



## Annual Review of Foster Carers

Formal reviews of fostering households will take place at least annually, with the first Annual Review taking place no longer than 12 months after initial approval. All subsequent Annual Reviews, if there are no concerns or issues, will be completed as detailed below. An exception to this is the 5-year Review, and each subsequent 5-year report, which requires a more comprehensive report that covers a carer's fostering career. This Annual Review will be presented to Panel and the carers invited to attend.

Reviews can take place more frequently and can be initiated by a Placement Manager, AFA Manager or Foster Carer. This can be due to a significant change of circumstances, which is affecting the carer's ability or capacity to foster, for example:

- Changes in the composition of the household (including new or ending partnerships);
- Health issues;
- Concerns about the standard of care provided;
- Persistent use of inappropriate discipline;
- Serious and/or persistent breaches of the Foster Care Agreement; A complaint or allegation made about the carer or a member of their family resulting in a [Section 47 Enquiry](#) (see 'Managing Allegations and Complaints against Carers policy');
- Concerns following an updated [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) check;
- A recommendation for a change of approval terms; and
- Refusal by the carer to allow reasonable contact with the child.

### Consultation and action before Annual Review

Prior to an Annual Review the Foster Carer will be sent an annual declaration. This form covers significant events, which should be notified to the carer's Placement Manager as and when they occur. The declaration must be completed and returned to the Agency and information will be included in the Annual Review report as necessary.

Prior to the Annual Review the Placement Manager will collate all the information relevant to the Foster Carer's continued suitability to foster. This will include:

- The number of children, the type of placements and the status/outcome of each placement;
- Information from the Looked After Reviews of any children placed (where appropriate);
- Any change of approval terms or exemptions;
- Supervision records and progress reports on children in placement;
- Post placement reports and records;

- Any complaints or allegations made against the Foster Carers or members of their household;
- The views of the Foster Carers, all members of the household and any children placed since the last Annual Review;
- The views of the Social Worker for children placed with the Foster Carers;
- The views of any other professionals, including Independent Reviewing Officers, Education Providers (where relevant);
- The Social Worker/s of any children previously in placement over the last year but who are no longer in placement; and
- The Foster Carer and members of their family, including the Foster Carers' own children, depending on their age and understanding, will be asked to complete a child friendly Annual Review form, giving their views on how they feel about living in a fostering family.

Wherever possible, their views will be reported in writing. For more information see the Placement Manager's Guidance.

### **The Annual Review Process**

The formal Annual Review is completed by the Placement Manager and Foster Carer. Where it is considered appropriate by the Registered Manager, the Annual Review will also include a Manager from AFA. This may be, for example, if the Annual Review was considering allegations or complaints which have been made about the Foster Carer or a member of the household.

The Annual Review will also discuss the Foster Carer's Safer Caring Policy, Fire Plan, and any risk assessments in relation to family pets. A Health and Safety checklist will also be completed. A Personal Development Plan will be completed including their training plan. The Placement Manager will need to meet with all members of the fostering household and may need to visit on more than one occasion to make sure all areas covered by the Annual Review are fully addressed.

In exceptional circumstances, one or more of the meetings may need to take place virtually to avoid a delay in the completion of the Review. If this is the case, it should be clearly recorded with the reasons.

The Placement Manager will prepare a report considering the carers' experience over the previous 12 months in relation to the seven Training and Development Standards for Foster Carers. In considering the information available, they will conclude as to whether the carers continue to be suitable to foster and whether the terms of their approval continue to be appropriate. The report should include a summary of the work undertaken to date and how this relates to the development of the Foster Carer's practice. Any recommendations for a change in the Foster Carer's terms of approval should be highlighted. The report will then be reviewed by the Placement Manager's Line Manager and comments added.

A copy of the completed Annual Review will be shared with the Foster Carers and once it has been agreed, it will be compiled with all documents and confirmation of completion forwarded to the Registered Manager and then passed on to the Decision Maker.

## **Presentation to the Fostering Panel**

Under the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 the first Annual Review should be presented to the Fostering Panel within 12 months of the original approval. AFA subsequently presents Annual Reviews to Panel at 5-year intervals. In exceptional circumstances, the presentation of the Review may be delayed by a year, but the reasons for this will be clearly documented by the Registered Manager.

If an Annual Review recommends termination of a Foster Carer's approval, the report should give full details of the concerns, allegations or complaints and the outcome of any Section 47 enquiry or investigation. Any mitigating circumstances should be outlined.

The report for the Panel will be shared with the Foster Carer(s) and they should be invited to submit written comments.

As part of the Annual Review process, the Registered Manager may decide that an Annual Review should be brought to the Fostering Panel if there are significant changes to a Foster Carer's terms of approval recommended, or if there are any concerns, for example regarding the outcome of an updated Disclosure and Barring Service check for a carer or a member of the household.

Foster Carers should be invited to attend the Fostering Panel when their approval is being considered, and the Panel Coordinator should be informed if they plan to attend. If the Annual Review is recommending termination of a carer's approval, it should be presented to the earliest possible Fostering Panel.

## **After the Annual Review**

The outcome of the Annual Review will be recorded and where there has been any change in the terms of the approval the Foster Care Agreement will be updated and signed by the Agency Decision Maker and Foster Carer.

If a carer's approval is terminated due to Safeguarding concerns, the Registered Manager, in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), will also make a decision about referring the Foster Carer to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

## **Representations / Independent Review Procedure**

Where, following an Annual Review, the variation or termination of a Foster Carer's approval is proposed, he or she must be advised, that if they wish to challenge the Decision Maker's decision they can make representation to the Panel or request a review of the decision by an Independent Review Panel. Details as to how to appeal will be included in the letter sent to a carer following the decision. A Foster Carer will not be able to request a review by an Independent Review Panel if he or she is disqualified because of a conviction or caution for a specified offence.

If no written representations or notification of a request for a review are received within 28 days, the decision to terminate or vary approval terms will be confirmed. Where the termination of a carer's approval is being considered, plans for the ending of any current placement will also be required.

## Updates on Checks

Disclosure and Barring Service checks on persons aged 18 and over should be updated every 3 years and if necessary, a review of a Foster Carer's approval should be carried out immediately to take account of any new information. Foster Carers should also be asked to complete a Personal Declaration every year. In the event of any serious concerns about the Foster Carer a review of their approval should be carried out immediately.

Medical assessments on Foster Carers should also be updated on a three-yearly basis, unless advice from the Medical Advisor dictates more regular updates.

## Retention of Foster Carer Records

Carer's records should be retained for a minimum of 10 years after their approval has been terminated. Please see policy on Data Protection for further information.

## Connected Policies or Guidance

<b>Name of Policy / Guidance</b>	<b>Relevant for</b>
Expectations of Foster Carers Behaviour	Carers, Placement Managers and Senior staff
Foster Carers Handbook	Foster Carers and Placement Managers
Safeguarding policy	All staff and carers
Management of allegations against staff and carers	Foster Carers and Placement Managers
Notification of significant events	Placement Managers and Senior Managers
Data Protection policy	All staff and carers
Fostering Panel policy	All staff, carers and panel members
Placement Manager guidance	Placement Managers, senior staff
Office process guides	All staff

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