual, for example. The Complaints and Information team can offer advice on what information can and cannot be disclosed.

The Council is required to respond to a subject access request promptly and in any event within one month of receiving it.

The first point of advice is with the Complaints and Information Team:

0300 500 80 80

acessto.records@nottscc.gov.uk

Activities and advice

What's On in Nottinghamshire

Web: <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/events>

Nottinghamshire County Council's website with information about events, arts, libraries, sport, archives, heritage and news and media.

Advice and Mediation Worker

See: Fostering Network in A-Z.

Advocacy

See: Fostering Network in A-Z.

Aids, HIV and Hepatitis B

Often the full background of the child in placement is not known. Therefore, it is always important to maintain a high standard of hygiene. Encourage everyone in the household to wash their hands regularly and particularly after using the toilet or handling any bodily waste products.

If a child has a cut, make sure that any item used to wipe away blood is either disposed of safely or washed immediately. Never share toothbrushes or razors and make sure even minor cuts are covered until they begin to heal. Dispose of sanitary products and nappies carefully. Deal with any bodily waste, blood or vomit quickly; wear rubber gloves and an apron, and dispose of any soiled items in a tied plastic bag.

For further information please see:

- [1.11 Blood Borne Viruses - H.I.V, Hepatitis B and C which is available online at http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com)
- Health and wellbeing in A-Z.

Alcohol misuse

Carers need to demonstrate a responsible attitude to alcohol. You must also bear in mind any possible previous experiences for the child in placement relating to alcohol use. They may have come from a household where alcohol was misused and was a precursor to domestic violence.

The carer's response to underage drinking must be clear and consistent, and any breaches of the law relating to supplying alcohol to children should be reported to the police. There are serious health risks to children who drink and alcohol can reduce inhibitions and impair judgement, which may make children vulnerable to behaving in a dangerous manner or being exploited.

See: Health and wellbeing in A-Z.

Allegations/serious concerns/complaints

Allegations, serious concerns and complaints can be raised or made by anyone, for example: an education or health professional; a member of the public, a child or another member of the family.

Complaints raised by a member of the public or a service user are dealt with under the local authority's managing allegations procedures. Complaints raised by another agency are dealt with "service to service" i.e. by a service manager or group manager.

An **allegation** involves an accusation of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or of neglect. The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) child protection procedures are used to investigate any allegation. All local authorities have a duty to thoroughly investigate any concern or allegation regarding a child in order to ensure that the child is safe and protected from harm.

Upon receipt of an allegation, consideration will be given as to whether this should be investigated under safeguarding children procedures.

The procedures are applied to any allegation or concern where any person who works with children:

- behaves in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaves towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children.

If an allegation is made about you and you live in Nottingham City Council boundaries or in another county, then a referral must be made to that local authority and dealt with under its child protection procedures.

The department will consider whether a **complaint** will be dealt with under the complaints procedures.

Examples of complaints might include:

- inappropriate verbal chastisement
- a child being restrained or inappropriately handled
- inadequate supervision
- non-compliance with special diet restrictions
- a single incident where a carer has not supported statutory requirements or

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

fostering standards, for example, not taking a child to a looked after child medical.

Sometimes a child or birth parents may make a false allegation of abuse or a complaint against a carer. This can happen because children are unable to deal with the closeness of a fostering family, they may want to move back to their family, or a child may link past abuse to their current carers, even though the abuse involved different people.

If an allegation is made it will be investigated, however well-known or experienced the carer may be.

It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that foster carers have access to independent support whilst an investigation is being carried out. The Fostering Network is one source of independent support that foster carers may find helpful during this often stressful time.

There is written guidance for foster carers and staff, which makes clear how they will be supported during an investigation into an allegation, including payment of allowances and any fees to foster carers while investigations are ongoing. During an investigation the fostering service is required to provide support, which is independent of the fostering service, to the person subject to the allegation and, where this is a foster carer, to their household, in order to provide:

- information and advice about the process
- emotional support

and

- if needed, mediation between the foster carer and the fostering service and/or advocacy (including attendance at meetings and panel hearings).

Supervising social workers will continue in their role if a child protection allegation or a complaint is made. Their role will include keeping the foster carer updated about the progress of the investigation, offer advice about your right to independent support, e.g. Fostering Network Advice and Mediation Worker and keep carers informed about procedures. Your supervising social worker will not be able to take on an advocacy role. Sometimes there will be restrictions on what they can tell the foster carer during an investigation.

Allegations, complaints and serious concerns can result in different outcomes:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation;
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive;
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;
- **Unfounded:** there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively they may not have been aware of all of the circumstance.

- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Criminal prosecution:** the police will be involved in a child protection investigation where a criminal offence may have been committed. If a criminal prosecution finds that the carer is not guilty, this does not mean that the allegation will be dismissed.

For further information please refer to the following:

- The Fostering Network in the A-Z.
- Handbook Section 2 - Making a Complaint.
- [12.17 Investigating Concerns, Complaints and Allegations Against Foster Carers Including Historical Issues](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) which is available online at <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

Allergies

If a child has an allergy, it is important that you let all those who are involved in their care, such as nursery group leaders and teachers, know the details and what response is necessary.

Some allergies are mild and may result in minor irritation or a rash, but some, such as an allergy to peanuts, penicillin or insect stings are potentially fatal. If this is the case, you must not only tell all those who are in regular contact with the child, but provide written information as to what response should be made in an emergency.

As soon as the child is of an age to understand, they should be made aware of what foods they should avoid if their allergy is food related.

Allowances

The fostering allowance is the payment a foster carer receives to meet the cost of caring for a child, i.e. clothing, transportation, food, holidays, pocket money.

See: Handbook Section 3 – Financial Information and Advice for Foster Carers.

Appropriate adult

See: Police in A-Z

Babysitting

- See: - [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](#) – Babysitters - which is available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>
- Section 3 – Financial Information and Advice for Foster Carers.

Bedroom Sharing

The National Minimum Standards (2011) requires the fostering service to make available foster homes '*which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development*'.

'In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider takes into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed.' (Standard 10.6).

As a service therefore, we have had to clarify our policy particularly for the purpose of recruiting new carers. The following are our preferred options for new foster carers:-

- all children aged 3 years and over should have their own bedroom, however some flexibility can be exercised as cited above
- a child under the age of 2 years can share the foster carer's bedroom, but foster children should never share a carer's bed.

The foster carer's annual review should consider the suitability of existing bedroom arrangements and holiday arrangements that involve bedroom sharing, should be carefully considered and risk assessed.

- See: [12.12 Bedroom Sharing in Fostering Households](#) available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Belongings

When a child or young person becomes looked after they may bring items of clothing, toys or other possessions with them. These might not seem very valuable, but they are likely to be precious to that child or young person and, therefore, should be taken with them when the placement ends.

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

During the time that the child or young person is in foster care, they may need extra clothing or toys, or they may have received presents; these must also go with them when the placement ends.

It is important that a child or young person's belongings are moved in suitcases or adequate travel bags, which all locality teams now have available. A child's clothing and important belongings should **never** be moved in plastic bags.

Benefits

See: Income Tax and National Insurance in A-Z.

Books/resources

Nottinghamshire County Council has launched a new cultural organisation called Inspire, a Community Benefit Society which is part of an innovative strategy led by the County Council to manage some of its libraries, archives and cultural services across the county.

Nottinghamshire County Council's cultural services have a track record of inspiring people to achieve, learn and develop, whether through a love of reading, music, the arts or education, and Inspire promises to deliver day-to-day business as usual for everyone who uses its services.

Nottinghamshire libraries have an extensive collection of books and resources on fostering, adoption and childcare in local libraries. It is hoped they will enhance your learning and development as a foster carer and may be used in discussion with your supervising social worker to count towards some of your required hours of learning per year.

All the books and resources are catalogued with key words and you can search and reserve books at home by visiting <http://nelib2.nottscc.gov.uk/rooms/index.jsp>.

You can also look at NeLib in a library – or you can simply ask the librarian for help!

In addition you can access additional resources from the Fostering Network via <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>

Buddy Scheme

Buddies are a countywide pool of foster carers, who have agreed to assist in the recruitment of new carers by visiting enquirers who need more information in making a decision as to whether to pursue an application to foster. The scheme can also be very valuable for inexperienced carers to speak to those who have been through similar experiences.

The scheme is intended to:

- identify and provide guidelines for visits
- provide recognition, support and training for buddies
- provide a wider pool of buddies for matching foster carers to enquirer households.

If an enquirer wishes to pursue their interest, a supervising social worker will undertake an initial visit to discuss what fostering involves and ascertain the enquirer's knowledge and understanding of the task. They will then decide whether or not a buddy visit is recommended.

Care plan

This ensures that all children looked after have clearly stated objectives set out for their care and strategies to achieve these.

Careers advice for young people

Young people aged between 13-19 can get advice on careers, employment, training, volunteering, personal development, housing and finance from [Directgov Young People](#) where you can search for various information for young people.

Children's Guide

The 'Children's Guide' is designed to provide every child or young person in foster care with essential information about what to expect in their foster home, and the experience of being 'looked after'. It also provides details of links to other information and professionals which foster children can access about specific issues.

Two 'Children's Guides' are available; one in a single booklet format which younger children can access easily and one which is a folder containing different kinds of leaflets, fact sheets and flyers designed for young people who are generally of secondary school age.

Each child or young person placed in foster care will be provided with a 'Guide' by their social worker. The social worker will set aside some time to go through the 'Guide' with the child, but often because foster carers spend so much more time with their foster children than other professionals, it will be appropriate for them to help children get the most out of their 'Guide'.

To ensure your foster child has a copy or you have any queries, please speak to the child's social worker or your supervising social worker.

Children in Care Council

See: Young People Looked After Team in A-Z.

Confidentiality

All foster carers are required to sign a confidentiality undertaking when they sign the Foster Carer Agreement.

When a child or young person is placed in foster care, the social worker involved will share information with the foster carers about the background of the child or young person.

During the course of the placement, the foster carer is also likely to receive confidential documents or paperwork. Any information that foster carers have about a child, young person or their family, should be kept confidential and should not be shared unless there is a need for others to know.

When in doubt, it is imperative that advice is sought from the child's social worker or the supervising social worker. Any written information that a foster carer receives about a child, as well as any daily diary records or notes, should be stored in a locked cabinet or other secure place and returned to the child's social worker when the placement ceases. If any recording has been undertaken on the computer this must be erased when the child leaves your care.

Some information can't be kept confidential. Confidentiality can, and must be, breached if there is reason to suspect that someone is or is likely to be, harmed or if a crime has or is likely to be committed.

See: [12.13 Foster Carer Recording Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) available on <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Contact

The term 'contact' refers to children and young people staying in touch with their birth and extended families. There are many ways of keeping in contact, such as telephone calls, emails, exchanges of photographs, visits and letters. The frequency and location of contact will be part of the child's care plan, as will details of exactly who will have contact.

National Minimum Standard 9 states:

'Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives.'

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Children are supported and encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships, subject to any limitations or provisions set out in their care plan and any court order.' (Standard 9.1)

An important part of a foster carer's role is to promote and support contact. Contact can sometimes take place in the foster placement, unless there are reasons to believe this would be unsafe or inappropriate, e.g. if the quality of contact needs to be assessed or supervised in a neutral venue. Contact arrangements will be discussed with the child's social worker, the child's foster carer and the foster carer's supervising social worker to confirm supervisory and transporting roles.

Contact arrangements for children who will be looked after long term should replicate 'family life' as far as possible. This means that when a permanency plan is agreed for a child, their main carer, who may be the foster carer provides transport and facilitates contact between the child and their birth family.

In the event that contact is not in the child's best interest, it can only be stopped for a period of up to seven days before the case is brought back to court.

Legal restrictions may mean that parents are not informed of the child's placement address, but this usually only happens for reasons of safety.

At times, contact can be distressing for a child or young person, particularly when a parent fails to attend pre-arranged contact sessions. It is important for foster carers to recognise that it can be extremely difficult for parents to see their children being looked after by someone else. This, combined with their feelings of guilt and anger, can mean that they find contact so upsetting that they try to avoid it, even though they may really want to see their children.

It is vital that foster carers maintain a positive attitude towards contact between the child and their parents or siblings, as negative feelings are easily conveyed and can be confusing and upsetting to the child. If foster carers are finding any aspect of contact difficult or upsetting, it is important to discuss these feelings with their supervising social worker and the child's social worker. Foster carers should also keep a record of contact, e.g. how the child's behaviour may have changed before or after contact and any comments the child may have made. These recordings should be shared with the social workers and may be used in court.

Court

When a court makes a decision, it must use the welfare checklist which ensures that the child's wishes, needs and feelings are addressed. A court can't make an order unless it considers that to do so would be better than making no order at all. As a foster carer you may, on occasion, be called to give evidence in court. You should:

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

- make sure that you have prepared a statement together with your supervising social worker, the child's social worker or the legal department. This will help you give evidence in court
- ensure that your records on the child are up to date, factual and evidenced. Only give your opinion if you are asked to do so
- arrange to have a friend, relative or supervising social worker to support you in court. You may have to wait for long periods of time before being called into court.

Culture, value and beliefs

A child's gender, ethnicity, culture, religion and sexuality are all part of what makes a child a unique individual. These factors influence the experiences that they bring and the way in which others will relate to them. Each child brings with them a family history that enriches our work and understanding of each other. Part of the fostering task is to ensure that the loss of family, does not in turn go on to become a loss of cultural inheritance, language, religion or racial identity.

As a child's identity emerges within the context of family and community, it is essential, whatever the child's background and experiences, that the foster carer helps the child to remember and value their past. Even where a child has experienced great difficulty, or where they have been exposed to harm, there will have been happy occasions or special people who are important to the child.

As a foster carer you need to establish a good working relationship with the parents or previous carers of the child and, where this is not possible, ensure that you maintain a positive attitude towards the child's family and help them to do so too.

People in Harmony

Web: www.pih.org.uk

An organisation promoting the positive experience of interracial life in Britain today; challenging racism, prejudice and ignorance in society. Website provides educational reading and video material to assist in the understanding about raising children of all ethnic origins in a multi-racial society.

Mix-d

c/o Multiple Heritage Project, Innospace, The Shed, Chester Street, Manchester M1 5GD

Tel: 0161 868 0034
Mobile: 07950 259 519
Web: www.mix-d.org

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Information on the subject of mixed-race identity designed to provide support for young people who may experience confusion, conflict, or misunderstanding about their racial identity including training events and resources.

Millo Services CIC

Favours Nottingham Centre, 153 Andover Road, Nottingham NG5 5FD

Tel: 0784 611 4907
Email: info@milloservices.co.uk
Web: www.milloservices.co.uk

Millo offer private and confidential counselling services on a wide range of issues in relation to emotional well-being, specialising in BME issues.

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

NNRF, The Sycamore Centre, 33a Hungerhill Road, Nottingham, NG3 4NB

Tel: (0115) 9601230
Email: info@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk
Web: <http://www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk/contact/>

Refugee Action

Head Office: 0207 952 1511

Web: http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/contact_us

Stonewall's Information Service

Info line: 020 7593 1850
Email: info@stonewall.org.uk
Web: <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Stonewall works with a whole range of agencies to address the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people in the wider community.

Data Protection Act 2018.

See: [11.13 Foster Carer Recording Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) – available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Death of a child in placement

If a looked after child or young person is critically ill or injured, involved in a fatal accident, or dies whilst in your care, it is your responsibility to notify the department immediately. If a child or young person dies in hospital, you must also make contact with your supervising social worker and the child's social worker as soon as possible.

An assessment will be made regarding the circumstances, so it is important that you write a record of events. Foster carers **must not** notify birth parents or family members of the child's illness or death, as this is the role of the child's social worker.

In the event of any media interest we would advise you not to talk to journalists and refer any enquiries onto your supervising social worker who will notify the Communications and Marketing Department at County Hall.

See: Handbook Section 2 - Out of Hours Support.

Delegated authority

Foster carers, in their own right, do not have a legal status to make decisions and **delegated authority** is the term used for all the responsibilities, consents and decisions that foster carers are authorised to undertake on behalf of a young person's birth parents (if they are the sole holders of parental responsibility), or the birth parents and the local authority (if parental responsibility is shared). Holders of parental responsibility can delegate authority to foster carers to make decisions, but parental responsibility, in itself, cannot be delegated.

The Government is very keen for foster carers to be authorised to make as many everyday decisions as possible, where it is consistent with the young person's care plan to do so. The Government wants to ensure that a fostered young person's life feels more natural.

Foster carers have different levels of expertise and experience and it would neither be safe nor appropriate for Nottinghamshire to have a "one size fits all" position on delegated authority. Delegated authority means having discussions at planning meetings and reviews about the quality of a young person's everyday life. Things change over time and what might be safe and appropriate for a seven year old, when s/he is placed with foster carers, may not be appropriate when they are twelve.

Everyday activities require everyday decisions and it is important that those with parental responsibility are **clear about the responsibilities, consents and decisions that are delegated to foster carers**. Activities such as allowing a young person to go a friend's house for a sleepover or signing a consent form for a school trip or making arrangements for a haircut ...these are all everyday activities that should be discussed at planning and review meetings and on an ongoing basis with your supervising social worker..

A delegated authority decision making tool is available in The Fostering Network's 2012 publication "Safer Caring - a new approach", written by Jacky Slade. This decision making tool is available on the website <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/> or can be requested from your supervising social worker.

Talk to your supervising social worker about the everyday activities in which you would feel comfortable if decision making authority was delegated to you. With your supervising social worker, raise the issue of delegated authority at the young person's planning meeting and at his/her subsequent looked after reviews. Ensure that there is a written, dated record as to the decisions, consents and responsibilities that are delegated to you as the young person's foster carer.

See: Relevant policies, for example:

[12.14 Safe Caring Policy](#)

[11.6.2 Consents to Medical Examinations](#)

[11.4.2. Overnight Stays and Social Visits](#) available on line at <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Disability

Children and young people with disabilities are those with physical impairments, sensory impairments (including children or young people who are deaf or blind), children with learning disabilities and some children with emotional difficulties.

The disabled children teams are specialist social work teams who help assess, support and address the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

You may be asked to care for a child or young person with special needs but do remember that a disabled child is a child first, with the same needs as any other child.

In some situations, children or young people with special needs are looked after because it has become too difficult for their parents to cope. Many parents of children with disabilities devote so much of their time and energy into meeting the child's needs that they benefit greatly from planned breaks.

Disabled children need services from more organisations than just the County Council, so we aim to link up with all the other organisations who provide social and health services to them.

There are many voluntary groups in Nottinghamshire that provide services to disabled children and their families.

These services include:

- after school and holiday clubs
- support for parents

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

- sitters and befrienders
- support and activity groups for other children in the family.

These services do not require assessment and you can find out about them by speaking to your supervising social worker.

To find out about the full range of services available for children with disabilities in Nottinghamshire please visit www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk.

Other support services available are:

Contact a Family

Tel: 0207 608 8700/0800 808 3555

Email: info@cafamily.org.uk

Web: www.cafamily.org.uk

This is a website which provides support and advice for families with disabled children. Also provides a range of information and resources to disabled children, their carers and professionals who support them.

Disclosures

Children and young people will often confide past experiences in those they trust, such as carers. If they tell you something that may indicate they, or other children, are at risk of harm or a criminal offence has or may be committed, you must contact the child's social worker at the earliest opportunity.

Make sure that the children know that there are some types of information you cannot keep confidential. If a child discloses abuse, you should:

- listen carefully and acknowledge how important it was for the child to share the information with you
- not ask any probing questions or lead the child in what they are saying
- reassure the child that they were right to tell you and they are not to blame or at fault
- let the child know that you believe them
- tell the child what you will do next, i.e. inform their social worker
- record the discussion as soon as possible after it takes place

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

- maintain confidentiality and only share what you have heard on a need to know basis, i.e. with children's services and other safeguarding professionals.

Some of the information that children and young people share may be shocking or distressing. Try to think clearly and not show how you feel. The child may feel overwhelmed by what they have experienced, but they need the carer to be calm and reassuring. Do not take any further action other than recording the session and informing Children, Families and Cultural Services.

When a child protection issue is brought to the attention of a carer during office hours, they must contact their supervising social worker and the child's social worker as soon as possible. Outside of office hours, the emergency duty team must be contacted.

See: Handbook Section 2 - Out of Hours Support

[12.5 Guidance for Foster Carers on Personal Safety and Incident Reporting](#) available in policies online

<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>) and

[12.13 Foster Carer Recording Policy](#)

Disruption to placement

Not all foster placement breakdowns can be avoided or prevented, but it is essential to recognise the early signs of placement instability and act quickly to try and reduce the risk of the placement ending. Ideally a support planning meeting will be held, to see if the situation can be improved by increased support such as intervention by a family resource worker, referral for therapy for the child or even by some support care to give everyone a break and to recharge the batteries!

Disruption is a term that refers to an unplanned move or placement breakdown, but the term 'disruption' reflects more accurately the upheaval which is experienced by all concerned. Placements are rarely disrupted because of a single incident or person, but more often a combination of events and personalities which prove impossible to contain.

The decision to end a placement is an unhappy experience and attributing blame does not make it any easier. It is important to understand what went wrong and a disruption meeting will normally be held in the case of long term placements, to reflect on the placement and identify what needs to happen next to reduce the chances of the child's next placement also being unsuccessful. Whatever the reason for a placement ending, foster carers should help the child to have positive feelings about the ending, as the process of leaving is as important as the process of arriving.

If possible, contact between you and the child should be planned for the future, as you will have been an important adult in that child's life and we know that the more loss and separation a child experiences, the more difficult it is to make positive attachments in the future.

Diversity

Foster carers have a duty to promote equality and value the diversity of each child in their care (National Minimum Standard 2). This means foster carers should provide care to enable children to 'have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background'.

See: Culture, values and beliefs in A-Z.

Documents

Foster carers are required to keep various information and documentation in the course of their fostering careers. For each child placed, a file will be provided to enable records to be kept of the child's placement. Documents relating to a specific child should be returned to the social worker when that child leaves the placement.

See: Recording Policy [12.13 Foster Carer Recording Policy](#)

Looked after children documents

When a decision is made to place a child or young person in foster care, the child's social worker needs to complete a range of important documents which will inform you of the background information, the birth family situation, details of education, health and development, any appropriate risk assessments to you or the child and other relevant information to assist you in caring for that child.

Looked after children (LAC) reviews

The purpose of a LAC review is to consider the quality of a child/young person's care plan based on the local authority's assessment of the young person's needs. The LAC review will monitor the progress of the care plan and make decisions to amend the plan, as necessary, in light of any new knowledge or change in circumstances.

The review will ensure that appropriate plans are in place to safeguard and promote the overall welfare of the young person in the most effective way with a view to achieving permanence for the young person.

The reviews are chaired by an independent reviewing officer (IRO). The child's social worker should co-ordinate and send out the invitations for the review. The child (depending on his/her age and understanding), parents, foster carers, social workers and other professionals including school and health should attend. Others such as advocacy workers and independent visitors are also encouraged to attend. In most cases your supervising social worker will accompany you to those meetings, but if they are not able to, they will submit a report giving their views of the placement.

See: Independent Reviewing Officer in A-Z.

Looked after reviews will usually be convened at the following intervals:

- an initial looked after review should be conducted within 20 working days 28 days of the child becoming looked after. However, under the care planning regulations,
- the IRO can defer adjourn any review if they feel that the information provided is insufficient
- the second looked after review should be conducted within three months of an initial looked after review
- subsequent looked after reviews should be conducted no more than six months after any previous review
- any arrangement to hold a review outside of these time scales must first be approved by a children's service manager?
- Whenever the IRO directs

Under the new care planning regulations, it will no longer be possible to terminate a placement without a review, unless the children are deemed at significant harm.

Drugs and substance misuse

Drugs and substances are those that are restricted or prohibited and may have a harmful effect upon a child, such as alcohol, cigarettes, tobacco, aerosols, gas, glue, magic mushrooms (Amanita), petrol and solvents. This definition also covers all controlled drugs and substances, such as amphetamines, barbiturates, cannabis, cocaine, hallucinogens, hashish and narcotics.

All reasonable measures must be taken to reduce or prevent children from obtaining drugs or substances which may harm them.

If it is known or suspected that a child is at risk of participating in drug or substances misuse activities, such as using or dealing, consideration should be given to the following:

- providing information, guidance and advice to help reduce or prevent risks
- developing a strategy for managing risk
- making a referral to relevant specialists for support, guidance and treatment
- consulting or involving the police.

Share your concerns with your supervising social worker in the first instance, to seek advice and support.

See: Health and Wellbeing in A-Z.

Education

A good education is important for all children. It is of extra importance to looked after children, as it can help them to enjoy life more and to do well in the future. Each looked after child must have a school/educational placement, go to education regularly and on time, be supported to enjoy education, learn, and be helped to learn.

From July 2014 when the legislation came into force, every local authority in the country was charged with having a post who is responsible for monitoring and tracking the education of looked after children. Often these posts are called head of the virtual school but can have different titles and functions depending on the local authority. Nottinghamshire county council has had a virtual school for many years, however, its structure and position in the local authority has changed and adapted to reflect the climate of change.

Nottinghamshire county council has a team manager for the virtual school and a co-ordinator of the virtual school which combined fulfils the function of the head of the virtual school.

This recent legislation identifies for local authorities a very clear role for the virtual school however they choose to discharge this statutory duty:

- Ensuring high aspirations for children in care – if it isn't good enough for your own child it's not good enough for children looked after
- Close gaps
- Access to high quality education provision
- Virtual schools have the means to discharge their duty
- Monitor educational progress and attendance
- Address any educational issues raised by the Children in Care Council
- Track those children/young people placed out of LA
- Ensure PEPs are of a high quality and effective
- Report to elected members who act as corporate parents for the LA.

Nottinghamshire's virtual school, in addition to the co-coordinator and team manager also has a team of four looked after children achievement officers (LAC AO). These four posts will support carers, teachers, schools, social workers in fact anyone in the team around the child should there be educational issues. They cover the county and in addition travel to wherever the child may be placed outside of the area, the virtual school still remains responsible for the education of children placed out of the county looked after by NCC. These roles will be looked at in greater depth in the next article.

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

How does Nottinghamshire discharge these high level duties:

- By working in partnership with all professionals and agencies that surround looked after children
- Strong working relationships with all schools and settings to support and where necessary challenge the provision being provided
- Ensure wherever possible children/young people looked after go to a good or better school
- Working to reduce school moves with social care and partners
- Make training readily available to those who work with looked after children so their needs are met and understood effectively
- Manage the pupil premium for looked after children to ensure maximum impact
- Quality assure PEPs
- Allocate resource where necessary to ensure the most vulnerable receive support
- Report to the virtual school leadership team and corporate parenting sub-committee to ensure the virtual school is supported and challenged.

For further information, including the foster carer role in education, please see Handbook Section 5 - Education.

Additional support can be obtained from:

Ask Us Nottinghamshire (formerly the Parent Partnership Service)

Ask Us Nottinghamshire is part of the Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) established in the County as part of the reforms to the systems of supporting special educational needs and disabilities introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014.

Ask Us Nottinghamshire fulfills many of the roles and functions that were previously undertaken by the Parent Partnership Service. The service provides impartial information, advice and support for parents/carers of children with SEND, aged 0- 25 years.

For further information and contact details please follow the link below:

<http://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/service.page?id=YmqugCdb3a4>

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

There is an emergency duty team (EDT) for Nottinghamshire County Council run by social workers who respond to emergency calls outside office hours.

For more information please see Handbook Section 2 – Out of Hours Support.

E-safety advice and cyber bullying

See: [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](#) – available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Family Service

The Family Service is part of Nottinghamshire County Council and is made up of professionals from the council, health and other agencies. The service's purpose is to help families with children aged under 18 who are having difficulties making positive progress.

The Family Service is delivered both from within the Council by locally based teams and through our network of children's centres. The workers are qualified and trained professional from a range of backgrounds including health, social care, youth work, nursery nursing, educational welfare and benefits advice.

If you would like more information about their services for Looked After Children please speak to your supervising social worker.

First aid and medications

Fully equipped first aid boxes must be kept in each home and in each vehicle used to carry children. Arrangements should be in place for the foster carer to record when medication is taken in the child's recording file and any allergies to medication or plasters should be checked out when the child is placed with you. It is always worth keeping a supply of anti-allergy/sensitive plasters readily available.

Medication must be stored safely in a locked cabinet. Medication that needs to be kept at a constant low temperature should be kept out of reach of children in a refrigerator.

Prescribed medicines should be kept in their original containers, clearly marked with the name of the person for whom they have been prescribed and should not be taken by anyone else. Arrangements must exist in the home for regular stock checks to be undertaken of all medicines and for the disposal of those which are no longer in use or out of date.

See: [12.13 Foster Carer Recording Policy](#) and
[12.14 Safe Caring Policy](#) available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Food and diet

Food means different things to different people, and people vary greatly in the way they eat. Some children or young people will eat a lot, whilst others are more particular. Such differences are to be expected and usually should not be a cause for concern.

Food and what it means to a child is often influenced by culture and background and it is important to recognise the different emphasis each child will place on food. Try to find out about a child's food preferences and where relevant, any ethnic dishes they enjoy and how to cook them. Children may not be used to certain foods and may be reluctant to experiment. Certain foods may also be part of a religious belief, such as halal meat and these customs must be respected.

It is important that you never force a child to eat or punish them in any way for not eating or for hoarding or stealing food. Children who have come from a deprived background can seem greedy, but they may be eating for comfort or because they have not been able to rely on having regular meals or enough to eat. It is reasonable to provide a meal and second helpings, but it is also fair to state when enough is enough.

Troubled children can use food as a means of communicating their distress or as a means of exerting some control over their lives. It is important that you recognise when this is happening and work together with other professionals as to how to address it.

Some eating problems are serious and can have damaging effects on a child's physical and emotional health and development. Some common eating disorders are Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and Compulsive Eating Disorder. Eating disorders are more common in girls than boys, but it is important to remember that boys do suffer from them too.

If you are concerned about a child's eating habits, raise this with your GP or health visitor and speak to your supervising social worker. You can also contact the LAC nurse or school nurse, all of who can refer the child or young person to specialist services.

See: [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

Foster Carer Agreements

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 requires the local authority to enter into a written agreement with a foster carer when they are approved. This contract lays out the department's expectations of carers and the terms and conditions of the partnership between the authority and the carer. All parties should sign a new Foster Carer Agreement at the time of their annual review and if the carer's terms of approval change. National Minimum Standard 21 outlines that:

21.9 - 'The supervising social worker ensures each foster carer he or she supervises is informed in writing of, and accepts, understands and operates within, all Regulations and standards and policies and guidance agreed by the fostering service'.

'Fostering News' email bulletin

'Fostering News' is distributed to all carers on a monthly basis. This digitally produced email bulletin that is sent to inform and update foster carers and staff on current issues, changes in practice and policies, fostering events and topics of interest. Contributions from foster carers are actively encouraged.

The email is distributed to foster carers and staff within the Children, Families and Cultural Services department and extended departments, members of the County Council and partner agencies with a particular interest in fostering.

If you have any articles that you would like to be considered for inclusion, please email the editorial group at fostering@nottscc.gov.uk.

Fostering Liaison and Advisory Group (FLAG)

See: Section 2 – Foster Carer Support Groups.

Fosterline

Fosterline is provided by Foster Talk on behalf of the Department of Education. It provides:-

- Confidential, impartial, advice information and signposting on the broad range of issues of concern to foster carers and those interested in fostering, in order to support them in their role, aid retention and encourage recruitment of foster carers.
- Fosterline advisers respond to enquiries by telephone, email and on the Fosterline Interactive Forum, on Monday to Friday between 9 am to 5 pm.

Web: <http://www.fosterline.info/>

Tel: 0800 040 7675

Email: enquiries@fosterline.info

Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering. As a foster carer for Nottinghamshire County Council, you are automatically registered as a member. Their member helpline provides information and guidance on all issues affecting foster carers and fostering services. This helpline is staffed by a team of experts from their practice support team, who work with all services across England, and their advice and mediation workers, who work with foster carers on a daily basis.



Information can be provided on a wide range of issues including:

- foster carer finances
- allegations
- delegated authority
- safer caring
- Standards and legislation
- Education.

Tel: 020 7401 9582 (10am-3pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: info@fostering

Address: **87 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA**

You can also visit www.fostering.net/ for a wide range of information and resources.

Members legal helpline: 0345 013 5004
(24 hours - providing, legal and counselling support).

Advice and Mediation Worker - Caron Heath

Tel: 0133 295 9980

Mobile: 07918 708945

Email: caron.heath@fostering.net

Provides an independent service for Nottinghamshire that foster carers can turn to about any aspect of fostering that affects them or their family, including:

- allegations and complaints
- changes in legislation
- financial issues
- concerns about a child's future
- support at reviews and fostering panels.

Advice can be sought by phone or, if necessary, the advice and mediation worker will visit carers or attend meetings with them.

Many complaints are the result of communication difficulties and when sorted early on, can result in more satisfying and supportive working relationships. If this is not the case, the advice and mediation worker can support carers through the complaints process. You can contact the service in confidence.

Fostering Panel

The fostering panel has an independent chair and a vice chair and has a diverse membership. The fostering panel is required to have a minimum of five members present, to include the chair or vice chair, a social work practitioner and at least one other independent member. It is our usual practice to have at least six members present to allow for sickness and emergencies.

The panel adviser advises the panel and expert legal and medical advice can be sought when necessary.

Fostering panels are constituted in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (amended 2013). The fostering panel makes recommendations to the agency decision maker who makes the final decision regarding:

- applications for approval
- terms of approval
- the continuing suitability of foster carers to be approved following an annual review or investigation
- changing the terms of a foster carer's approval
- termination of approval
- the suitability of Family or Friend foster carers
- termination of assessment.

Nottinghamshire County Council's fostering panel invites and encourages prospective and approved foster carers to attend the panel when their application or annual review is being considered. Panel members will have received reports about each case and it is hoped that by carers attending, the panel will gain helpful additional information and hear their views personally.

Prior to attending the fostering panel, you and your supervising social worker will discuss the panel process and the questions that you may be asked. You will also be sent some information about the members of the panel and details of your panel.

If a foster carer disagrees with the agency decision maker's proposal to terminate their assessment/approval or change their terms of approval, they have the right to appeal to Nottinghamshire County Council's fostering panel or the Independent Review Mechanism (Fostering).

See: Handbook Section 1 – Review of Approval.

Fostering Service Regulations 2011

These regulations are issued by the Department of Health and together with the National Minimum Standards, form the basis of the regulatory framework under which all fostering agencies are inspected.

See: National Minimum Standards for Foster Carers in the A-Z.

HHealth and wellbeing

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (Looked After Children) – (CAMHS)

CAMHS specifically target the emotional well-being and mental health needs of children living away from their birth parents in the care of the local authority. They may be living in foster care or in residential placements.

The team offers support to young people moving to live independently and receiving a service from the Leaving Care teams.

Referrals are made via the child's social worker and supervising social workers.

For appointment queries, etc., please telephone:

Specialist CAMHS North: 0115 9560866

Specialist CAMHS South: 0115 8440501

Drugs and Alcohol:

Let's Build Training Services:

Lifespring Centre
Sherwood Drive
New Ollerton
Newark
Notts NG22 9PP

Tel: 01623 232124

Email: liz@letsbuild.org.uk

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

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Provides information on training, support and advice about drugs & alcohol issues. They offer a wide range of training courses that will help develop the competence and confidence necessary to work with substance use.

W.A.M. (What About Me?)

Tel: 01623 635 330
Text: 07970 724165
Email: wam.team@nottshc.nhs.uk
Web: <http://www.wamnotts.co.uk/>

For children and young people aged 5 – 19 who are worried about someone they care about using drugs or drinking too much alcohol.

Hetty's

Marlborough House, 23 Woodhouse Road,
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG18 2AF



Tel: 08000 850 941 or text 07896228547
Email: info@hettys.org.uk
Web: www.hettys.co.uk

Provides access to confidential advice support and information to family members, friends or carers of drug or alcohol users in Nottinghamshire, including information about self-help groups or one or one support.

Talk to Frank



Tel: 0300 123 6600
Text: 82111
Web: www.talktofrank.com

A-Z confidential free information about drugs and drug abuse.

Health Issues:

NHS



Call 111

Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

NHS non-emergency telephone number where you can speak to a highly trained adviser, supported by healthcare professionals. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

If you have a medical emergency, please call 999.

Nottingham NHS Walk-in Centre

Seaton House, City Link, London Road, Nottingham, NG2 4LA

Tel: 0115 883 8500

Web: <http://www.nhs.uk>

Opening hours are Monday to Sunday 7am to 9pm, including Bank Holidays where you can see an experienced nurse for treatment of minor injuries.

In October 2015 the **new NHS Urgent Care Centre** opened at the above address, (next to the BBC building). The centre will offer assessment and treatment for health conditions that are urgent but non-life threatening such as:

- Minor burns and scalds
- Minor head injury with no loss of consciousness
- Skin infections and rashes
- Suspected broken bones, sprains and strains (X-ray will be available on-site)
- Eye infections and minor eye injuries

No appointment will be needed; just drop in between 7am and 9pm, 365 days a year.

Equation (formerly Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum)

Domestic violence shatters lives. Equation's vision is that everyone deserves healthy relationships that are based on mutual respect and free from abuse.

Domestic Violence Helpline

A confidential support and advice service:

- Local helpline **tel:** 0808 800 0340

Childline

Childline can be contacted anytime - calls are free and confidential.

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



Sexual Health:

Contraception and Sexual Health Advice (CASH):

Victoria Health Centre, Glasshouse Street, Nottingham NG1 3LW

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Tel: 0115 8839002

For information about services and support, please visit:

<http://oxleas.nhs.uk/services/service/contraception-and-sexual-health/>

C-Card

The C Card scheme is a service which offers free confidential advice and is aimed at helping young people make the right choice about sexual health.

Details about obtaining a C Card, registration and pick-up points in Nottinghamshire can be found by visiting:

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/caring/yourhealth/staying-healthy/sexual-health/c-card/>

Teenage Pregnancy

Tel: 0115 977 2694

Teenage pregnancy training is available to support workers to meet the needs of all young people and in particular those who are more vulnerable to becoming teenage parents.

The training helps carers to consider the health, social and emotional needs of the young people they work with, in relation to sexual health and teenage pregnancy; it also provides a variety of practical tools to meet these needs and to deliver effective sex and relationship education, interventions and workshop.

For further information, please contact your supervising social worker to discuss your training needs or access the post approval training room on Fronter to for dates and venues.

For additional information about staying healthy, please visit:

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/caring/childrenstrust/developmentwork/teenage-pregnancy/>

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/health-and-wellbeing/sexual-health>

Sex - Worth Talking About

Web: www.nhs.uk/worhtalkingabout

Information about contraception, teen talk, talking about sex and STI's.

Health and Safety

A health and safety assessment is undertaken as part of the assessment to become a foster carer and should be reviewed annually.

All newly approved foster carers will be provided with smoke alarms if required. They must be kept in good working order and foster carers are responsible for replacing batteries in any alarm supplied. These should be tested regularly to ensure they are working. If foster carers require any additional safety equipment they should discuss this with their supervising social worker.

Holidays

It is expected that any child or young person placed with foster carers will be treated as a member of the family and be included in family holidays.

It is very important that carers ensure that our looked after children attend school on a regular basis to ensure educational stability and achievement. Nottinghamshire County Council have a duty to close the attainment and progress gap between looked after children and their peers, and create a culture where we have high aspirations for children, and support schools in promoting their educational achievement. Maintaining good attendance at school is key in supporting all children with their education, and with this in mind, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced strict new rules on holidays in term time.

Previously, head teachers were able to grant 10 days' leave in "exceptional circumstances", meaning that many schools could allow up to two weeks of term-time holidays per year. The stricter rules mean that booking a holiday is unlikely to be classed as an exceptional circumstance, and unauthorised absence from school can lead to fines. There will be times where children miss school due to illness or family emergencies, and head teachers are sympathetic to this and will help children to catch up with missed work. Given our commitment to closing the educational gap between children looked after and their peers, we ask that carers do not book holidays in term-time.

In particular, children should never be absent from school when SATS, GCSE's or A Levels are taking place.

If foster carers are thinking of going abroad with a foster child, the carer must give the child's social worker plenty of notice of their plans. Parental permission, as well as consent from Children, Families and Cultural Services may need to be sought depending on the legal status of the child. You may need to carry a covering letter from the department, as well as the child or young person's passport, if you are taking them out of the country.

If foster carers are planning to take a holiday without a foster child, it is important that they notify the social worker as soon as possible so that suitable arrangements are made for another foster carer, family friend or relative to take care of the child.

NB: Payments to the foster carers usually cease once the foster child has been away from the foster carers in support care for 28 days (see Section 3 - Financial Information and Advice for Foster Carers).

Income Tax and National Insurance

The different payments you receive as a foster carer will affect the benefits that you are entitled to. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC – previously called the Inland Revenue) need to know about any payments being made to you, as may the housing and council tax benefit sections of your local council.

Foster carers are contracted by the local authority to provide care to children placed with them. If you receive income this way you are treated as self-employed and are responsible for your own Income Tax and National Insurance contributions, therefore all foster carers need to register as self-employed with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

If you are a new foster carer, the two key things you need to do straight away are to register as self-employed, as soon as you are approved by your fostering service, and to start keeping a record of the children you foster, the dates they are with you and their ages.

The Children and Young People's Payments Team (CYPPT) issue "Year End Statements" (YES) to ALL foster carers. These statements will summarise ALL the payments made to you during the previous financial year and will be issued in early June.

Your supervising social worker will also receive a copy of your statement and will keep it on your file for future reference. These statements will assist all foster carers in the self-assessment process for the Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

More detailed information can be provided in a Year End Report (YER). These reports are available, upon your request, from the CYPP team at County Hall by telephoning 0115 8043840.

You can register with HMRC by telephone, either by calling the HRMC Newly Self Employed helpline on 0300 200 3500/3504 or by filling in the paper form CWF1 (downloadable from HMRC's website); or you can [register online here](#). It's simplest to register online. If you do so you'll automatically be prompted to send in your tax return, and already be set up to do so online.

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

You should seek advice from your local tax office or an independent financial adviser in completing the forms. HM Revenue and Customs has a fact sheet on the tax arrangements for foster carers, which can be found by visiting:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifying-care-relief-foster-carers-adult-placement-carers-kinship-carers-and-staying-put-carers-hs236-self-assessment-helpsheet>

If you don't register with HMRC you may face a financial penalty.

Once you're registered as self-employed you're also automatically registered for Class 2 National Insurance contributions.

For further information and advice please refer to

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/personal-tax/self-assessment>
<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/tax-and-national-insurance>.

Identity cards

All approved foster carers should be issued with an identity card. The cards are issued on behalf of the County Council to a named individual with a digital photograph, to enable foster carers to be easily identifiable when attending meetings and venues on behalf of the children they care for. Each cardholder will be responsible for the safe custody and appropriate use of the card.

To find out more about obtaining an identity card, please contact your supervising social worker who can complete an online form to request a card on your behalf.

All identity cards should be returned to the supervising social workers when the carer is no longer registered.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)

Reviewing officers are normally qualified social workers appointed by the local authority to chair LAC, fostering and adoption reviews. IROs should not have line management responsibility for the child's case. Apart from conducting a LAC review, a core function of the IRO is to ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority prior to a child's review taking place.

Independent Visitors

The local authority can appoint an independent visitor whose role is to visit, advise and befriend a child looked after by the local authority.

Independent Visitors can provide looked after children with an adult friend who can offer support, take a child out socially and, where appropriate, advocate on their behalf.

Nottinghamshire County Council's advocacy service is delivered by NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) who are a national children's rights charity. Independent Visitors take a real interest in the lives, hopes and concerns of children and young people in care and are there to listen and help.

For more information about this service, please speak to your supervising social worker.

Interpreters

If an interpreter is needed for a meeting or an important discussion, the child's social worker can arrange this, prior to the event.

Leaving Care

Looked After young people aged 16 to 18 years are supported by the Looked After Children teams to ensure that there are clear plans in place for their legal discharge from care at age 18. From 16 onwards, social workers will work with young people, their families, carers, schools and other professionals to assess what needs to be done, to ensure that each young person develops the skills required to make a positive transition to adult life and independence.

This will include an assessment of the young person's strengths and needs in areas such as education, employment and training needs, self-care, household management skills, physical and emotional health and how they manage their relationships.

Young people will be helped to think about their personal goals and the support they need to achieve them. Foster carers play an important role in this process and will be well placed to talk to young people about their hopes for the future. Foster carers will be expected to help young people to develop the skills they need to eventually manage their own home. A personal adviser may be allocated to support this process from age 16 if the young person needs additional support, this PA is likely to continue to work with that young person post 18. The Leaving care team also has 3 Transitional PA's who's role is to work intensively with a small cohort of young people who are identified as requiring intensive support in their transition to leaving care, these group of young people will be gradually stepped down to an 18+ Personal adviser after they reach 18. The leaving care and Looked after managers meet on a regular basis to determine the point at which a young person requires Personal Adviser support.

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Young people's goals and the support to be put in place to achieve these goals are written in a Pathway Plan. This Plan is required by law and outlines what needs to be done, who will do it and the timescale for action.

While the young person is in care, the Pathway Plan is written by the young person's social worker and reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer. This ensures that the Plan is of good quality and meets the young person's needs.

A Leaving Care review will be held prior to the young person's 18th birthday. At this review, the Pathway Plan should contain details about the young person's housing arrangements, their education, employment and training plans, how their health needs will be met, and the practical arrangements that are to be put in place to support them to live successfully as independent young adults. All Pathway Plans will be different due to the individual needs of young people and each Plan will contain any issues for specific consideration such as, the transition to Adult Social Care and Health provision for young people requiring specialist services due to disabilities or specialist mental health needs and specific housing and support packages for asylum seeking young people.

At this point, ongoing support and the review of the Pathway Plan is taken over by the Leaving Care team who are a team of personal advisers working with care leavers between the ages of 18 to 21 years, (up to 25 if the young person remains in education or training). It is expected that the young person will have been introduced to their personal adviser before they are 18, so that they have a chance to get to know the service before they leave care.

Personal advisers work with young people to support them in all areas of independent living. This support is practical and emotional and aims to ensure that young people are suitably housed; are able to manage their finances, get support to pursue education, training and employment goals and achieve good health and wellbeing.

A growing number of foster carers and young people are choosing to maintain their "living together" arrangement after the young person officially leaves care aged 18 years. Discussions about whether this will be viable should take place once the young person turns 16 and be part of the Pathway Plan. The role of the local authority is to facilitate this and financial support is available to ensure that arrangements can continue. The support available is contained in the authority's Staying Put Policy. Evidence suggests that young people who remain with foster carers for longer, will achieve better outcomes in terms of education and employment in the longer term.

Unless they return home to parents, most looked after young people in Nottinghamshire will continue to be looked after until they are 18 years old.

Life story

Most children whose lives have been disrupted will have had sad and painful past experiences. These are part of their history and underpin their subsequent development and view of the world. Children have a right to know about their past experiences and to try and understand the reason for what has happened to them.

Children, particularly young children, tend to live in the present and forget the past. If a child has had a particularly unhappy past, a foster carer may be tempted to try and protect them by encouraging them to forget their past.

Though memories might fade, there is likely to come a point where the child or young person is curious about their parents and their past, and go in search of their identity. As a foster carer you will be the first person to take over the care of the child from their parents. At this stage, you may not know how long the child will be placed in your care, but regardless of this, you become part of the child's history.

The child's social worker is responsible for completing life story work when a child comes into care, for example, a family tree, genogram or 'later life letter'.

Foster carers are expected to provide a collection of memories for the child which highlight the time they have been with the carer. As soon as the child comes to stay with you, it is important to find ways of documenting this time, whether the child returns home or has to move on to another placement. Ideas of ways to record are:

- take some photographs of yourself, your family, your home, your pets and other significant people
- keep pictures, school photos, pieces of the child's work, achievement certificates and school reports
- keep mementos, such as birthday cards, photos of celebrations and holidays
- record factual information, such as the child's first tooth or their first day at primary or secondary school
- keep a record of contact that the child has with their family.

The collection of life story items can take the form of a memory box or book. Items should be dated and you can add captions or explanations or give items meaning. The items can be collected in a box, or in plastic sleeves or folders.

Please speak to your supervising social worker for more ideas and information.

Matching a child to a family

Each child or young person placed in the care of a foster carer is carefully matched in accordance with the child's assessed needs. In matching children with carers, the child's care plan and any other recent written assessments are taken into account, as well as the most up-to-date assessment or review of the foster carer.

Matches are achieved by sharing information and considering the child's racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs before matching these as closely as possible with the foster family.

Where trans-racial placements are made, the fostering team should provide the foster family with additional training, support and information to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of their heritage.

When foster carers are contacted to consider a placement, there are some questions which they are advised to ask. These are:

1. is the child to be placed within my approval range (age, gender, number)?
2. what is the family background/reasons for the child coming into care?
For example, abuse, neglect, domestic violence, mental ill-health, drug or alcohol issues
3. what is the legal status of accommodated under Section 20, Care Order. Is this case subject to court proceedings?
4. what is the expected length of the placement?
5. what is the Care Plan?
6. does the child have any specific needs? For example, taking medication, attending appointments, allergies. Is special equipment required? Are there specific health and safety issues? For example, does the child have a history of running away from the home?
7. does the child have a disability?
8. does the child have any other special requirements? For example, dietary needs, religious needs, language support or any other cultural needs.
9. what are the expectations around contact and school arrangements? Are you expected to provide transport for contact, or take the child to school?
10. are there any other professionals involved? For example, CAMHS, YOT, a family centre. Check regarding any upcoming appointments
11. has a risk assessment been carried out for this placement? What risks have

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

been considered? For example, is it necessary to keep your address confidential from either the child's birth family or from a particular family member? Will contact take place in a contact centre and will it be supervised?

12. does the child display any behaviour that could be considered a risk to you or your family? If so, how are these risks going to be managed?
13. who are the important people in this child's life that may need contact? For example, siblings, parents, carers and friends. Have arrangements been put in place?
14. are there any important behavioural issues? For example, challenging behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, and criminal activity. What are the child's strengths that will enable you to work with them?
15. what are the nursery/school arrangements? Does the child attend regularly? If there is no named school, what arrangements can be put in place in the interim?
16. what are the child's interests and hobbies? What is their personality like (introverted, extroverted)? Will they be comfortable with your pets?

The foster carer requires answers to these questions when first being approached about the placement. This list is not intended to replace the significant information for looked after children such as the looked after child's care plan and the placements team can request any further information from the looked after children's team as necessary.

There will be occasions when the emergency duty team (EDT) will contact foster carers to ask if they would consider taking a placement on an emergency basis. In situations like this, there may be limited information available about the child.

Missing from care

Children who Run Away and Go Missing From Home, Care or Education Policy is included in the Recording Policy, which is given to foster carers at the time of a child's placement. If you do not have a copy of this document, please speak to your supervising social worker or see:

See: [6.5 Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home, Care or Education Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) available online <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Mobile phone guidance

See: [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) available online <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

A useful website which contains information by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre about internet safety and allows on line reporting direct to trained police officers, if a young person was having a problem with inappropriate contact via chat rooms or emails, etc., can be accessed on www.thinkuknow.co.uk .

Names

Most children you care for will still have parents. Very few children will not have a mother or father. In temporary placements it is not appropriate for a child to call you 'mum' or 'dad' because it can be confusing to the child and insensitive to the child's birth parents.

Many children struggle to know what to call foster carers and may choose not to call you anything at all, at least in the early stages of the placement. You should tell the child what you want them to call you, which will usually be your first name.

If a child is placed with you long term, they may want to call you 'mum' and 'dad', particularly if your own children are doing so. You need to deal with their request sensitively and carefully depending on the child's age and individual circumstances.

Foster carers cannot change children's names. If a child is placed with you on a permanent fostering status, appropriate exploratory steps can be taken to obtain legal advice to allow the child to be known by the carer's surname. A child's name can only be changed by a person with parental responsibility, but do make sure you ask the child the name they would like to be called by. However, in confidential placements you may need to seek advice from children's services, as it may be necessary to make arrangements in school or at GP surgeries to prevent a child's birth name being publicly announced.

National Minimum Standards for Foster Carers

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards are applicable to the local authority and independent fostering agencies. All foster carers are expected to work within the minimum standards and regulations.

You can access a copy of the National Minimum Standards or the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards> and <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/581/contents/made> or requesting a copy from your supervising social worker.

Ofsted

Ofsted inspects and regulates all children's services activities using the Fostering Service Regulations, the National Minimum Standards and the five outcomes.

Out of Hours Support

See: Handbook Section 2 – Support.

Outcomes for children

In September 2003 the Government launched 'Every Child Matters', which set out its commitment to improving the outcomes for all children and young people.

The policy brought together statutory, voluntary, independent and community groups and identified five outcomes that improve the life chances of all children and young people, not just those who are looked after. Under each of these headings are five aims which have measurable targets and indicators.

Inspection teams, such as Ofsted, use these indicators to judge the contributions of services to improving outcomes. The agenda for 'Every Child Matters' is ambitious and will involve every agency (voluntary, statutory and independent) working towards improving the lives of all children.

The outcomes, which can be easily remembered by the following slogan are:

SHEEP

Stay safe

- safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation
- safe from accidental injury and death
- safe from bullying and discrimination
- safe from crime and antisocial behaviour in and out of school
- have security, stability and are cared for

Healthy

- physically healthy
- mentally and emotionally healthy
- sexually healthy
- healthy lifestyles
- choose not to take drugs

Enjoy and achieve

- ready for school
- attend and enjoy school
- achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school
- achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation
- achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school

Economic well-being

- engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school
- ready for employment
- live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- access to transport and material goods
- live in households free from low income

Positive contribution environment

- engage in law abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
- develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate
- develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges.

Overnight stays

See: [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) available online
<http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

Parental responsibility

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties and responsibilities that a parent of a child has by law. People other than the child's birth parents can acquire parental responsibility through:

- being granted a Residence Order
- being granted a Special Guardianship Order
- adoption
- a local authority obtaining a legal order, such as a Care Order.

When the local authority obtains a legal order, parental rights and responsibilities for a child are shared, to varying degrees (depending on the agreement determined by the court), between the local authority (and therefore foster carers acting on their behalf) and the parents. Parents or other family members are not able to remove a child from the care of the local authority without the local authority or court's consent.

Foster carers should be informed of what responsibilities they share with parents and the local authority at the first 72 hour planning meeting.

Parenting

Family Service Directory

Web: www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/

The family service directory allows you to search a database full of useful information, advice and guidance on all aspects relating to children, young people and families whether you're looking for registered childcare, schools, health, family support services or activities to keep the family fit and entertained, it's all in one place!

Family Lives

Web: <http://familylives.org.uk/>
Helpline: 0808 800 2222

A national charity helping parents to deal with the changes that are a constant part of family life by providing professional non-judgmental support and advice via 24 hour helpline, advice on the website, email and live chat service, befriending services and parenting/relationship support groups.

Passports

Wherever possible, parents should be asked to provide consent for a passport application. However, if a child or young person is on a Care Order, the group manager will need to sign the application.

Obtaining passports and the consents necessary can be a lengthy process, so please request completion of the child's application well in advance of the intended visit abroad.

Rules regarding photographs can be found at <http://www.gov.uk/photos-for-passports>

Play and toys

It is important to recognise the needs of children and young people, the issues they might be struggling with and how their feelings may be played out or communicated.

While a child or young person might be of a certain chronological age, their social and emotional age might be significantly lower. Therefore, it is important not to describe certain types of play as 'childish', as many children may have missed the

opportunity to play at this level. Children should have access to a wide range of multi-cultural toys, books and other activities and may require help to learn how to play.

Children might choose random objects to play with rather than toys; but it is vital that you are vigilant for signs of play becoming distressing or dangerous for the child, or anyone else involved. If you feel that you or the child is in need of support or advice about play and the choice of toys, please talk to your supervising social worker.

Pocket money

When children are first looked after, the amount of pocket money they receive should be agreed at the outset of the placement. (See Section 3 – Financial Information and Advice for Foster Carers for guidance on weekly pocket money rates).

Police

If a young person in placement is arrested by the police and the foster carer is contacted, carers should find out why the child has been arrested and inform the police that the young person is looked after. The police should be given contact details for the young person's allocated social worker or the emergency duty team if it is outside office hours.

The foster carer should also contact the young person's social worker (or duty social worker if the young person's social worker is unavailable to advise them of the incident). If the situation occurs out of hours, make sure that the emergency duty team is advised.

If the young person is going to be interviewed as part of the process, an appropriate adult will need to be identified to support the child. This will be arranged by the police and the parties concerned.

Racism and discrimination

Children may respond to racism and discrimination by feeling ashamed, angry and rejected, and it can affect their confidence and sense of self-worth. For children to feel comfortable enough to talk about their experiences of prejudice and discrimination, foster carers need to feel comfortable with the subject too.

It is an important part of a foster carer's role to take positive action to combat racism or discrimination and to help a young person develop strategies to cope with their experiences.

See: Culture, Value and Beliefs in A-Z.

Religion

It is important for a child or young person's identity and welfare that his or her religious practices and beliefs are supported during a period of separation from their birth family.

Foster carers cannot change a child's religion and should consult their supervising social worker before involving the child in their own religious practices or beliefs. Foster carers need to be aware of, and care for, a child's spiritual and moral well-being as part of their physical and emotional development. This may mean enabling the child to pray or participate in rituals relating to their faith.

See: Culture, Value and Beliefs in A-Z.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment will identify significant hazards and whether existing precautions are adequate or more can be done. A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm. A risk is the likelihood of potential harm from that hazard being realised. The extent of the risk will depend on:

- the likelihood of that harm occurring
- the potential severity of that harm
- those who may be affected by the harm.

There are five stages to undertaking a risk assessment:

Step 1 – Look for hazards

Walk around your house, garden and any other area that children or young people may regularly use, and look at what could be reasonably expected to cause harm.

Step 2 – Decide who might be at risk and how

There may be children and young people who may be at a particular risk. For example, children with a disability or very young children.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risk and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more could be done

You must determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Can you get rid of the hazard altogether? If not, how can it be controlled? For example, if you have a pond you may feel the risk is unacceptably high and decided to fill it in.

Step 4 – Make a record

In your daily log, record that you have carried out a risk assessment and what precautions, if any, you have taken.

Step 5 – Review your assessment

Hazards change and the potential risks alter with the age and behaviour of the child in placement. You also need to be carrying out a risk assessment when you take children in placement to new surroundings. For example, if you go on holiday the hazards may be very different to those at home.

See [1.10 Transporting children and young people Safely](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) - available online at <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

Safeguarding children

Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We will respond robustly to all concerns about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults that are reported to us. This commitment applies equally to children that we work with directly and those that we come into contact with. We expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Safeguarding and Promoting the welfare of Children

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Child protection is a key element in work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Child protection refers to work undertaken with children identified as being at risk of significant harm.

All those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work, including practitioners who do not have a specific role in relation to safeguarding children, have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As a foster carer, this issue will be covered with you fully in your induction and form part of your ongoing professional development and training.

School trips

See: Delegated authority in A-Z.

Self-harm

Self-harming or self-injurious behaviour is the deliberate act of causing harm to oneself. It can take many forms from scratching or cutting, to the swallowing of harmful substances and taking an overdose. It can include under-eating or over-eating.

If a child is suspected of self-harming, any strategies to be used should be outlined in the placement plan. If no plan or strategy exists, all reasonable measure should be taken to reduce or prevent the behaviour. This may include providing additional supervision, confiscation of materials that may be used to self-harm or, as a last resort, physically intervening or calling for assistance from the emergency services, the child's looked after CAMHS or the CAMHS crisis team.

If there is a suspicion that the child may be involved in self-harming, a risk assessment must be undertaken with a view to deciding what strategies should be adopted to reduce or prevent the behaviour. If necessary, specialist advice or support should be sought.

The Looked After Children's team also signpost carers and young people to the local organisation **Harmless** which you can look at online for support and guidance.

<http://www.harmless.org.uk>

Harmless is a user led organisation that provides a range of services about self-harm and suicide prevention including support, information, training and consultancy to people who self-harm, their friends and families and professionals and those at risk of suicide.

All incidents of self-harm are to be logged / recorded and shared with the child's social worker and the carers supervising social worker.

See: A-Z Health and Wellbeing.

Sexual health and relationships education

Sex and relationships education has been described as: 'lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships and sexual health.'

The aim is to provide children with accurate information and to help them develop the skills and positive values to guide their decision making, judgments, relationships and behaviour. Sex and relationships education has three elements:

- attitudes and values

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

- personal and social skills
- knowledge and understanding.

One of the contributing factors to being happy is to be accepted for who you are and not have to live life according to the wishes or beliefs of others. If you are caring for a child who thinks they may be lesbian, gay or bisexual, then being available for them to talk to you without fear of judgement or censor is very important. This is also relevant for any young person identifying as transgender (a person whose sense of identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.) Every child needs the support, acceptance and understanding of those who are caring for them.

Foster carers and social workers can and should give young people, including those under 16, information on sexual health and contraception and the details of how to contact local services. If young people need advice, they should be encouraged to contact health centres and local resources where support and advice on contraception and sexually transmitted infections is available free of charge. Youth workers can also offer C Card registration and provide advice and contraception if considered appropriate.

The LAC nurse can also talk to young people if they have any queries about sexual health or contraception. It is important for you to be aware that health professionals can provide contraceptive advice to young people under 16 years old without parental consent, if certain criteria are fulfilled.

The legal position in relation to sexual relationships is that it is illegal for a male aged ten years or over to have sexual intercourse with a female who is under 16 years of age. Sexual intercourse is considered a serious offence if the girl is under 13 years of age. If a girl is aged 13 to 16 years, a lesser charge may be made if the male believed the girl was over 16 years old (the age of consent), and it is his first offence and he is under 24 years old. In this situation, the offence is committed by the male, not the female.

The age of consent for men to have sex with men is 16 years of age. There is no age of consent in respect of women having sex with women, but a charge of indecent assault could be brought if the girl is less than 16 years old.

See: Health and Wellbeing in A-Z and [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com) available online <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

Sexuality

See: Culture, Value and Beliefs and Sexual Health and Relationships Education in A-Z.

Sleepovers

See: Overnight Stays in [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](#) available online <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

Smoking

All supervising social workers are expected to advise foster carers and new applicants about the dangers to babies, children and young people of passive smoking. We are now committed to reducing the level of smoking in the county and protecting non-smokers from the damaging effects of second-hand smoke. One important aspect of this, is to encourage and support smokers who want to give up and to promote local 'stop smoking' services.

Carers who smoke are damaging their own health and potentially compromising their ability to actively parent the child. This is of particular concern for a limited number of foster carers who are providing a permanent home for the child. Children who have experienced many losses in their lives may be faced with the premature loss of another parent figure as a result of smoking related disease, disability or death.

You might think that smoking at work – if you're still allowed to do it – deals with the second-hand smoking issue. However, the smoke on your clothes that you take back into the home, still contains poisonous chemicals which can affect the health of those who breathe it in. It is impossible to cancel out the damaging effect of smoke which hangs around on your clothes, or drifts into the house or another room.

And, of course, in all these situations the risk to your own health is still present. As a foster carer, you may be advised to restrict your smoking to certain areas of your home, preferably outdoors, to ensure that children play, eat and sleep in smoke-free environments. Carers also have a responsibility to ensure that children are not exposed to smoke when they visit relatives and friends of carers.

Our policy is that children under five years should not be placed within a smoking household, nor should children who have:

- asthma or other breathing difficulties
- heart conditions
- middle ear/glue ear problems
- a disability such as Downs Syndrome or Cystic Fibrosis.

In addition if the child was born prematurely, or the mother smoked during pregnancy, or there is a family history of asthma, for example, it would be considered inappropriate to place the child within a smoking household.

Passive smoking is linked to respiratory diseases such as asthma and bronchitis, sudden infant death syndrome and middle ear problems. No child should have to live in a smoking environment.

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Adult carers act as role models for their children. Children who live with smokers are much more likely to become smokers themselves, with all the health risks that this poses. Smoking is a difficult habit to break, so it is important to encourage children never to start.

If you care for children who do smoke, try to encourage and support them in giving up and make sure the rules about smoking are very clear – for instance, smoking in the bedroom can be an additional fire risk and should never be allowed.

Young people should not smoke inside the foster home and should be advised that if they must smoke, they have to go outside. Remember it is against the law for young people under the age of 16 years to buy cigarettes and if you are aware a shop is supplying tobacco or cigarettes to children, you should speak to the proprietor.

See: [12.14 Safe Caring Policy](#) and [11.6.3 Protecting Children from the Harmful Effects of Second-hand Smoke \(Prospective Foster Carers and Prospective Adopters\)](#) available online <http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.

Smoking in private vehicles

It is illegal to smoke in a car (or other vehicle) with anyone under 18. The law changed on 1 October 2015, to protect children and young people from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Both the driver and the smoker could be fined £50. The law applies to every driver in England and Wales, including those aged 17 and those with a provisional driving licence.

The law applies:

- to any private vehicle that is enclosed wholly or partly by a roof
- when people have the windows or sunroof open, or the air conditioning on
- when someone sits smoking in the open doorway of a vehicle

The law does not apply to:

- e-cigarettes (vaping)
- a driver who is 17 years old if they are on their own in the car
- a convertible car with the roof completely down

You may also find the following phone lines and websites helpful:

- NHS Smoking Helpline
0300 123 1044 (freephone);
- www.nhs.uk/smokefree;

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

- **NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline**
0800 169 0 881 (Urdu)
0800 169 0 882 (Punjabi)
0800 169 0 883 (Hindi)
0800 169 0 884 (Gujarati)
0800 169 0 885 (Bengali);
- Text **GIVE UP** with your full postcode to: **88088**.

NHS "Stop Smoking" Services across Nottinghamshire:

FREE support for smokers who want to stop.

- **Bassetlaw Stop Smoking Service**
"Do you want to kick the habit?"
0800 328 8553 or 07968 016256
- **New Leaf Stop Smoking Service**
(covers Ashfield, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood. This service offers **FREE** nicotine replacement therapy to those registered with GPs in this area)
0800 389 7712
Text LEAF to 80800
- **Nottingham New Leaf City Stop Smoking Service**
(covers Nottingham City, Gedling, Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and Hucknall)
0800 561 2121
Text NEW to 80800

Special Guardianship Orders

A Special Guardianship Order is a court order that gives a child permanent legal security in a family without giving them a new identity. Under a Special Guardianship Order, links between the child and their birth family can be maintained.

Special Guardianship is a route to permanence that fits between permanent fostering and adoption. Special Guardians have overriding parental responsibility to make day-to-day decisions concerning the welfare of the child, without the involvement of the local authority. Once a Special Guardianship Order has been made, the child ceases to be looked after.

To apply for a Special Guardianship Order, the applicant:

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

- must be 18 years old or older
- can be a relative or family friend, a foster carer, or someone who has looked after the child continuously for the last year or for three out of the last five years
- does not need to be married
- cannot be a birth parent.

A local authority cannot apply for a Special Guardianship Order. There are some decisions that Special Guardians cannot make without the consent of a parent or permission from a court, these are:

- changing the child's surname
- removing the child from the United Kingdom for more than three months
- significant decisions where the law states that the consent of all those with parental responsibility is required, for example, circumcision
- giving consent for a young person under the age of 18 years to marry.

For more information about Special Guardianship, please speak to your supervising social worker.

Support foster care

The current messages from attachment theory, emphasises that in order to help the child form relationships and develop trust in the adult world, consistency is a key factor. The implications of this for support care are clearly important; if boundaries and management approaches are to be consistent, this needs to be considered at the planning stage and integrated into fostering practice. Furthermore, the climate in which support care takes place has significant implications for the child's experience of this namely, it's potential as a further rejection and blaming experience or conversely as a normalising experience extending family life.

Implications for Practice

1. support carers need to be provided with full information about the child and a summary of their attachment behaviours (e.g. anxious/avoidant/ambivalent)
2. support carers need to understand the behaviour management routine which operates in the main foster home and how to transfer this to their own setting
3. support placements should take place within a positive context in which it is presented to the child, as an opportunity to make new relationships, new experiences etc, NOT as a punishment, or at a time of crisis. The child should be helped to feel involved with the planning by being introduced to the support carers,

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

initially by using the families “Book About Us”, photographs etc., and a process of introductions

4. the main carer should be encouraged to liaise with the support carer to ensure that they are kept up to date as regards events in the child’s life. It is also important to model a relationship between the carers for the child so as to promote a sense of personal links. A good communication link between carers can also model a message of containment and thereby enhance the child’s sense of safety and security
5. where possible, the support carer might encourage the child to display photographs/personal objects so as to personalise and “claim” the fact that they are a regular visitor
6. supervising social workers should take a lead responsibility in organising the initial planning process and in promoting the above
7. support care arrangements should be re-viewed as part of the looked after review process and the child’s views explored.

Support Hubs

We encourage our foster carers to meet with each other on a regular basis at various support groups or “hubs” to talk about different issues and offer advice, helping each other. Your supervising social worker will advise you where and when these groups are meeting.

Tattoos and body piercing

Children should be informed that it is illegal for a tattooist to tattoo them if they are under the age of 18 years, even with parental consent. If a child seems determined to have a tattoo, consideration should be given to making the tattooist aware of the age of the child. Children should be made aware of the risks in having a tattoo, such as unsafe materials or unclean needles.

Foster carers should also never give consent for a child to have any part of their body pierced. Children should be advised to speak with their parents and social worker before they have any piercings, but whether consent is given or not, children cannot be prevented from being pierced.

See: Delegated authority in A-Z.

Transporting children

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

Good parenting practice requires that foster carers, whenever possible, personally transport children to school and appointments. When this is not possible, and someone other than the child's foster carer provides transport for the child, you must:

- always ask to see an identity card for the person providing the transport.
- always check there is an appropriate car seat and/or seat restraint in the vehicle.
- always ensure that a Child Care Risk Assessment - Section 2 Transporting Children and Young People Safely is completed in respect of the child you are looking after. This assessment should be completed at the placement planning meeting.

See: [1.10 Transporting children and young people Safely](http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_transport_ch_yp.html) - available online at http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_transport_ch_yp.html

Truancy

Foster carers should ensure that a child is out of school as little as possible. This may mean suggesting that any meetings take place after school.

Where a child has a history of truanting, the foster carer may have to personally take the child into the school building each day, to make sure they arrive.

Every school now has a designated teacher for looked after children. The LAC team can help carers and children who are experiencing difficulties with education by offering advice, assistance and direct support from teachers and educational psychologists.

If a child is out of school for any reason, the foster carer must inform the school on the first day of absence. If the child is excluded from school, the school must provide school work to complete at home. If a child is not excluded but has been advised not to come to school for a period of time, carers should also ask for school work for the child or young person to complete. Carers should ensure that all the work is completed and returned to the school before more work is requested.

See: Handbook Section 6 – Education.

Unannounced visits

Supervising social workers have a duty to carry out unannounced visits on an annual basis. Unannounced visits can be made more frequently if there is any cause for concern.

The purpose of the visit is to check health and safety, household composition and safer caring. They will want to look around the home to check bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen facilities. A record will be completed for each visit and signed by both the

foster carer and supervising social worker. A report on the unannounced visit will be included in the annual foster carer review.

Wetting and soiling

Children may have a medical condition or infection that causes them to wet or soil during the day and/or night. The problem may be due to immaturity in physical development, or it may result from the child being anxious and worried. It is important to reassure the child and establish with them a way they can respond to any accidents.

Make sure the child is having a good diet with plenty of liquids and fibre, and establish a good routine of going to the toilet regularly throughout the day, as young children can become so engrossed in play that they forget to go to the toilet until it is too late.

It is important to remain calm and positive and not to embarrass the child as this can create a greater anxiety. If a child continues to soil or wet, it is important to consult the GP.

Working together guidance

The Department for Education (DfE) has issued a guide called Working Together to Safeguard Children. The guide sets out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Children can only be safeguarded properly if the key agencies work effectively together. The guidance is aimed at all professionals, including foster carers, who have responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. A Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) has been established to help ensure that this happens.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Young people looked after team

The Young People Looked after Team (YPLA), offers a range of services and events throughout the year which are dedicated to young people looked after by Nottinghamshire County Council.

They are responsible for:

- increasing the number of young people looked after who attend/are aware of youth service provision across the county, and give them support, where

A-Z Quick Reference Guide

necessary to access the provision of their choice

- plan and deliver a range of youth work activities, such as residential experiences as well as a series of planned fun events throughout the year
- give young people access to youth workers for one to one work where appropriate to support young people to build self-esteem and confidence so that they can fully participate
- ensure that all young people looked after have the opportunity to 'have their say' through consultation and participation in the Children in Care Council (CIC Council)
- to work with colleagues from all agencies to ensure we are all working together for each individual young person and have a joined up approach to solving any issues that might arise.

Arts and sport bring out hidden talents, which have lasting benefits, they give individuals greater self-respect, self-confidence and a sense of achievement, all contributing to greater self-esteem and improved mental wellbeing. All of these qualities are particularly valuable to looked after young people.

The key outcomes for the team are:

- to ensure that young people have fun, and are involved in social education linked to out of schools hours learning
- that young people are given the opportunity to have a voice about their life in care by participating in the CIC council, as well as being made aware of activities on offer across the county that they may want to get involved in and can enjoy
- that young people are made aware of the 'PLEDGE' which is a list of promises about how they will be supported whilst in care made to children by the corporate parenting panel and senior managers within children's services.

The team also manage the Child in Care Council function. The work of the Children in Care Council is about meaningful involvement of young people in decision making, evaluation, planning and delivery which leads to services that are effective in meeting their needs in the long-term.

Young people will be invited to events and formal meetings to express their wishes and feelings about the individual care they receive in their placement, as well as being able to shape the overall strategy for children in their area. For enquiries and advice about activities for looked after children please contact the team on 01623626972 or email pav.ayoub@nottsc.gov.uk

Youth Justice Service

The Youth Justice Service works with children and young people aged between 10 and 18 with the aim of preventing offending and re-offending and includes representatives from local councils, the police, probation service and health authorities and a range of other agencies. Find out more about Youth Justice Services at www.gov.uk and visit our website at <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/childrens-social-care/nottinghamshire-childrens-trust/pathway-to-provision/youth-justice> for more information.

We hope you have found this guidance helpful.