



Annual Review of Foster Carers

Formal reviews of fostering households will take place at least annually, with the first Annual Foster Carers Review (AFCR) taking place no longer than 12 months after the carer's initial approval. All subsequent AFCRs, 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, covering a carer's fostering career. These AFCR's 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 may affect the carer's ability or capacity and/or where there are concerns as to their suitability to continue fostering, 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 "review process following substantiated LADO outcome" below within this policy and 'Managing Allegations and Complaints against Foster 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 a routine AFCR

Prior to the completion of a routine AFCR 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 from such will be included in the Annual Review report as necessary.

Prior to the AFCR the Placement Manager will collate all the information relevant to the Foster Carer's continued suitability to foster, including:

- The number of children, the type of placements and the status/outcome of each placement;
- As relevant, information from the Looked After Reviews of any children placed;
- Any proposed change of approval terms or exemptions;
- Dates of supervision records and progress reports on children in placement;
- Post placement reports and records;

- Details of 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.

Foster carers will be asked to complete a self-evaluation feedback form, sharing their views. 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 be updated and 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, the reasons should be clearly recorded.

The Placement Manager will prepare an AFCR report analysing the carers' experience over the previous 12 months in relation to the seven Training and Development Standards for Foster Carers. Considering this information they will conclude 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 before it is compiled with all documents. Confirmation of completion will be 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 this will be clearly documented by the Registered Manager.

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

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 changes 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.

The review process following a substantiated LADO outcome

The management of allegations and complaints processes are outlined within the relevant named policy. Following a LADO process where any or all allegations made about the carer(s) have been found to be substantiated, AFA will prepare a focused review report detailing the relevant information available for panel to consider. Unless the timing of this report falls at the point that the carer's Annual Review would usually be due, it will be limited to the following information:

- Reason for the review being completed.
- Details of children currently and previously in placement.
- Chronology of complaints and/or allegations.
- Chronology of key events.
- Summary and recommendations.

Although it will be dependent on the gravity and significance of areas found to be substantiated, the collation of information for this report may not include the completion of statutory checks such as Health and Safety or requests for feedback from other parties. As is usual practice, the carer(s) will be invited to share their views within the self-evaluation feedback form or in writing.

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

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
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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