

## Fostering Assessments

### Description

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<https://sparksfostering.org/wp-content/uploads/speaker/post-5769.mp3?cb=1711836035.mp3>

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## Application Process

The process for Sparks Fostering assessments is as follows:

### INFORMAL ENQUIRIES

Foster carers are supported with **informal enquiries** for as long as needed.

### QUIZ

Applicants complete the [online quiz](#).

A completed **Quiz** will be responded to within 2 working days via email, text or phone call.

### APPLICATION

The **foster carer record** is shared with the applicants. Applicants will complete the information required for **checks** to commence. Sparks Fostering will complete ID, reference, and other safeguarding checks. On average it takes applicants about **20 hours** to complete the form. Sparks Fostering **meets with applicants every week** to offer guidance.



## STAGE 1

**Checks and references** are completed. Checks are essential to safeguard the children who we care for.

Enhanced DBS (police) checks are also carried out on all members of the fostering household who are aged 18 or over. See Sparks Fostering home pages for further information about checks and application criteria.

Sparks Fostering notifies fostering applicants when all checks are completed.

Applicants are notified in writing if an assessment is ended at this stage. Applicants at stage 1 aren't able to challenge the decision.

## STAGE 2

A **qualified social worker is then allocated** to complete the record. The social worker has experience of foster care and family placement work and is trained in assessment.

Applicants are notified in writing if the assessment is terminated at stage 2. If the applicant objects to the decision, they may request a review via the ['Independent Reviewing Mechanism'](#).

Applicants are given **5 working days to respond** in writing to a completed assessment. The assessment sets out all the information for the fostering panel and decision maker to make an objective approval decision.

## PANEL RECOMMENDATION

Subsequently, the non-confidential parts of the report are **shared with panel members**. Panel are given at least 5 working days to review the paperwork.

Reports are **discussed at panel within 8 months of the application**.

The **panel meeting** is held (see Policy on 'Panel Meetings' for further information).

## AGENCY DECISION

**Panel minutes** and accompanying paperwork are then shared with the agency decision-maker. The agency decision maker decides whether or not to approve the person as a foster carer, and on what terms. The decision is made **within 7 working days** of receiving the paperwork linked to the panel's recommendation.

**Applicants are informed** verbally of the decision within two working days and in writing within five working days of the decision being made.

## Transferring foster carers

The steps outlined above are also followed for transferring foster carers; however, the process may be **fast-tracked**

if the current fostering provider shares their information.

If the foster carer is currently subject to an **allegation or complaint**, this must be resolved before an application with Sparks Fostering starts.

The foster carer becomes familiar with the **Sparks Fostering policies and procedures** on the website home pages and also on the 'Core Information' pages, to ensure that they would be happy to follow Sparks Fostering processes.

The following **information is obtained** from the current fostering provider:

- The most recent foster carer review.
- Any other review report.
- Written details of concerns about standards of practice.
- Written details of any allegations made against the foster carer or their household members.
- Any other permitted information considered relevant.

Sparks Fostering would also request a **reference**. The reference should include:

- Length of registration.
- Date and terms of approval.
- Variations in approval in the last five years.
- Age, sex and length of stay of all foster children during the last five years.
- Extent to which the foster carers were able to achieve placement objectives.
- Strengths and skills of the foster carers.
- Recent training courses attended.
- Skills obtained post approval.
- Date and outcome of any investigation of allegations or concerns. Unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious allegations aren't shared.
- Details of any current allegations or concerns.
- The outcomes of the latest annual review.
- Any other information considered relevant.

Sparks Fostering may also ask to **view the foster carer's files**.

Once the previous fostering provider acknowledges receipt of the notification from the foster carer, Sparks Fostering can officially start the assessment. Sparks Fostering may choose to repeat some checks or references. The social worker will also need to update other information.

If there are **children currently being fostered**, the child's social worker will also be notified of the intention to move providers. The child's social worker notifies the child's Independent Reviewing Officer of the intended change, who should arrange a review meeting before the resignation period ends.

Sparks Fostering will contact the local authority to confirm the **fees to be paid** to Sparks Fostering. The foster carer should never be expected to receive reduced allowances; where possible the allowance will be increased.

A **transfer protocol meeting** is arranged with the previous fostering provider. This meeting ensures

that the children are supported to transition to Sparks Fostering.

Once the fostering assessment is updated and ready for panel, the foster carer can **give written notice**. The email should include the date on which their resignation takes effect. By giving notice, their approval with the previous provider automatically ends within 28 days.

Sparks Fostering presents the report to **panel** within two weeks of the foster carer giving notice to the other provider.

The agency decision maker gives written **notice of approval** to the foster carer before their 28 days notice with the previous provider expires and states the date upon which the approval with Sparks Fostering is due to commence (the day after their resignation with the previous provider expires).

After the 28 days notice ends, the foster carer (and any children in placement) are officially transferred to Sparks Fostering.

## Preparation to foster

### BEFORE APPLICATION

Applicants are expected to have reviewed the information on the 'home' pages of website. This helps to ensure that applicants understand the basic fostering requirements.

### DURING ASSESSMENT

Some of the 'Core' policies are reviewed with the assessing social worker. Mandatory subjects (safeguarding and safer care) are discussed, alongside any other relevant policies.

Foster carers are invited to monthly workshops at stage 2.

### INDUCTION

A review of the training record and training needs is completed within 3 months of a child joining the fostering home.

See policy 'Training Records' for further information.

## Exemptions

No one may foster more than **three children** unless:

- The children being fostered are all siblings.
- The area local authority provides exemption for named children.

In considering whether to exempt a person from the usual fostering limit, the area local authority **must have regard, in particular, to:**

- The number of children whom the person proposes to foster.

- The period of time for which they propose to foster the children.
- The living and care arrangements.
- The intended and likely relationship between the person and the fostered children.
- Impact on all other members of the household.
- Whether the welfare of all children in the household can be safeguarded.

When a local authority exempts a person from the usual fostering limit, it must **inform the foster carer** in writing:

- That they are exempted.
- The children, described by name, whom they may foster.
- Any condition to which the exemption is subject.
- The review period for the exemption.

A local authority may at any time, vary or cancel an exemption.

## **Foster Carer Agreement**

Following a successful panel, foster carers will review the 'Foster Carer Agreement' section of their foster carer record.

## **Legal ID**

Upon approval, foster carers are issued with an appropriate form of identification, to enable their role as a foster carer to be verified.

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### **Author**

user