**Fostering Reviewing Officer Issue Resolution Policy**

Quality Assurance Service Manager

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| **Version number** | **Date updated** | **Updated by** | **Review date** |
| Version number 1 | June 2022 | Jade Hill | June 2023 |

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1. Context, Legislation & Guidance

Regulation 28 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 requires fostering services to review the approval of foster carers within a year of approval, and thereafter whenever necessary but at intervals of not more than a year. A written report of the review must set out whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable to foster and, if so, whether the terms of their approval continue to be appropriate. The first review must be referred to the fostering panel to make a recommendation.

Regulation 28 also gives foster carers the right to make representations to the fostering service or to refer to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) within 28 days of any qualifying determination issued by the fostering service.

National Minimum Standard (NMS) 20.6 sets out that reviews should include an appraisal of a carer’s performance, consideration of training and development needs and a review of the carer’s personal development plan. Standard 13.9 emphasises that areas of concern or need for additional support that are identified between reviews should be addressed at that time and should not wait until a planned review. Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 (July 2013) provides statutory guidance regarding reviews and terminations of approval

1. Key Principles

* The impact on the child of any actions (or inactions) by the Local Authority, will be the focus of any challenge made by the Fostering Reviewing Officer (FRO).
* The FRO is guided by and will refer to relevant legislation, guidance, policies, procedures and practice standards.
* In the first instance, the FRO will seek to resolve the issue informally with the supervising social worker, team manager and practice supervisor although this stage is dependent on the seriousness of the issue for the foster carer and/or child.
* Issues that are impacting on children’s safety and well-being will be addressed in a suitable timescale for the child.
* FRO’s will set realistic timescales for resolution. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale appropriate to the child or foster carers needs, the FRO will follow the formal QA issue resolution policy and escalate to dispute as necessary.
* The FRO may bypass any stage and progress the issue resolution to dispute and to the level s/he considers most appropriate to achieve the desired outcome in the best interest of the child and/or family and/or foster carer(s).
* The Dispute Resolution process will be used where it has not been possible for the FRO to resolve an issue or where the agreed actions from the issue resolution have not been progressed.
* Discussions between the FRO, practitioners and managers will be recorded on the foster carers LCS record. The record will evidence to the foster carer and/or child the action that the FRO has taken on their behalf to ensure targeted and timely interventions.

1. Use of the Quality Assurance Issue Resolution/Dispute Policy

Positive working relationships are important with professional challenge being part of healthy working interactions. The FRO will use the policy and communicate their concerns to practitioners and managers when:

* There are concerns that statutory requirements for the foster carer(s) are not being met
* There are concerns about the quality, implementation and timeliness of the service provided to foster carer(s)
* Where an issue is impacting on an outcome for the child/ren and/or foster carer(s)

1. Quality Assurance Issue Resolution and Dispute Process

Please see Appendix A

1. Conclusion

5.1 Once the Quality Assurance issue resolution is resolved, the FRO and the social work team complete the ‘*Outcome of issue requiring resolution’* and ‘*Key learning points*’ section of the form to capture learning. The issue resolution form is then finalised and will remain on the foster carers record.

* 1. Learning from Quality Assurance Issue Resolutions will be discussed and acted upon within team meetings and shared with the wider Operational Management group via Operations Managers meetings and Quality Performance Review meetings (QPRMs).

1. Appendix A – The process

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| **Informal Quality Assurance Resolution**  The FRO brings the issue of concern to the attention of the supervising social worker via direct contact and seeks to resolve the matter. The FRO is clear about the issue, the impact on the child and/or foster carer, the preferred solution and a specific timescale proportionate to the issue. | | | |
| **Formal Quality Assurance Issue Resolution/Dispute Resolution**  If the matter remains unresolved, the FRO will use the formal process to seek resolution. This is not a linear process with the stage at which the FRO raises the issue dependent on the seriousness of the issue for the foster carer(s) and/or child. | | | |
| **Stage** | **To / CC** | **Recording** | **Timescale** |
| Informal Resolution  (Stage 1) | To: Social worker  CC: Practice Supervisor and Team Manager | The FRO discusses the issue informally with the SSW via direct contact, face to face, MS teams or e-mail. The FRO records on the foster carers record in a FRO case note as soon as the issue is discussed.  FRO reviews on agreed date and if the issue is resolved, the FRO records as **FRO Informal resolution achieved** case note on LCS. | As early resolution as possible. Up to a maximum of 10 working days.  If not resolved, escalate to formal stage. |
| Formal Issue Resolution (Stage 2) | To: Practice Supervisor and Team Manager  CC: Social Worker | The FRO completes a Quality Assurance Issue Resolution form on LCS and follows up with a direct communication to the PS and TM (face to face, MS teams or e-mail) referring them to the LCS form for details of the issue and resolution sought. | Up to 5 working days. If the FRO is not satisfied that the issue has been resolved via stage 2, then proceed to stage 3 – Dispute. |
| Formal Dispute  (Stage 3): Level 1 | To: Ops Manager  CC: PS & Team Manager | The FRO records the name of the Ops manager and date contacted in the dispute section of the QA issue resolution form under level 1. Record the date resolution is sought by.  The FRO follows up with a direct communication to the OM (face to face, MS teams or e-mail) referring them to the LCS form for details of the issue and resolution sought. | Up to 5 working days. If the FRO is not satisfied that the issue has been resolved via stage 3 (Level 1), then proceed to stage 3 (Level 2). |
| Formal Dispute  (Stage 3): Level 2 | To: Head of Service  CC: Team Manager  CC: Ops Manager | The FRO records the name of the Head of Service and date contacted in the dispute section of the QA issue resolution form under level 2. Record the date resolution is sought by.  The FRO follows up with a direct communication to the HoS (face to face, MS teams or e-mail) referring them to the LCS form for details of the issue and resolution sought. | Up to 5 working days. If the CP chair is not satisfied that the issue has been resolved via stage 3 (Level 2), then proceed to stage 3 (Level 3). |
| Formal Dispute  (Stage 3): Level 3 | To: Deputy Director  CC: Team Manager  CC: Ops Manager  CC: Head of Service | The FRO records the name of the Deputy Director and date contacted in the dispute section of the QA issue resolution form under level 3. Record the date resolution is sought by.  The FRO follows up with a direct communication to the DD (face to face, MS teams or e-mail) referring them to the LCS form for details of the issue and resolution sought. | Up to 5 working days. If the FRO is not satisfied that the issue has been resolved via stage 3 (Level 3), then proceed escalation to the Director). |
| Formal Dispute  (Stage 3): Level 4 | To: Director of Children’s Services  CC: Team Manager  CC: Ops Manager  CC: Head of Service  CC: Deputy Director | The FRO records the name of the Director and date contacted in the dispute section of the QA issue resolution form under level 4. Record the date resolution is sought by.  When an issue is escalated to the Director, the Director’s briefing note must also be completed outlining pertinent information.  The FRO follows up with a direct communication to the Director (face to face, MS teams or e-mail) referring them to the LCS form for details of the issue and resolution sought. |  |

1. Appendix B – Directors briefing template

