



The
Fostering
Network



Exit Interview Toolkit
Part Three

Information for foster carers
leaving their service



Information for foster carers leaving their service

This guidance forms part of The Fostering Network's Exit Interview Toolkit developed during our Foster Carer Retention Project. We would recommend that fostering services pass this on to foster carers who are leaving their fostering service, so that they have some guidance on what they may need to do, and what their future options are.

Do you have questions regarding fostering?

If you are still a member of The Fostering Network and have questions relating to leaving your service, please call our helplines:

England: 020 7401 9582

Northern Ireland: 028 9070 5056

Scotland: 0141 204 1400

Wales: 0800 316 7664

Alternatively, you can send general enquiries to info@fostering.net

If you are not a member of The Fostering Network, please contact your own membership organisation or your fostering service for advice.

Retaining your membership of The Fostering Network

You can still register for individual membership if you continue fostering with another service or our retired foster carer membership scheme if you have decided to stop fostering. Some foster carers enjoy membership with us for many years but significantly make use of the benefits, such as our market leading legal protection insurance scheme, once they have stopped fostering.

Some young people make allegations many years after leaving care, and this can be challenging for carers to cope with. We can continue to support you with these and any other challenges under our retired foster carer membership, which we would urge you to maintain. Your fostering service may not be able to support you after you have stopped fostering, but The Fostering Network can continue to protect you in the event of an allegation. Please visit thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/membership for more information.

Your feelings and emotions on leaving fostering

Fostering can be an emotional journey and leaving your fostering service equally so. Please contact the relevant helpline of The Fostering Network if you retain our membership, speak to your GP or refer to the NHS counselling service at www.nhs.uk/conditions/counselling if you would like to explore your feelings and work through any remaining challenges or difficulties. Please consider if this may also be appropriate for members of your family.



Your exit interview

Your fostering service will have offered you an exit interview which you may or may not have already had. We would strongly encourage you to consider this as an important and valuable stage of leaving your service. This is your opportunity to share ideas and opinions with your service which can help you to move on, and which can help your fostering service to be proactive in improving their practice for you, other foster carers and looked after children.

If your fostering service has offered you the opportunity for a second exit interview discussion or communication, after a period of reflection, please do consider taking them up on this offer. Your reflective thoughts on leaving fostering are important and may be different to your initial thoughts, but equally as valid, so are worth sharing with your service to help inform their practice.

Your financial and tax affairs

Please ensure that you cancel any direct debits or standing orders which relate to activities or subscriptions for children who will no longer be in your care.

Please contact your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau if you need financial advice immediately. You can find your nearest at www.citizensadvice.co.uk. If you are already in receipt of benefits and would like to know the impact on these, please contact your local Jobcentre Plus. You will be able to find them here www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus.

Other useful links for exploring benefits are www.gov.uk/browse/benefits and www.turn2us.org.uk.

A useful source of information for you may be The Money Advice Service. You can access their help at www.themoneyadviceservice.co.uk.

As a foster carer you will have been self-employed and responsible for completing a self-assessment tax return each year. This will need to be completed for any portion of a year in which you have fostered if you are stopping fostering. You may wish to cease being self-employed if you stop fostering and, if this is the case, you will need to contact the tax office at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on 0300 200 3300. They will ask for your National Insurance Number and other personal details.

Keeping in touch

As a foster carer, you may have looked after children who you would like to keep in touch with. It can be positive and helpful to all parties to maintain some contact after a move and we would urge you to consider whether this is appropriate to you, your family and the children and young people you have fostered. We would recommend that you contact the child's social worker or independent reviewing officer (IRO). You will have the child's social worker details from when you cared for the child, and if you have the IRO's contact details and have permission to contact them directly, you are able to do this. If you do not have the details, please contact the local authority who looks after the child you would like to keep in touch with and they will be able to help you.



Looked after children's records

It is your fostering service's responsibility to collect any physical records that you hold relating to the children who have been in your care. Please contact them and ask them to collect anything outstanding if they have yet to do this. You should be aware of how the Data Protection Act 2018 relates to you and we would advise you to research your particular situation thoroughly.

Looked after children's belongings

Please contact the child's social worker to make arrangements to have any items in your home which belong to a child who has left collected. We would recommend that you make a phone call to make the initial arrangements, followed up with an email to confirm what you have arranged. Please ensure that any belongings you pack for children are packed appropriately, avoiding plastic carrier or bin bags.



Who to tell if you are stopping fostering

In addition to HMRC, there are a number of people and organisations who you may wish to consider informing that fostered children are no longer with you. This will stop them from contacting you about routine matters or important events which should now be communicated to others. You may find that the child's social worker has informed some people or organisations already, but we would recommend that you do so in order to be fully transparent.

- Doctor, dentist, optician and any other health professionals who the child is registered with.
- Your local authority or benefits office will need to be told that you are no longer fostering if you are a recipient of Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income Support or Council Tax Support. There may be other benefits which could be affected when you stop fostering so please consider these as well.
- Consider if there are guardians, independent workers, CAFCASS workers, advocates, court appointed visitors, or others of this kind, who may need to be informed.
- Childcare and education placements.
- Out of school clubs and activities.
- National membership organisations (for example sports clubs, or The Scout and Guide Association).
- Anyone with your phone number who has telephone contact with the child.
- Consider bank accounts which you hold for the child who has been in your care. If you have savings for the child please forward these to the local authority – we would recommend that you ask for a receipt for any savings you return. You may need to organise a change of address for ISAs if this applies to the child.
- Consider any mobile phone contracts you may hold for children in your care.
- The Department for Work and Pensions – if the child you have been caring for is in receipt of any payments (for example disability or mobility benefits).
- Occupational Health – if the child you care for has regular deliveries of aids or equipment.
- Consider any trusts which have been linked to you (for example if you are guardian for any criminal injury compensation accounts).
- Your house and car insurance which may have been more expensive due to the 'work' element which you may have added.



You could also choose to:

- Request a copy of your fostering file or records and your assessment report (The Skills to Foster Assessment or your Form F). These things could be useful in the future. You should ask for a SAR (Subject Access Request) for any of these files. Consider which agencies may hold files for you that you would like copies of (for example your service, the police and so on).
- Consider asking your fostering service if they will provide you with a reference for any future employment. You may need to provide a record for any time you have spent fostering. Perhaps you could ask for a copy of any reference they might offer in case of staffing changes in the future.
- Find out, in the case of an allegation, if your fostering service is making a referral to the DBS. Your membership with The Fostering Network includes legal protection insurance which could help you to make representation if necessary. If you are leaving fostering due to a standards of care issue, an investigation may be underway. Once you leave, and your approval terminates, you are no longer approved as a foster carer and any investigation would stop. Any information collected, and opinions reached, might still be recorded on your fostering file. You are entitled to ask for a copy of this.

Final thoughts

As the UK's leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network brings together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice. This guide for foster carers is part of the support we aim to offer and the Exit Interview Toolkit, which this guide forms part of, is designed to help fostering providers to develop their services.

We recognise that fostering impacts on all areas of a fostering family's life and we hope that this guide has been of value to you when leaving your fostering service.



About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

Contact

Please email The Fostering Network at learninganddevelopment@fostering.net for further information about this project.



thefosteringnetwork.org.uk



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