Foster Carer Reviews

Description

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Formal Reviews

Foster carer approval is formally reviewed at least once a year. The first review is presented to panel (see the Policy on Panels), and subsequent reviews are also bought to panel when the supervising social worker (in consultation with the Registered Manager) considers it necessary.

Other than the first annual review (which has to be presented to panel), foster carer reviews are carried out and presented to panel when there are changes to the fostering household which could impact on the ability of the carers to foster – for example if there is a change in the number of foster carers in the home, or if any of the household members have been arrested. Foster carers must mention any changes to their social worker, who will bring the matters to the registered manager; the registered manager will advise if a review is to be carried out and/or if the review is to be presented to panel.



Frequency and reasons for reviews

Foster carer reviews are carried out at least annually. Earlier reviews and/or panels are held when there are significant changes in the fostering household; for example, if joint carers separate/divorce, if there is a death of a close family member, if there are concerns about the ability of the foster carers to

carry out their role, or if there is a request for a change in approval (or termination).

In accordance with regulation, Sparks Fostering maintains a clear policy framework outlining the circumstances in which a foster carer may be removed from the agency's list of approved carers, in the interests of the safety and welfare of children. Any concerns about a carer's suitability are reviewed through supervision, safeguarding procedures, and, where appropriate, presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration. Decisions to terminate or vary approval are based on evidence and made in consultation with the Agency Decision Maker, ensuring that the rights of both the carer and the child are protected. Carers may continue to receive payments of up to the equivalent of the bridging payment during the investigation period, as detailed on the Allowances page. This ensures that foster carers are not placed under undue financial pressure while enquiries are ongoing. The process is transparent, proportionate, and guided at all times by the paramount principle of promoting children's safety and wellbeing.

If it is appropriate to put a fostering approval on hold (for example if the foster carers wish to take an extended break from fostering), the foster carer's file would be updated, and a short addendum report would be presented to the next available panel to explain the circumstances. Panel may take a view about the conditions under which the carers should be returned to panel (if necessary). If more than 12 months has elapsed (since the previous review), the foster carer's updated records would need to be presented to panel before they can resume their role.

If a foster carer gives notice of resignation, the termination of their approval is in effect within 28 days. The resignation would be mentioned to panel; however, panel is not able to halt the termination of approval of foster carers. If there are any ongoing investigations, they will be completed and the outcome will be kept on file (and shared with any relevant services).

Contents of the review

The foster carer's supervising social worker takes the lead in ensuring that the foster carer's files are up to date in preparation for the review. The foster carer review must consider whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable to foster. Sparks Fostering makes whatever enquiries it considers necessary to inform this judgement, which will include checks in relation to any new members of the household. Specifically, the review takes into account the views of the foster carer, any child/ren placed and the responsible authority for any child who has been in placement during the previous year.

After the supervising social worker has updated the foster carer's files, the information will be reviewed by another social worker (the 'reviewing officer'). The reviewing officer may be another social worker from Sparks Fostering, or it could be an independent social worker. The reviewing officer will work with the supervising social worker and foster carers to finalise the content of the review.

After the review

At the conclusion of foster carer reviews, Sparks Fostering provides written confirmation to foster carers outlining if the foster carers continue to be suitable for their roles, and if the terms of the foster carers approval continue to be appropriate. If there are any proposed changes to terms of approval, these would be presented to panel (and subsequently to the agency decision maker, who may make a

‘qualifying determination’ – see below).

Oversight and monitoring of decisions made at the review

Recommendations made at foster carer reviews are to be added to the foster carers and/or children’s actions list. The action list (which is a compilation of all tasks and actions suggested during reviews, meetings, supervisions and other contact) are reviewed regularly to ensure that the foster carers and children are making good progress.

If there are any concerns about the foster carer(s) or children’s progress, this should be raised with the foster carers directly. The social worker’s line manager should be informed of the concerns and if necessary, an early review and/or panel meeting may be arranged.

Terminating or amending foster carer approval

If Sparks Fostering considers that the foster carer’s approval must end or be adjusted, Sparks Fostering provides a written notice (a “qualifying determination”), together with the reasons and a copy of the fostering panel’s recommendation.

In such circumstances the foster carer may wish to respond in writing within 28 days, with a request for their representations to be presented to panel for reconsideration.

Alternatively, the foster carer(s) may wish to apply for a review by the independent reviewing mechanism.

If a foster carer’s approval is terminated, a copy of the notice is also sent to the local authority in which the foster carer lives, and the responsible local authority for any children in placement.

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