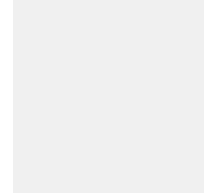


Procedure for Accepting the Resignation of Foster Carers



RELATED GUIDANCE

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AMENDMENT

In August 2015, a link was added to The Fostering Network.

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1. Introduction

Generally it is the aim of the Fostering Service to retain all our foster carers and this is achieved by providing effective support, supervision and training, within a respectful, enabling framework. However, foster carers may decide to cease fostering for a variety of reasons and this is the process to be followed when this happens.

Regulation 28 (13) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 states:

‘A foster parent may give notice in writing to the fostering service provider at any time that the foster parent no longer wishes to be a foster parent, in which case the foster parent’s approval is terminated with effect from 28 days from the date on which the notice is received by the fostering service provider’.

This regulation clearly defines this process as one instigated by the foster carer and completed within a defined time period with the carer's approval ending at the end of the 28-day period regardless of dates of Fostering Panel meetings. Therefore advising the Fostering Panel of a carer's resignation is for information only so that the panel can be made aware of carers who are leaving the agency and the circumstances of their decision to resign. It is the role of the Provider (Fostering Service) and not the Fostering Panel to respond to notices of resignation.

2. Process for Responding to a Foster Carer's Intent or Notice to Resign - No Children in Placement

If a foster carer states that they wish to resign they must be advised that they must do this in writing.

All written resignations must be date stamped on receipt and given to the Group Manager Family Placement Service

A letter will be sent to the Foster Carer signed by the Group Manager Family Placement Service, acknowledging the written resignation and noting the date it was received and the date from which the resignation will take affect.

The **Independent Reviewing Officer** for foster carer reviews will be notified of the carer's resignation and will contact them to arrange an exit interview.

The Fostering Panel administrator will arrange for this item to be put on the next available Fostering Panel agenda for information only and to be noted in the minutes.

Documents required for Fostering Panel are: a copy of the written resignation; the response; and a brief covering note explaining the circumstances (unless the written resignation has made this clear). These should be forwarded to the Fostering Panel administrator.

On the date the resignation takes affect the foster carer database and any other systems must be updated.

3. Carers wishing to resign to go to another Agency - Children in Placement

Where a Foster Carer wishes to resign and there are children in placement they must put their intent in writing. The need to ensure continuing registration for the foster carer and children in placement will be coordinated via the recognised transfer protocol (attached). It is important that a date of resignation from one provider and the date of approval by the new provider are established to ensure that there is continuing approval by one authority/agency only.

Where it is agreed that children will remain in placement when the foster carers transfer to another agency or authority the case must be presented to the fostering panel who will be informed of the resignation, the move to another provider and the protocol arrangements.

This information should also have an accompanying report on the circumstances of the carer's decision.

4. Resignation of Carers during Investigations or Reviews of their Ability to Foster

In these cases the carer's right to give 28 days notice of their wish to cease fostering continues to apply whether or not the fostering provider considers there may be grounds for de registration.

If a carer gives 28 days notice then there is no means to continue an investigation (cause for concern only) or review of a carer's ability beyond the expiration of the notice that the carer no longer wishes to act as a foster carer.

If a foster carer wishes to transfer from one fostering service provider to another, the carer's current fostering service provider should notify any other fostering service if the carer is subject to a child protection enquiry or action under this procedure and inform them of the expected time scales for completing the investigation/review of approval.

If a carer resigns during a child protection investigation the fostering service provider should continue to collate the information already known to include it on the foster carer's record. Foster carers should be informed of this in writing.

This information will provide the basis of a recommendation to refer the foster carer for inclusion on the list of individuals barred from engaging in regulated activity with children, held by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

In such cases it is good practice for the Fostering Panel to be asked to form a view regarding this. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) would expect the documentation/review presented to panel and the panel minutes to be available when they are considering whether a referral should be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service. The documentation that should be presented to the Fostering Panel is:

- A copy of the **Strategy Meeting** minutes;
- A copy of the minutes from the post enquiries meeting; and
- Any other documents that are deemed relevant.

Representations should have been heard and that the process for reaching recommendations be transparent. The Fostering Panel is the most appropriate forum for this to take place.

If a foster carer resigns from fostering before, or during, a review of the carers approval following a child protection investigation the fostering service provider should collate whatever information is available and a foster carer review should be prepared for the fostering panel, with recommendations e.g.:

- That specific training needs or issues are addressed should they wish to return to foster for Walsall;
- That the carers are advised that an application from them at a future date would be welcomed; or

- Had they not resigned an application would have been made to Fostering Panel to have them de registered.

The Group Manager Family Placement Service must advise the foster carer of the recommendations that are made and the basis for them. The carer should be given sufficient opportunity to respond in writing about any matters of fact that they dispute, as well as any comments they may have about the recommendations. The carer's written response should be submitted to the panel along with the review. The review and recommendations from panel will be shared with the foster carers, retained on their file and provided as part of any future reference.

5. Letter to Foster Carers

Whatever the circumstances, foster carers should always be sent a letter indicating:

- The date that the resignation takes effect;
- Informing them that they will be removed as approved foster carers from Walsall's register of approved foster carers on the date that their resignation takes effect;
- Any additional text thanking the carer for years of service or offering sympathies etc will be included in the letter at the discretion of the Group Manager Family Placement Service;
- As appropriate the letter will also need to advise the foster carer that if they make an application to foster to any fostering agency or another local authority then a reference will be requested from Walsall and we shall be obliged to share any 'cause for concerns' related to their fostering career with Walsall as well as the positive aspects of their care.