



## Annual Review of Foster Parents

The first Annual Foster Parents Review (AFPR) process should be completed no longer than 12 months after the Foster Parent's initial approval and is then presented to the Agency's Fostering Panel. Additionally, the 5-year Review, and each subsequent 5-yearly Reviews, which require a more comprehensive report, covering a Foster Parent's fostering career, will also be presented to Panel. When matters are presented to Panel, Foster Parents are always invited to attend. All other AFPRs, if there are no concerns or issues, will be completed in the same way, but will be presented to a Fostering Review Meeting rather than to Panel.

The aim of the AFPR is to consider whether the Foster Parents and their household remains suitable to be approved. This includes all members of the household and therefore the review should consider changes to household membership or to the individual circumstances of such members. Where two people foster as a couple, their suitability to foster jointly must be considered.

As per Regulation 28, which states "at the conclusion of the review", a Report must be written. This indicates that the review has been concluded. Presenting the Report to Panel and/or to the Agency Decision Maker happens after the review and is therefore not a part of the review.

Reviews can take place more frequently and can be initiated by a Fostering Social Worker, AFA Manager or Foster Parent. This can be due to a significant change of circumstances which may affect the Foster Parent'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 Foster Parent 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, Complaints and Standards of Care issues about Foster Parents' policy)
- Concerns following an updated [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) check
- A recommendation for a change of approval terms
- Refusal by the Foster Parent to allow reasonable contact with the child in their care

### Consultation and action completed for an AFPR

Prior to the completion of a routine AFPR the Foster Parent will be sent an Annual Declaration. This form covers significant events, which should be notified to the Foster Parent's Fostering Social Worker as and when they occur. The declaration must be completed and returned to the Agency and information from this will be included in the AFPR report as necessary.

For the purpose of the AFPR, the Fostering Social Worker will collate all the information relevant to the Foster Parent's continued suitability to foster, including:

- The number of children, the type of arrangements and the status/outcome of each arrangement.
- As relevant, information from the Reviews of any children in the home.
- Any proposed change of approval terms or exemptions.
- Dates of supervision records and progress reports on children in the home.
- Ending reports and records.
- Details of any complaints or allegations made against the Foster Parents or members of their household.
- The views of the Foster Parents, both verbally and written with them being asked to complete a self-evaluation feedback form, sharing their views. Foster Parents who struggle to complete forms as a result of literacy or language issues are helped to do so and creative ways considered as to how to provide their views.
- Views of all members of the household and any children moving to the home since the last Review.
- The views of the professionals working with children living with the Foster Parents, for instance, their Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer and Education Provider (as relevant). These are requested in writing but gained verbally if appropriate.
- The Social Worker/s of any children previously in the home over the last year but who are no longer in the family.
- The Foster Parent and members of their family, including their own children, depending on their age and understanding, will be asked to complete a child friendly feedback form or engage in a discussion so they can give their views on how they feel about living in a fostering family.

Children should be given help and support to give their views, including written ones, the support being provided by a trusted person other than the Foster Parents. This encourages the child to give their views fully and protects the Foster Parents from being seen to have influenced what the child has written. Anyone who has assisted should be noted within the review documents.

Any issues highlighted in written responses provided by Foster Parents, family members, children or other professionals will be followed up as part of the review process.

## **The Annual Review Process**

The formal AFPR is completed by the Fostering Social Worker or an Independent Social Worker and the Foster Parent(s). Where it is considered appropriate by the Registered Manager, the AFPR will also include a Manager from AFA or another worker. This may be, for example, if the AFPR was considering allegations or complaints which have been made about the Foster Parent or a member of their household.

The AFPR will also discuss the Foster Parent's 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. In addition, updates to any children's Risk Assessment and Reduction Plans and CSE toolkits will be completed, alongside a review of the Safer Caring Policy. Where there are no children looked after, a generic Safer Caring Policy will be provided. The Fostering Social Worker will meet all members of the fostering household and may need to visit on more than one occasion to make sure all areas covered by the AFPR 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 such. If this is the case, the reasons should be clearly recorded within the AFPR.

The Fostering Social Worker will prepare an AFPR Report analysing the Foster Parents' experience over the previous 12 months in relation to the seven Training and Development Standards. Considering this information, they will conclude whether the Foster Parents 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 Parent's practice. Any recommendations for a change in their terms of approval should be highlighted. The report will then be reviewed by the Fostering Social Worker's Manager and comments added to provide an Agency overview. A copy of the completed AFPR will be shared with the Foster Parents before it is compiled with all documents for a final review and signing by those involved in the process.

### **Presentation to the Fostering Panel**

AFPRs will be presented to Panel as detailed at paragraph one of this Policy. In exceptional circumstances, the presentation of an AFPR may be delayed by a year, but this will be clearly documented by the Registered Manager.

If an AFPR recommends termination of a Foster Parent'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 Parent(s) and they should be invited to submit written comments.

As part of the AFPR process, the Registered Manager may decide that a Review should be brought to the Fostering Panel if there are significant changes to a Foster Parent'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 Foster Parent or a member of the household.

Foster Parents will 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 AFPR is recommending termination of a Foster Parent's approval, it should be presented to the earliest possible Fostering Panel.

### **Review Panel Meetings**

For all AFPRs that are not presented to Panel, a Review Meeting will be convened following the completion of the relevant documents. This meeting will be held at the AFA Offices and both Foster Parents are expected to attend in person where possible or otherwise virtually. The meeting will include the Registered Manager, Fostering Social Worker, any other worker involved in the completion of the AFPR and the Foster Parents. The meeting will be minuted.

The Review meeting is an opportunity for the Registered Manager to have oversight of all Review processes and for a person within the agency, independent to the direct involvement or line management of Foster Parents, to consider the review, it's recommendations and therefore the suitability for the Foster Parents continued approval. It is also an opportunity for Foster Parents to engage with the agency and to provide feedback.

Once the meeting is completed, the documents and minutes will be passed on to the Agency Decision Maker for the final decision to be made.

### **After the Annual Review**

For all Reviews, the approval of new Foster Parents is complete when the Agency Decision Maker makes and signs the decision. They are the only individual who can agree the continued approval of a Foster Parent.

The outcome of the AFPR will be recorded and where there has been any changes in the terms of approval, the Foster Parent Agreement will be updated and signed by the Agency Decision Maker and Foster Parent(s).

If a Foster Parent'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 them 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 policy. Following a LADO process where any or all allegations made about the Foster Parent(s) have been found to be substantiated, AFA will prepare a focused review report detailing the relevant information available for Panel to consider. Although there is no statutory requirement to hold a review of approval following an allegation or investigation into any other concerns over a Foster Parent, it is good practice to do so.

Unless the timing of this report falls at the point that the Foster Parent's AFPR would usually be due, it may be limited to the following information:

- Reason for the review being completed.
- Details of children currently and previously in the home.
- 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 Foster Parent(s) will be invited to share their views within the self-evaluation feedback form and in writing, following the completion of the report.

### **Representations/Independent Review Procedure**

Where, following an AFPR, the variation or termination of a Foster Parent's approval is proposed, he or she must be advised, that if they wish to challenge the Agency 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 Foster Parent following the decision. A Foster Parent 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 Foster Parent's approval is being considered, plans for the ending of any current care arrangements will also be required.

### Updates on Checks

Disclosure and Barring Service checks on persons aged 18 and over should be updated every 3 years. Once Foster Parents have been approved for more than three years and at the point of the renewal of their DBS check, they will be added to the yearly update service to allow for more regular checks to be completed.

Following a check, if necessary, a review of a Foster Parent's approval should be carried out immediately to take account of any new information. They should also be asked to complete a Personal Declaration every year. In the event of any serious concerns about them a review of their approval should be carried out immediately.

Medical assessments on Foster Parents should also be updated on a three-yearly basis, unless advice from the Medical Advisor dictates more regular updates or the Agency becomes aware of a change to the health of a Foster Parent which may impact on their ability to foster.

### Retention of Foster Parent Records

Foster Parent'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 Parents Behaviour	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers and Senior staff
Foster Parents Handbook	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Workers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Managing Allegations, Complaints and Standards of Care issues about Foster Parents	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Workers
Notification of significant events	Fostering Social Workers and Senior Managers
Data Protection Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Fostering Panel Policy	All staff, Foster Parents and Panel
Fostering Social Worker guidance	Fostering Social Workers, senior staff
Office process guides	All staff
Changes Of Approval and Exemptions	All staff and Foster Parents

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