

Death of a Looked After Child in family placement

Scope of this guidance

The 'Death of a child in family placement' guidance will catalogue in detail the issues, who should do what, in what order and in addition list other matters that should be considered. The document addresses the unexpected and the expected death of a child; for example a child with a terminal illness/life limiting condition.

Legislation

- 1989 Children Act
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Special Guardianship Guidance, DfES 2005
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

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1. Unexpected death

During Office Hours and in this order

- Foster carer – Call 999 – Police and Ambulance
- Foster carer – Call Child's social worker/Team Manager. *Agree if foster carer or child's social worker informs the carer's supervising worker/team.*
- Child's social worker/Team Manager contacts parents.
- Inform other parties who may need to know e.g. health professionals, education.
- Senior Manager informed as per Staff Alert System 'Need to Know' procedure.
- NSCB/LADO informed – by child's social worker Team Manager.
- Ofsted informed by senior management team.
- Entries made on Liquidlogic by child's social worker and FP social worker. Files are usually sealed.

Outside Office hours and in this order

- Foster carer - Call 999 – Police and Ambulance
- Foster carer – Call EDT.
- Foster Carer– Call FP Out of hours worker who will contact relevant Team’s manager EDT informs Snr. Manager as per Staff Alert System ‘Need to Know’ procedure.
- EDT informs child’s fieldwork Team Manager.
- Child’s social worker/Team Manager contacts parents.
- Inform other parties who may need to know e.g. health professionals, education.
- NSCB/LADO informed by child’s Team Manager on the next working day
- Ofsted informed by senior management team on next working day.
- Entries made on Liquidlogic by child’s social worker and FP social worker on the next working day. Files are usually sealed.

2. Expected death

During Office Hours and in this order

- Confirmation of death – GP.
- Foster carer – Call Supervising worker/FP Team Manager.
- Support worker/Team Manager – Call child’s social worker/Team Manager or child’s social worker/Team Manager.
- Child’s social worker/Team Manager contacts parents.
- Inform other parties who may need to know e.g. health professionals, education.
- Senior Manager informed as per Staff Alert System ‘Need to Know’ procedure.
- NSCB/LADO informed by child’s Team Manager.
- Ofsted informed by senior management team (Ofsted should already have been pre-warned).
- Entries made on Liquidlogic by child’s social worker and FP social worker. Files are usually sealed.

Consider consulting Police Child Protection Unit for advice re not calling police – contact them on case by case when planning ‘end of life’.

Outside Office hours and in this order

- Confirmation of death – GP.
- Foster carer – Call EDT.
- Foster Carer Call FP Out of hours worker who will contact relevant Team’s manager.
- EDT informs Snr. Manager as per Staff Alert System ‘Need to Know’ procedure.
- EDT informs child’s fieldwork Team Manager.
- Child’s social worker/Team Manager contacts parents.
- NSCB/LADO informed by child’s Team Manager on the next working day.
- Ofsted informed by senior management team (Ofsted should already have been pre-warned).
- Inform other parties who may need to know e.g. health professionals, education.

- Entries made on Liquidlogic by child's social worker and FP social worker on the next working day. Files are usually sealed.

Consider consulting Police for advice re not calling police – contact them on case by case when planning 'end of life'.

3. Expected death e.g. terminal illness/life limiting condition

To consider:

- A meeting of all parties to discuss how the situation will be managed – agree who does what, etc.
- Process and decision making regarding the ceasing of treatment and non-resuscitation Health professional (paediatrician usually) and Director to sign the relevant protocol.
- Should the child remain with foster carers or be admitted to hospital/hospice – health colleagues input required.
- Wishes and feelings of child.
- Wishes and feelings of parents (extended family?).
- Issues of ethnicity, race and religion in relation to dying.
- Legal situation – care order, PR.

NB on the death of a child the care order ceases to exist and the local authority no longer has PR.

- Consider legal advice e.g. where contact arrangements have been terminated where parental involvement has been minimal/non-existent. Might a Specific Issue Order need to be considered? The extent to which parents want to be involved in goodbyes and funeral arrangements e.g. where will the child be taken to if at foster carers?
- Care of the child e.g. carers, parents, and palliative nurses?

At the time of or following the death consider:

- Support to the birth parents c/o child's social worker.
- Support for the foster carers including expert support (see below).
- Is a post mortem being held? Inform all parties.
- Child's social worker to oversee the removal of child's belongings from hospital/hospice(as appropriate).
- Might the birth parents/carers want to see the body of the child at the hospital?
- Who will collect the death certificate – parents or social worker?
- Registering the death-birth family or social worker?
- Child dying at foster carer and if there is no post mortem, the child's GP needs to issue the death certificate.
- Finances: carer to inform relevant agencies to cease e.g. DLA, Carers Allowance, EMA.
DLA monies held on behalf of the child might have to be passed to birth parents irrespective of their involvement – advice needed for foster carers.



- Foster carer's support worker to sort out ceasing payments and allowances.
Discuss with County Manager applying for money to be paid for a specified period afterwards
- The Department needs to consider covering reasonable expenses to allow the birth family to attend the funeral.

Other matters to consider:

- Letters of condolence to birth parents from e.g. social work and FP team.
- Letters of condolence to foster carers from e.g. social work and FP team.
- The sending of flowers.
- Who should attend the funeral?
- Birth parent's siblings.
- Foster carer's own children.
- Support for Departmental staff.

4. Expert support

Suggested options/organisations:

- Norfolk Support Line – foster carers (spot purchase) and staff
- Critical Incident Team – FP team(s)
- Quidenham Hospice (where appropriate) incl. Foster carer's and their children
- Foster carer's GP – (counselling may be available)
- Cruse
- Child Bereavement Network
- Fostering Network
- ACT (Palliative support charity, membership needed)