

Introduction

Phoenix Community Care Foster Care Agency (PCCFCA) is committed to fulfilling its duties and responsibilities for all children and young people who are cared for by the local authority. The Agency's policies and procedures comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011.

The Agency will review the approval of each foster carer in accordance with the above regulations 28 (2011). Approval of all foster carers must be reviewed within a year of approval, and thereafter whenever felt necessary, but at least annually.

All foster carer annual reviews will be chaired by an Independent Social Worker (ISW) whose role is to contribute to the independent scrutiny of the fostering service. The ISW's primary focus is to quality assure the review process, planning, support and development of foster carers.

In addition to the annual review, a review will be convened following any significant incidents, complaints, change of circumstances, allegation of abuse or following a period of significant ill health.

Whilst this policy is framed in the singular, reference to a foster carer should also be taken to mean the plural, where a couple is fostering together.

The primary aim of the annual review will be to consider the following:

- Whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable
- Whether the terms of the foster carer's approval continue to be appropriate.

The annual review will consider an appraisal of the foster carer's performance against the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011, the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) Training, Support and Development Standards (2007) and the Every Child Matters Outcomes (2003). The review will also appraise the foster carer's personal development plan and evaluate the effectiveness of training and development received by the foster carers.

The review will also consider Statutory Checks, References, Health Assessments and DBS checks (formally CRB) undertaken when a foster carer is first approved must be repeated every three years.

The annual review policy applies to the Independent Social Worker (ISW), all Supervising Social Workers (SSW), the Social Work Manager (SWM) and Agency Decision Maker (adm) within the fostering service.

All staff must comply with legislation and regulations.

Monitoring and evaluate

The ISW and the Fostering Panel have a key quality assurance role by providing independent scrutiny of the Agency and feedback on the quality of assessments and

service issues.

The Annual Foster Carer Review

The Fostering Service Regulations ((28), 2011) stipulate that all approved foster carers must be reviewed within a year of approval, and thereafter whenever felt necessary, but at least annually. The review process takes place over a period of weeks, however the date of the review will be considered as the date of the meeting chaired by the Independent Social Worker.

Initiating the review and timescales

For planned annual reviews, the timescale from initiating the review process to the actual review meeting will be twelve weeks. If the review is to be presented to the fostering panel then an additional three weeks will be required for gate keeping purposes.

For all other additional reviews the timescales will be negotiated between the ISW, the fostering service and the fostering panel advisor.

The Foster Care Agency administrator will be responsible will be responsible for initiating this process.

Consultation

Prior to the foster carers review it is essential that a full range of views are sought in relation to the placement. It is intended that the ISW will ascertain the following views prior to the review:

- The Foster Carer's views
- The child's social worker's views
- The Looked After Child's views
- The SSW views
- The views of any children within the household
- Any other views from professionals/responsible local authority that may be relevant

The only formal consultation documents to be sent out prior to the review will be to the sons and daughters of the foster carer. This task will be the responsibility of the SSW who will directly ascertain their views prior to the review meeting. It is accepted that the foster carers' children may not wish to formally complete a consultation document, and therefore the SSW should use their professional judgement as to what method should be utilised to best capture the foster carer's children's views.

The child's views should be directly obtained by the SSW prior to the review meeting. It is acknowledged that for some children particularly those with complex needs, it may be appropriate for their views to be obtained by another 'key professional' for example their teacher / key worker. In such cases, the SSW and the child's social worker should inform the ISW of the details of this key professional.

Prior to the review meeting

The ISW will contact the foster carer prior to the review meeting prior to provide an opportunity for the foster carer to discuss any key issues.

There should be no surprises in the review regarding the agenda. The SSW must ensure the ISW is fully informed of any sensitive issues beforehand so this can be considered however any such issues should not prejudice the outcome of the review.

The review meeting

The key principle of this meeting is to provide an opportunity to reflect on the foster carer's journey in the preceding year, to consider their ongoing suitability and terms of approval including their future support, training and developmental needs.

Where there are two registered foster carers in the household both will be reviewed and both should attend the review meeting, which will be chaired by the ISW. The SSW should always attend the review meeting however if they are unable to do so, then their manager should attend who should have an appropriate knowledge of the foster carer and their situation.

It is envisaged that all reviews will take place within the foster carer's home. However, if this is not possible then the Agency office will be made available.

Key documents required for the meeting

For the purpose of the review meeting the ISW will require sight of the following documents:

- SSW report
- Foster Carer consultation report
- The Looked After Child's Social Worker's report
- The Looked After Child's consultation report
- The minutes of the previous review document with parts 1&2 completed
- Most recent health and safety questionnaire & pet questionnaire including copies of any actions plans.
- Extract from last panel minutes

Further guidance is located within the following policy: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk (click on social care and health and select LSCB from the children and families section)

The review document will record an account of the context and outcome of any allegation since the last review and will consider the implications of this regarding their suitability as a foster carer. The fostering panel will consider all reviews whereby an allegation has been made against a foster carer.

At the end of the review meeting the ISW will inform all parties of the decisions and recommendations including any actions plans to be completed in preparation for the next review.

After the review

After the review meeting the ISW will have five working days to complete part three of the review document. Once completed, the document will then be sent to the SSW and the foster carer for comments and signatures. The SSW should return the document to the ISW who will load the document onto PARIS.

For those reviews being presented to the fostering panel, the SSW/PC will be responsible for ensuring the completed review document and any relevant documents are sent to the panel advisor three weeks before the panel date.

After all annual foster carer reviews including ones that will not be considered by the fostering panel, the ISW will send a completed monitoring form to the panel advisor confirming that a review has taken place.

Submission to the fostering panel

For those foster carers being presented to panel, the fostering service will submit the following documents to the fostering panel three weeks prior to the date of the panel:

- Completed review document
- Most recent health and safety questionnaire & pet questionnaire including copies of any actions plans.
- Extract from last panel minutes

The Fostering Panel will consider the following reviews:

1. All foster carer first reviews
2. Any subsequent reviews whereby:
 - There have been significant changes in the foster carers circumstances
 - There has been a complaint, allegation or disruption
 - Following a recommendation by the ISW
3. Every fourth review if not been to panel for any other reason

The fostering panel will make a recommendation to the agency's decision maker as to the carers continued approval and terms of registration. The decision in respect of all foster carer annual reviews will be made by the principle manager, Cared for Children and in his/her absence, a delegated representative from the operational management team.

Attending the foster panel

The ISW and the SSW or practice consultant will attend all cases being presented to the Fostering Panel. In addition all foster carers should also be invited to attend when the fostering panel is considering a review of their approval or any other matter concerning their approval. The foster carer may also bring a supporter to the panel if they wish.

Notification

The SSW should orally notify the foster carer of the outcome of the decision within two working days. The fostering service should send a confirmation letter regarding the approval status together with a copy of the review document to the foster carer within five working days of the decision made by the agency's decision maker. A copy of this documentation should also be placed on the foster carer's file.

Complaints

Phoenix Community Care Fostering Agency has a complaints procedure which is made available to all foster carers. All foster carers should know about the complaints and representations policy and how to use it and it is the responsibility of the SSW to ensure the foster carer is aware of this policy.

Appeals process

If the Agency's Decision Maker proposes not to approve the foster carer or amend their terms of approval, the foster carer must be sent a written determination together with the reasons for the decision by the Fostering Agency including a copy of any records made by the fostering panel.

The foster carer must be advised that they may, within 28 days of the date of the notice, either submit written representations to the decision maker, or apply to the Secretary of State for a review of the determination by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).