**Final Version dated 08/4/21**

**Foster Carer / Connected Carers Review Procedure\***

**\*The terms ‘foster carer’ / ‘carer’ and ‘connected carer’ are used throughout this procedure. The procedure applies equally to foster and connected carers.**

**1. Frequency**

Formal reviews of foster carers / connected carers will take place at least annually.

Reviews will take place more frequently or may be brought forward in the event of a significant change in circumstances of a foster carer for example where there are concerns about the care provided by the foster carer as a result of a complaint or allegation or following a life changing event such as a divorce, pregnancy, adoption of a child or a bereavement. Reviews will be brought forward following placement disruptions. Additional or brought forward reviews will be requested by the SSW. CSSU business support will liaise with the IRO to identify a time and date.

As well as formal reviews, there will be regular dialogue and feedback between the fostering worker and the foster carer during regular supervisions.

**2. Booking / Arranging a first or subsequent Foster Carer Review**

The fostering service will ensure newly approved foster carers are booked in with the Children’s Safeguarding Standards Unit (CSSU) Business Support Team. The Panel administrator is responsible for updating CSSU once the Carers approval has been ratified.

At the point of booking in for a first review each carer will be allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). CSSU Business Support will agree a date for the review matched against the Supervising Social Worker’s (SSW) and IRO availability. The SSW will confirm the date with the foster carer and will liaise with CSSU should the date need to be amended.

The first reviews for all foster carers will, after completion, be presented back to fostering panel for their endorsement by the ADM.

Dates for second and subsequent reviews will be agreed between all parties at the end of the ‘current’ review. Relevant parties will liaise to rearrange dates as required, although every effort should be made to maintain the agreed date. All changes must be confirmed with the IRO and booked in by CSSU Business Support.

In advance of the agreed date, CSSU Business Support will send an appointment letter to the foster carer, enclosing a report for the foster carer to complete and one for the carers own children if applicable. Ideally these reports should be made available in advance of the meeting, but where this is not possible, they must be provided to the IRO at the start of the Review Meeting. However, foster carers must be able to contact the IRO in advance of the review to discuss the review and identify any areas of concern. The IRO will then arrange for these reports to be uploaded to the carers case file.

**3. Preparation before the Review**

Prior to the formal review, the SSW will share with the foster carer a copy of their initial review report. This should be done in person or by such means as to enable the report to be discussed between the SSW and the foster carer. The SSW must capture how the foster carer has met the fostering standards. Once complete the SSW report must be authorised by a Team Manager.

The fostering social worker will also, in advance of the review encourage and support the foster carer, and the carer’s own children, to complete the reports templates sent to them by CSSU. It is important that the views of the carer and their children are captured and made available for the review meeting.

CSSU Business Support will send requests to complete a report for the review to all placing social workers who are currently working with children residing with the foster carer. Requests will also be sent to social workers who have had placements for their children with the carers in that review year. These reports must be completed 2 weeks prior to the review to allow time for these to be considered by the SSW and to be shared with the carer. The reports will be collated by CSSU Business support who will collate them as part of the review packs for the IRO.

Understanding the views of children placed with the carers, both currently and over the last year is an essential part of the review process. These views must be understood and used to inform the SSW report and the final review report. It is expected that these views will be captured in placing SW reports, Childs in Care Reviews and via MOMO.

Should placing social workers wish to raise any concerns about the carers this must be done through the placing social workers report and shared with the carer and SSW. The carer must be fully aware of any such concerns in advance of the review. The carer must be supported to contact the IRO in advance of the review to discuss any concerns identified. It will be necessary for the PSW to attend the review where concerns are highlighted.

**4. Formal Review Meeting**

The review will be chaired by the allocated IRO and be conducted as a meeting in the carers home between the carer and SSW. Others, such as placing social workers, may be invited as required. The review meeting will follow the structure of the Foster Carer Review Chairs Report. It will include reviewing the carers Personal Professional Development Plan which should outline the carers training and developmental needs, compliance and how the carer meets the fostering standards. If it is the carers first review, reference should be made to whether the carer has completed their TSD’s within 12 months of approval (or for connected persons, 18 months of approval) as required. The review must also explore the foster carer's views of the service and support provided as well as the appropriateness of placements made and evaluate the care provided by the foster carer. Any recommendations identified should be discussed at the time of the review and the foster carers views on the recommendations must be recorded. Any learning identified after the review must be shared in such a way as to ensure the carers understand the rationale and what is required.

The IRO will complete the Chairs Review Form on CareFirst. The report will be considered by the fostering Team Manager before being shared by the SSW with the carer. The Team Manager may ask the SSW to hold further discussion with the carer to ensure their views and understanding of the recommendations has been captured. Review reports and any relevant documentation will be presented to Panel by the SSW. Panel endorse the recommendation and then this goes to the [Agency Decision Maker for final sign off. (This is only for the first annual reviews).](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/pr_desg_man.html#agency_foster)

**4.1 Re-assessment of Carers following review**

The Review process may identify a need for a carer to be reassessed. This will include where significant concerns have been identified during a review process. A recommendation may be made for the carer to be reassessed to ensure they remain suitable to act as a carer. This recommendation should be explored in the review to ensure the carer is fully aware of the rationale for this. The Chairperson must capture the carers views about the recommendation.

The decision to authorise this assessment sits with the Fostering Team Manager. If the recommendation is accepted clear timescales for the assessment must be established. Once completed the fostering SSW will ensure this assessment is presented to panel and a recommendation will be made by panel members that will require a final ADM decision.

The Fostering Team Manager must discuss with the IRO their decision not to follow a recommendation regarding reassessment. Should there be a dispute about this decision this will be addressed using the Case Discussion and Escalation Process.

**5. Presentation to the Fostering Panel or Agency Decision Maker**

A report must be presented to the Fostering Panel on the foster carer's first review for a recommendation and thereafter may be presented to the fostering panel if required. This may include where significant changes to the foster carer's approval or the termination of the foster carer's approval are recommended or where any circumstances exist which in the opinion of the Agency Decision Maker require consideration by the Fostering Panel. This may include the situation where an updating Disclosure and Barring Service check reveals a new concern about the foster carer or a member of the household.

Whether presented to the fostering panel or not, the report will be presented to the Agency Decision Maker / Fostering Team Manager for a decision as to whether the foster carer remains suitable to foster and whether the terms of approval remain appropriate.  Where it has been presented to the fostering panel, the Agency Decision Maker will consider the panel's recommendation.

**6. After the Fostering Panel**

The foster carer will be informed in writing by the fostering service of the outcome of the review. The IRO’s report will be sent to the Carer by Fostering Business support

A copy of the Review Form and a record of the outcome of the review will be retained on the foster carer's case record.

**7. Representations/Review Procedure**

**7.1 Proposal to Terminate Foster Carer's Approval**

Where, as a result of a review, the termination of a foster carer's approval is proposed, a Qualifying Determination will be made by the Agency Decision Maker and written notice of the proposal and the reasons must be sent to the foster carer within 7 days of the determination being made and he or she must be advised that if they wish to challenge the determination, they have the opportunity to make representations to the Agency or to request a review by an Independent Review Panel under the Independent Review Mechanism as set out in the [**Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers Procedure, Representations / Independent Review Procedure**](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_ass_app_fost.html#representations_review). The foster carer will not have the right to request a review by an Independent Review Panel if they are regarded as disqualified as a result of a conviction or caution for a specified offence - see [**Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure**](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_pers_disq.html).

If the carer chooses to make representations to the Agency, these must be in writing and be received by the service within 28 calendar days from the date of Qualifying Determination letter. On receipt, the Agency Decision Maker may consider the carer’s case again or refer the case along with the carer’s written representations to the Fostering Panel to consider and to make a fresh recommendation. If the Agency Decision Maker does refer a carer’s case to the Fostering Panel, the carer will be invited to attend the panel meeting to answer any questions the panel may have and may be accompanied by a friend or supporter.

The Agency Decision Maker will take the fresh recommendation into account when making the final decision. Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must then be sent to the foster carer within 7 working days of the decision.

If no written representations or notification of a request for a review are received within the period confirmation a final decision to terminate can be made and the Agency Decision will be sent to the carer.

Where the termination of the approval of a foster carer is being considered, plans for the termination of any current placement will also be required and made as appropriate.

Where the approval is terminated, the Agency Decision Maker, in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will decide whether to refer the former foster carer to the Disclosure and Barring Service for inclusion of the carer's name on the Children's Barred List.

**7.2 Proposal to Revise the Terms of the Foster Carer's Approval**

**7.2.1 Where the Foster Carer is in Agreement**

Where, as a result of a review, it is proposed to revise the terms of the foster carer's approval, a statement must be sent by the SSW to the foster carer setting out whether it is considered that the foster carer or members of their household (including any children placed there) may have additional support needs as a result of the proposed revision and, if so, how those needs will be met, and request the foster carer's agreement in writing to the proposed revision of terms.

Where the foster carer's written agreement is received, the decision to revise the terms of approval may be made immediately.

The Agency Decision Maker's / Team Manager’s decision in such circumstances is not a qualifying determination and the foster carer may not apply for an independent review of the decision by way of the independent review mechanism.

Foster carers must not be pressured to accept changes to their terms of approval.

**7.2.2 Where the Foster Carer is not in Agreement**

Where the foster carer does not agree in writing to the revision of their terms of approval, then the representations/review procedure as set out in [**Section 7.1 Proposal to Terminate Foster Carer's Approval**](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_review_fos_care.html#term) **will apply.**

**8. Updates on Checks**

Disclosure and Barring Service checks should be updated every 3 years and if necessary, a review of the foster carer's approval should be carried out immediately to take account of any new information. DBS checks must take account of anyone over the age of 18 living in the household, including former children in care who have ‘stayed put’.

See [**Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure**](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_pers_disq.html)

Whilst there is no statutory time interval, as good practice medical information should also be updated at least every 3 years by writing to the foster carer’s GP. In the event of any serious concerns about the foster carers health, a review of the foster carers approval should be carried out immediately.

**9. Resignation by Foster Carers**

A foster carer may give written notice at any time of their wish to resign from the role. Once written notice has been given, their approval will automatically be terminated 28 days after receipt of the notice. The foster carer cannot withdraw their notice once it has been received, nor can the Agency Decision Maker decline to accept the resignation. Should a foster carer who has resigned subsequently wish to foster again, they will need to be assessed under the procedure for [**Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers Procedure**](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_ass_app_fost.html). There is no requirement for the fostering panel to be notified of resignations. However, the fostering service will send a summary of the resignation to panel to be noted. CSSU must be informed so they can end their allocation with the carer.