Children’s Services Escalation Policy for Concerns Raised by Fostering Panel

**Version FINAL v1.1 Approved by Jo Rabbitte**

**Date: March 2024**

# About this document

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| **Title** | **Escalation Policy for Concerns Raised by Fostering Panel** |
| **Purpose** | **To outline the principles and process for the Fostering Panel and Chair to use to escalate concerns in relation to key areas as part of their Quality Assurance role.** |
| **Updated by** | **Maria Griffiths (Panel Advisor)** |
| **Approved by** | **Jo Rabbitte** |
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Version Control

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| March 2022 | V1 | First Issued | Jennifer Warr (Panel Advisor) |
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#### Intended Audience

This document has been issued to the following people for Review (R) Information (I) and Review and Sign off (S). The Child in Need procedure is mandatory and must be shared with all staff and partners working with Children in Need and their families.

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| **Name** | **Position** | **S/R/I** |
| Tina Benjamin / Matt Antsell | Directors | S/R |
| Tom Stevenson/ Siobhan Walsh / Jo Rabbitte/ Catherine Watkins/ | Assistant Directors | R |
| Service Managers |  | I |
| All staff |  | I |

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## Introduction

Effective working together depends on resolving concerns to the satisfaction of workers and agencies and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children. Due to the nature of the work undertaken it is inevitable that there will be concerns from time to time. Debate and respectful challenge should be encouraged to impact positive outcomes for children.

This Guidance outlines the principles and process for the Fostering Panel and Chair to use to escalate concerns in relation to key areas as part of their Quality Assurance role.

Surrey Council recognises the need for both the independence of Chairs and also for there to be a clear and transparent process which encourages chairs to exercise that independence in the quality assurance of the fostering panel process and where appropriate to escalate concerns.

## Guidance

This procedure should be applied in the context of a commitment to learning, developing and building working relationships to deliver the best practice so that children and their carers are guaranteed the best support and outcomes.

The procedure recognises that it is a key function of the Fostering Panel:

* To quality assure
* To ensure that unsafe or poor practice is highlighted to an appropriate manager
* To ensure that safeguarding concerns are addressed

Escalations may relate to procedural or practice concerns.

**Procedural** concerns relate to issues such as, but not exclusively to:

* Adherence to regulatory requirements
* Adherence to timescales
* Adherence to procedures
* Statutory checks and references are completed

It is recognised that issues in relation to Procedure may also indicate poor practice and may need to be escalated through the Practice Escalation Process.

**Practice** issues relate, but not exclusively to:

* Quality of reports (content, breadth, presentation)
* Quality of assessment (information available, evidence of inclusion of key individuals)
* Quality of analysis (informed by knowledge, theory, legal framework)
* Decision making and intervention (timely, proportionate, appropriate to level of risk and or need)
* Care planning
* Safeguarding issues

**Where there are immediate safeguarding concerns then these need to be raised with a senior manager immediately. The escalation form should be used to follow up in writing.**

**Escalation Process**

**Prior to Panel**

It is recognised that any initial concerns about adherence to procedures or quality of information should be resolved in an informal manner. This may be through the Panel Chair asking for clarification or extra information from the Panel Advisor. It is hoped that issues in relation to procedures will be quickly and easily resolved and it is not envisaged that formal processes will be used.

Where the Panel Chair has attempted to resolve issues at the informal level and has not received a response or, in their view, without satisfaction, formal processes can be followed to ensure adherence to procedures. The Panel Chair should advise the Panel Advisor that they intend to progress to the formal process.

**Concerns raised during Fostering Panel**

Where concerns have not been resolved prior to fostering panel or become apparent at the fostering panel the Panel chair may wish to raise a formal escalation.

Formal Process

1. Panel chair makes a note of the panel’s concerns and completes the escalation form within 5 working days of the meeting
2. Panel chair sends the escalation form to the Panel Advisor.
3. Panel Advisor identifies the manager best placed to respond to the concern and emails them the escalation form with a request for a response within 5 working days.
4. The responsible manager investigates the escalation and provides a response to the panel advisor within 5 working days. The response should include not only a response to the specific concern/s but also actions to resolve the concerns and how learning will be taken forward.
5. The panel advisor will send the response to the ADM and Panel Chair who will indicate whether they feel the concerns have been answered satisfactorily.
6. If the escalation has not been satisfactorily resolved then the ADM or Panel Chair should complete a further form identifying which aspects they remain concerned about and the process will be considered by a more senior manager.

## Monitoring and Reporting

The Escalation Resolution Process is recorded within the LCS electronic data base under Case Notes. The Panel Adviser will also keep a spreadsheet of escalations to ensure that responses are completed within timescales.

An overview report of key themes from panel is completed by the panel advisor; this will include detail of any escalations each quarter.

## Fostering Panel Escalation Form

Fostering Panel Escalation form

Section A – to be completed by Panel Chair

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Foster carer’s name/s |  |
| Date of Fostering Panel |  |
| Social Worker’s name |  |
| Team Manager’s name |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Panel Chair |  |
| Name of Panel Adviser |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nature of concern** | | | |
| **PROCEDURAL** | | | |
| Adherence to timescales | **YES** | | **NO** |
| Appropriate planning processes / care plan |  | |  |
| Checks / references completed |  | |  |
|  |  | |  |
| **PRACTICE** | | | |
| Quality of reports | **YES** | | **NO** |
| Quality of assessment |  | |  |
| Quality of analysis |  | |  |
| Inclusion of key individuals |  | |  |
| Decision Making and Intervention |  | |  |
| Safeguarding concerns |  | |  |
| **Further information – nature of concerns and actions requested to resolve** | | | |
| DATE FOR RESPONSE (5 working days) | |  | |

Section B – to be completed by Panel Advisor

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of manager asked to deal with complaint |  |
| Date sent to manager |  |
| Spreadsheet updated |  |

Section C – to be completed by manager

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Response to concerns raised | | |
|  | | |
| Actions and learning | | |
| Action | By whom | By when |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Section D – to be completed by panel advisor

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date received |  |
| Date sent to panel chair |  |
| Date sent to ADM |  |
| Date for feedback to fostering panel |  |

Section E – response of ADM

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Section F – response of Panel Chair

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Resolved Yes / No

Further escalation required Yes / No

## Flow Chart

Panel members raise a concern regarding practice

Response is put on Panel Agenda under AOB

Response is forwarded to Panel Chair and ADM. If the response is satisfactory then the escalation is closed. If not then new escalation form is completed.

Manager investigates the escalation and responds to Panel Advisor within five working days. Panel Advisor updates spreadsheet

Panel advisor receives the escalation and forwards to the manager requesting a response within 5 working days. Panel Advisor updates spreadsheet

The Panel chair records the concern on the Escalation Form and sends it in writing to the Panel Advisor within 5 working days.