**Foster Home Review Procedure**

Dudley Safeguarding and Review

Approved by – Senior Leadership Team, Dudley MBC

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**REVIEW LOG**

Date Version Comments Approved by

This system of recording review dates is designed to ensure staff at all times use the correct version of the up to date procedure. This system is used on all Dudley MBC – Children & Young People Policies and Procedures.

**CONSULTATION**

The following people have been consulted on this policy:

• Foster Home Independent Reviewing Officers (FIRO)

• Service Manager/Team Managers Fostering Service

* S&R Service Managers / Independent Reviewing Officers

• Fostering Supervising Social Workers

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

All Fostering Services have a statutory duty to review the progress and development of their Foster Carers; within Dudley this responsibility lies with the Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officers.

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the Independent Foster Home Reviewing officer’s duties to:

• fulfil Dudley’s statutory review requirements to review carer’s approval and consider any changes to remits that would be appropriate.

• review the experience, skills, and performance over the year of the carer

• ensure that carers continue to offer good quality care and receive appropriate training and support to undertake the fostering task.

**2.0 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Foster Carer Reviews are subject to statutory regulation under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 Regulation 28 [2]. This Regulation states;

“Reviews must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the Fostering Service consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year”.

• Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations – Volume 4 Fostering Services

• National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011

• Regulation 28 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

• Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) 2009

• Care Planning and Placement Review Regulations

**3.0 KEY PRINCIPLES**

• All carers approval must be reviewed at least annually.

• All foster carers first annual reviews will be presented at the Fostering Panel. Best practice would be to hold the review within 6 months of a child being placed or 11 months after approval, which ever is sooner. Within Dudley we will hold the first review at 6 months post approval.

• All carers approvals should be reviewed whenever there is a significant incident, investigation or change in carers circumstances. Within Dudley we will consider calling a review within 20 working days of the concern being raised with the FIRO. If investigation is still ongoing at 20 working days then FIRO will record oversight and clarify review process and plan.

• Reviews need to confirm or change the initial approval considering experience, any changes in carers households or other significant matters

• It is important that the processes of assessment and approval are seen by everyone involved as on-going and continuing

• Carers will be expected to attend their reviews, whether they are review meetings or fostering panel.

• The general outcomes of all reviews will form part of the annual review report on the Fostering Service which is presented to the Fostering Panel. This will keep the fostering panel informed of significant issues in relation to retention of carers, changes of remit, etc. The annual report will include the quality assurance data that is captured via foster home reviews.

• Review meetings and review fostering panels will require the information listed in section

**4.0 PROCEDURES**

**4.1 Information and preparation for reviews**

The Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officer will gather the required review information:

• Feedback from the supervising social worker, child’s social worker, foster carer, foster carers birth children, the child’s Independent Reviewing Officer, any relevant others e.g. health professional etc.

• Check DBS is in date.

• Check Foster Carer medicals are up to date.

• Check Health and Safety Statement is in place

• Safer Caring statement is in place and relevant to the child or young person in placement.

• Check delegated authority is in place, has been reviewed and signed by the relevant persons

• Check each carer’s Personal Development Plan is in place and training record is up to date.

• Note progress on any recommendations from the previous review and ensure they have been completed in good time.

The Supervising Social Worker will provide a written report and other information for consideration at the review, including information on any proposed changes of remit prior to the foster home review.

Where a review is called because of a significant incident, concern or change, then all relevant information and the outcome of any investigation will also be made available.

Where there has been any decision or recommendation that a carer’s approval should be terminated, this will be clearly documented and the formal review will be considered by the Fostering Panel, after an investigation and post investigation review. Carers will be expected to attend their review meetings/fostering panel.

Carers will have access to the reports and information prepared for the review, excluding confidential third party information, two weeks in advance of the review.

**4.2 Consideration of Foster Home Reviews at Fostering Panel**

Reviews will be carried out by the Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officer.

The fostering panel will consider certain reviews:

• All first foster home reviews for carers.

• Reviews which are required as a result of a significant incident, concern/investigation or change in a carers circumstances; and where considered necessary.

• Reviews where the recommendation is to terminate/deregister approval for whatever reason.

• The review panel or meeting will consider the written report and information prepared.

• Where the review is the first annual one, the panel will have access to the original reports and the approving panels minutes.

• The panel or meeting will review any training or developmental needs identified in previous reports/plans, whether these have been taken forward, and identify tasks for the coming year.

• Consideration will be given to any changes that are needed in the approval.

• The review panel or meeting will make recommendations, including any changes to approval, and these will be shared at the time of the meeting.

• A record of minutes of the Fostering panel or meeting will be made, including any comments by the carers, and will be retained as part of the carer’s records.

The Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officer makes a professional judgment, which informs their recommendation about the continued approval of a Foster Carer and the terms of their approval.

Presentation to the Fostering Panel provides a further quality assurance process whereby the final review documentation including the Independent Foster Home Review Officer /Chair’s report, the targets they have set, and the recommendation can be further scrutinised.

See Fostering Panel Procedure – <https://dudleychildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_fost_panel.html>

**4.3 Actions following the Foster Home Review**

The INDEPENDENT FOSTER HOME REVIEW OFFICER will:

• Complete an Annual Foster Home Review Report on LCS and set the date for next review.

• Recommendations should also be inputted onto a LCS case note within 5 working days.

• A full copy of the Annual Foster Home Review will be sent to carers by email within 4 weeks of the FHR taking place by Safeguarding FHRO Administrator.

• If required the Supervising Social Worker will book a panel date (this will happen automatically for first foster home reviews)

• If a Foster Home Review has not been presented to fostering panel, carers will have the right to take any recommendation with which they disagree to the panel for further consideration.

**4.4 The Panel welcomes the attendance of prospective foster carers at meetings during consideration of their applications for approval.**

The Panel Administrator, in consultation with the Chair, prepares the agenda for each meeting and sends out the agenda to Panel members five working days before the meeting.

Those presenting reports to the Panel must send their reports to the Panel Administrator at least 10 working days before the date of the Panel. The Panel Administrator will arrange for the documentation to be distributed to Panel members.

**5.0** **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES FOR BOOKING AND ADMINISTERING A FOSTER HOME REVIEW**

• Independent Foster Home Reviewing officer will arrange a date with the carer and Supervising Social Worker

• Date and carer details will be passed to the Safeguarding and Review FHRO administrator via email

• Administrator will identify all placements with the Carer since the last Foster Home Review.

• Safeguarding and Review Business Support will request feedback from the Child’s Social Worker, Carer, Independent Reviewing Officer and child/young person (for any child placed with the Carer during the year). This is to be undertaken no less than 2 weeks prior to the FHR

• Feedback and consultation forms are part of the Annual Review. These will be uploaded onto LCS in the Foster Carer’s electronic record and referenced in the IRO review Foster Home Review.

**5.1 Post Review Process:**

The Independent Foster Home Review Officer (FIRO) will record the recommendations of the Review meeting on the foster carer’s record in LCS inn a case note. This will be recorded within 5 working days of the meeting.

The completed annual review report and recommendations and signature sheet will be completed on LCS within 20 working days.

FHR Business Support will then email a copy of the completed annual review report to the foster carer.

**6.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The Quality Assurance process aims not only to assess the quality of work on behalf of individual Foster Carers, but also to enable the service to assess the quality and effectiveness of the Local Authority on behalf of all Local Authority Foster Placements.

Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officers are well placed to provide valuable feedback to the Fostering Service in relation to the quality of work in supporting Foster Carers and the children placed in their care.

**6.1 Process**

Following each Foster Home Review the INDEPENDENT FOSTER HOME REVIEW OFFICER will complete a quality of practice questionnaire. This will assess the quality of the support provided to the Foster Carer by the Local Authority and the oversight of the statutory requirements for placements. Once complete the INDEPENDENT FOSTER HOME REVIEW OFFICER will issue a Quality of Practice Alert to the Team Manager if issues have been identified.

The Quality Assurance data will allow the Fostering Service to report on a quarterly basis and annually basis. The Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officer will also produce an Annual Report.

*Good Practice Alert: Meeting Fostering Regulations at good standard:*

* INDEPENDENT FOSTER HOME REVIEW OFFICER will issue a ‘Good or Excellent Practice Notification’ where this has been identified within the Review

*Quality of Practice Alert:*

Concerns exist that require priority intervention

• Key documents not provided to the Annual Review

• Recommendations from the previous review have not been implemented

• Supervision visits have not met the minimum frequency

• Training has not been provided

• Paperwork has not been monitored/updated

The Quality of Practice alert will be sent to the Supervising Social worker, Fostering Support Team Manager.

*Initiate formal Dispute Resolution Concerns exist where immediate action is required*

• DBS/Safer Care statement expired and lapse in risk assessment

• Poor physical condition of the home

• Concern about the suitability of the placement

• Concern about professional conduct

• Concern a child is at immediate risk of harm

The DRP will be sent to the Supervising Social, Fostering Support Team Manager, Fostering Service Manager.

**6.2 Foster Home Review Quality Assurance and Dispute resolution.**

As well as attending and chairing Foster Home Reviews, the INDEPENDENT FOSTER HOME REVIEW OFFICER (FIRO) has a duty to monitor the Local Authority’s performance in respect of the placement. The FIRO should identify both good and poor practice and may negotiate with the Local Authority’s managers up to the highest level.

6.2.1 The Safeguarding and Review Service believes in immediate problem solving with team managers and social workers whenever possible. FIRO’s will begin to address issues in a constructive cooperative manner.

6.2.2 It is expected that the review processes and professional discussion should be utilised to resolve issues before a formal alert is raised; unless the risk is such that to do so would place a child at risk.

6.2.3 It is important for the FIRO to have collaborative relationships with social work staff and management with the responsibility for foster carers and placements. As the FIRO Officer fulfils a quality assurance function it is important that they also recognise and report on good practice by individuals or teams.

6.2.4 When the standard of practice impacts on the standard of care plan or outcomes for the child, the FIRO should ensure that they negotiate with management up to the highest level, if necessary, to resolve the dispute by negotiation.

6.2.5 The FIRO will report on themes arising, quality of practice alerts, and formal Dispute resolutions on a quarterly basis. The report will be shared with managers to inform policy, practice and workforce development.

6.2.6 The Safeguarding and Review Service is responsible for monitoring the performance of the FIRO as well as ensuring that they are discharging their responsibilities in relation to procedures, regulations and this guidance. Workers and team managers should speak to the FIRO or the Safeguarding Service Manager directly if they have feedback with regard to FIRO performance.

6.2.7 Issues relating to a child or young person care plan: Where the issues of concern relate solely to a child care plan the FIRO will refer the matter directly to the child’s IRO for her/him to take appropriate action.

**6.3 FIRO Formal dispute resolution.**

6.3.1 This protocol outlines: the formal stages and timescales for the resolution of an identified concern; the recording of good practice; the process for recording and collating positive feedback, as well as raising and escalation of concerns that the FIRO has identified during or outside of foster carers’ review that need resolution.

6.3.2 The FIRO may bypass any stage and progress the issue to the level s/he considers appropriate subject to prior discussion with their line manager, except in emergencies.

6.3.3 It is the responsibility of the receiving supervising social worker/manager to respond to the alert within 5 working days of receipt, unless an alternative timescale has been agreed with the FHR Officer.

6.3.4 Generally all identified problems should be resolved with supervising social worker / Manager. FIRO will complete the Quality of Practice alert form including the agreed action/s which will be sent to the supervising social worker and the Team Manager. The Team Manager will confirm when actions are completed, and FIRO will confirm that the matter has been resolved. Where this is unsuccessful or when a more urgent response is necessary the FIRO will go straight to stage 2.

6.3.5 *Stage 1 Formal dispute resolution.*

FIRO will meet with the Team Manager to discuss the concerns arising from the QA, or an immediate concern if reported outside of the Review process (5 working days)

6.3.7 Stage 2 Formal dispute resolution

Arrange a meeting with the FIRO and Fostering Service Manager and S&R Service Manager (5 working days)

6.3.8 *Stage 3 formal dispute resolution.*

Where the FIRO considers that the responses are unsatisfactory and that the problem is unresolved then the matter will be referred to the Heads of Service in Children in Care and resources and Head of Safeguarding Practice and Quality Assurance (5 working days)

6.3.9 *Stage 4 Formal dispute resolution*

HOS safeguarding and Review alerts Service Director. Service Director meeting with FIRO and HOS’s.