Incident Reports

Foster Carer Handbook · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/incident-reports/

Incident Reports – when and how to use them

An **Incident Report** is the agency's formal record of anything *significant, unexpected or potentially risky* that happens in or around the foster home. Completing the form quickly protects children, safeguards you, and enables the agency to meet its legal duty to notify placing authorities, Ofsted and—when thresholds are met—the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The full procedure is in *Reporting Incidents / Notifiable Events* (ask your Supervising Social Worker if you need a copy).

What counts as an "incident"?

Below are the most common triggers; when in doubt **phone your SSW, then fill in the form.**

Category	Examples (not exhaustive)
Missing / absconding	Child fails to return by agreed time, slips away during an outing, or disappears overnight. If lateness is chronic the SSW may agree a weekly summary log—but the *first* episode always needs an immediate report.
Illness, accident or injury	Any event requiring GP, NHS 111, A&E or dental emergency care; serious allergic reaction; head injury; suspected concussion; overdose or ingestion of harmful substance.
Injury to household member linked to fostering	Carer sprains wrist restraining a door, birth child bitten during sibling fight, visiting grandparent knocked over in tantrum.
Use of restraint	Any physical intervention beyond gentle shepherding—e.g., holding arms, guiding to floor, blocking exit. Record the build-up, intervention, de-escalation, child's and your feelings.
Safeguarding concerns	Disclosure of abuse, unexplained injury, extremist language, serious bullying.

Category	Examples (not exhaustive)
Police or emergency-service involvement	Arrest, call-out to property, ambulance attendance—even if no hospital transfer.
Significant damage / hazard	Bedroom fire, smashed, gas leak, stolen medication.
Allegation or complaint	Child accuses carer or household member of harm; neighbour alleges neglect.
Medication error	Missed dose of essential medication, double dose, wrong child's prescription.

Step-by-step timeline

1. **Immediate verbal report** – phone your SSW (or out-of-hours manager) as soon as the child is safe. Give facts, actions taken, who else is aware.
2. **Written Incident Report within 24 hours** – use the agency online form. Email it securely; if tech fails, hand-deliver or dictate by phone so the SSW can type it. *there is always a link to the incident form in your weekly recordings email.
3. **SSW follow-up** – they review, add management actions, and decide whether the Registered Manager must submit a "Notifiable Event" to Ofsted or the LADO.
4. **Child debrief** – offer the child a chance to talk when calm; note their views and any apology or repair agreed.
5. **Reflective discussion** – at the next supervision you and the SSW analyse triggers, what worked, and how the Safer Caring Policy or risk assessment should be updated.

Tips for clear incident recording

- Stick to *facts*: times, places, direct quotes, observed behaviour.
- Separate *feelings* ("I felt frightened") into the reflection section.
- List *actions*: "Applied cool pack 20:35, called 111, arrived A&E 21:20."
- Note any **witnesses** and attach photos (injury, damage) if appropriate.
- Use child's full name and DOB on page 1; thereafter "the child."

What if you’re unsure?

If you hesitate—*“Is this serious enough?”*—call your SSW. It is better to report something that turns out to be minor than to miss a pattern that places the child or you at risk.

Key message: Timely, factual incident reports turn individual crises into organisational learning and keep every layer of safeguarding—carer, agency, Local Authority, Ofsted—working together for the child’s safety.