



INDEPENDENT REVIEWS OF HCC FOSTER CARERS

SOCIAL WORK PROCEDURES MANUAL:	
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SCOPE:

The IRT will review Hertfordshire County Council ("HCC") approved foster carer's in accordance with National Minimum Standards (2011) ("NMS").

The Review will ensure consistency and equality of service to Children Looked After ("CLA").

HCC is committed to providing the best quality of care to all CLA ensuring that Hertfordshire County Council approved Foster Carers meet the required Standard of NMS (2011) and the Induction Standards of the Children's Workforce.

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1.0 IRO REVIEWS

A review should be chaired by IRO:

1. When a Foster Carer has been the subject of any planned enquiry the outcome of which has been concluded, an independent review will be completed and presented to Panel. The review meeting should take place within 28 days of the conclusion of the investigation;
2. When a Foster Carer has been the subject of internal or external complaint in relation to practice or when Foster Carers have made a complaint in respect of the Fostering Service;
3. Following a disruption of a matched long-term placement consideration to be given to an Independent Review and /or a disruption meeting;
4. All 1st annual reviews of the level three Foster Carers approved and supervised by ARC SSW's. IRO's will also complete an overview of every annual review of level three carers and refer the review to panel if necessary;
5. Shared Care professional foster carers as point 5 above;
6. A sample of reviews of family and friends carers;
7. Supported Lodgings carers who are approved under Fostering Regulations are also subject to the review process and any concerns referred to the IRO in accordance with these procedures;
8. Sample of First Reviews to provide an overview for purposes of quality assurance for the Fostering Service and IRT;

9. Where the Fostering Service Manager considers that an Independent Review is required.

2.0 Notifications and Referrals to the Independent Review Service

Notifications

In instances where a foster carer has been referred to LADO, regardless of whether LADO threshold was met, the Supervising Social Worker should notify the IRO.

Referrals to IRO

1. Where the Supervising Social Worker identifies a quality of care concern, they should complete the Standards of Care Report at the point of referral to the IRO Placement Review Officer. Referral to be made via the Independent Fostering Review Address Book;
2. Complaints to be referred by Fostering Team Manager/IRT - Manager;
3. IROs to dip sample, at their discretion, any other reviews including themed;
4. Any other reviews to be referred by Fostering Service and discussed with IRO;
5. Strong consideration to be given for the need to undertake an independent review when other professionals have raised concerns about the quality of care.

3.0 Pre-Meeting

1. Referral to IRO via the Independent Fostering Review address book;
2. IRO will allocate and make contact with SSW to discuss the issues, timescales and set review meeting date;
3. SSW to request a panel date following consultation with IRO in relation to timescales. Good practice would indicate that the review should be held within 6 weeks of the referral;
4. SSW to send IRO all review paperwork at least 1 working week before the review meeting. This should include a report that includes feedback from other professionals (e.g. education, health, CAMHS, social workers) analysis and recommendations. Where a placement has ended, the Fostering Service should include the Independent Review Form for Social Workers with the report.
5. For Standards of Care Reviews, the SSW should complete the Quality of Care Report (Located in LCS);
6. The IRO will identify key areas to explore during or prior to the review meeting and identify any missing reports/information and seek clarification (See Audit Form [LINK](#));
7. It is the responsibility of the IRO to identify any additional work that may be required to be undertaken prior to the review and to seek the additional information through SSW or their manager;
8. The IRO will view all paper and electronic files relating to the approved

foster carers, and if necessary, the electronic files pertaining to the children and young people placed;

9. In all cases IRO's will offer to meet separately with Foster Carers if requested.

4.0 Review Meeting

Purpose of meeting (Helen Cosis Brown CoramBAAF 2011) is for the IRO, Foster Carers, SSW to evaluate and appraise the quality of care that has been undertaken in the designated review period).

- Evaluate the quality of direct care offered by the Foster Carer to each child looked after within the designated review period;
- Where a Foster Carer has their own, including adult children, living within the home or who have significant contact or involvement, the impact of fostering on them;
- Consider any allegations, complaints implication for continued approval;
- The review will also consider and evaluate the areas identified as part of NMS and from the information contained within the SSW report the following:
 - Support Network;
 - Quality of Foster Carer working relationship with SSW and other professional;
 - Ability to work with Birth families;
 - Training and personal development;
 - Target from previous review and matters identified in previous Foster Panel Minutes;
 - Changes to the circumstances to the household and impact of fostering;
 - Identify areas of strength, vulnerability and future development.

5.0 IRO Report

The purpose of the IRO Report is to present an overview and analysis drawn from the reports provided by Fostering Service and Review meeting.

Link to [CS0221F15 IRO Review Report](#)

The IRO Report will:

- Evaluate the quality of Foster Carers abilities in accordance with regulatory framework;
- Address any identified specific matters with the SSW practice;
- Address any specific matters arising from the review (i.e. allegation/complaint);
- Provide an analysis of information obtained and an overview providing a balanced evaluation of the quality of Foster Carers practice;
- Include a plan for improvement / support;

- Recommendation of the IRO including continued approval, terms of approval with consideration for evidence and rationale when making the recommendation and/or any additional recommendation which may be included. The report may also recommend de-registration or that no further child be placed if any identified matters remain unresolved;
- The completed IRO report (separate to SSW report) will be completed within 15 working days by the IRO and agreed by all parties;
- When IRO report is received by the SSW and manager, it should be checked for factual inaccuracies which are to be agreed by IRO and collated with the review paperwork, copy should be sent to Foster Carers by the Fostering Service within 5 working days for comments and signed by FC, SSW, Manager and be submitted by Fostering Administrator to FS Panel.