



Privacy Notice for foster carers and prospective foster carers

Introduction

Under data protection legislation, Foster Care Connect Ltd is defined as a data controller. Our registered manager is Lyn Stuart Black and she can be contacted at 42 High Street, Galashiels, Scottish Borders, TD1 1SE. Telephone 01896 751999. Email enquiries@fcconnect.co.uk.

We take our legal duty for safeguarding your personal data and privacy very seriously. This privacy notice sets out what sort of information we hold on foster carers and people applying to become foster carers, why we need it, how we hold it, how we use it, with whom we share it and what rights you have in relation to this information.

We are required to have a named data protection officer (DPO). This person is responsible for making sure that our fostering service complies with its legal duties in how we collect, keep and share your personal data.

Our DPO is Karen Gillie and she can be contacted at 42 High Street, Galashiels, Scottish Borders, TD1 1SE. Telephone 01896 751999. Email enquiries@fcconnect.co.uk.

Why do we collect your personal data?

We collect and use your personal data in relation to your position as a foster carer or person applying to foster because the law requires us to do so. Before we are allowed to approve you as a foster carer, we must assess you to consider whether you are suitable to foster children and young people. This involves us collecting and recording a lot of personal information about you, your family and persons in your household. The law requires us to keep this information for a number of years, whether or not you end up being approved to foster.

What personal information do we collect?

As part of the fostering assessment, the personal information we collect and record includes your name, address and contact details (including email address and telephone numbers), date of birth, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, health, disability and religion or beliefs.

We will also collect information about your childhood, family and other relationships (including current and past marital status), education experience, employment history and finances. Your social worker will explain the assessment process to you and show you the forms we use to record these details. You will be asked to give written consent to us taking up criminal record, health and other checks and personal and other references, as without these we cannot lawfully progress your application. We are required to hold this information in your case record.

If you are approved as a foster carer, we will need details of your bank account, and will continue to collect personal information, including records about the children placed with you and how you care for them, training that you undertake, any changes in your health or circumstances, and any complaints or allegations about you. You will have regular supervision meetings and annual reviews, and all this information will form part of your case record.

How we collect your personal data?

Much of the personal information we hold will have been provided by you directly on your application form to foster, or in conversations with your assessing social worker, or the supervising social worker allocated to you after approval.

Other information will come from third parties during the assessment, such as criminal records checks, or from personal referees or employers, but only where you have given consent for us to approach them.

For approved foster carers, additional information may come from children you are looking after, their parents or family, and from professionals working with the children. Information about you may also come to our attention from other sources.

How do we use your personal information?

We keep and use your information to enable us to run a fostering service in line with the requirements that are set out in law. This will include assessing your suitability to be a foster carer, presenting a report about this to our fostering panel, matching you with children who need to be fostered, supporting and supervising your activity as a foster carer, and reviewing your continued suitability to foster at least annually.

Who has access to your data?

Employees of our fostering service will have access to your information for the lawful purposes set out above. Additionally, we may share your information with others in certain situations:

- to allow your information to be held securely on our database, which is commissioned from GB Technologies;
- to undertake checks and references as part of the fostering assessment, and only where you have explicitly consented to this;

- with members of our fostering panel at the time of your approval and subsequent reviews;
- with local authority commissioning services that are considering whether you might be suitable to foster a specific child they are seeking to place;
- with The Care Inspectorate when it is inspecting the fostering service, as required by law;
- with an Independent Panel if you ask for a review of any decision by the fostering service about your suitability or continued suitability to foster.

We may make information available to regulatory authorities, governmental organisations, or others, if required to do so by any regulatory or legal authority, or in order to comply with the law, or in some circumstances if you ask us to do so.

How do we make sure your personal data is kept safe?

We have a range of policies and controls in place to try to ensure that your data is not lost, accidentally destroyed, misused or disclosed. We have a system to ensure that your information is accessed only by individuals authorised by us to do so in the performance of their duties.

Your personal data held on paper files is protected by being kept in locked cabinets within our office, which is securely locked outside of office hours. Our office premises are alarmed.

Personal data that is held electronically is held on a secure database. This is only accessible to authorised individuals, with password protections and other systems in place to ensure this. These systems have been assessed and certified as appropriate by an independent organisation (GB Technologies) that specialises in this area of work.

All of our staff are trained in data protection duties and are required to comply with our data protection policies.

When we share your information with third parties, we are obliged to check that those third parties have systems in place to protect your information with appropriate security measures and that they will not disclose your information to others. Personal data that is held electronically is held on a database provided by GB Technologies. We have a written contract with them and they have a privacy notice that can be accessed at www.gbtechnologies.co.uk/gdpr_and_privacy_policy.

If there is a data breach, where we “lose” or wrongly share any of your personal information, we will inform you of it, and tell you what action we are taking.

How long do we keep your personal data?

The law is very clear that personal data should not be kept longer than is necessary, but in relation to fostering we are required to hold data for a set minimum period of time.

For approved foster carers, the case record must be kept for at least ten years from the date on which you ceased to foster. Where a person has enquired about fostering, but for whatever reason, including withdrawing their application, has not gone on to be approved, the case record will be held for three years from the date when it was decided that the enquiry or application would not proceed.

There may be circumstances in which we decide that the case record should be maintained for more than the three or ten years required by law. We will tell you if we decide to keep the information for longer.

Do we keep data on your family, including your children?

In assessing you to be a foster carer, and in working with you when you are a foster carer, it is necessary for us to have personal information about others in your family and/or living in your household. Most of this information will have been provided by you as part of your assessment or in supervision after you are approved, or by them directly, or very occasionally by others. This personal information will be contained within your records, and we will not have a separate case record for your family or household members. We have developed a separate privacy notice for your family and household members and will share that with them and/or you.

How can you see what personal information is held on your record?

You can ask to see what personal information we hold about you. This is sometimes called a Subject Access Request. We will provide this information to you within one month (unless things are very complicated), and there is no cost for this. If you want to see the information we hold about you, please contact the data controller whose details are provided earlier in this notice. You do not have to give any reasons for why you want to see this information.

Comments or concerns

If you have any comments or concerns about how we use your information, we would like to hear from you. Please contact the data controller whose details are provided earlier in this notice.

Alternatively, you may contact the Information Commissioner's Office (www.ico.org.uk) for guidance and advice, or to lodge a complaint:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House, Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545745 (national rate)