**Care standards investigation**

A standard of care complaint is when a foster carer’s care raises professional concerns.

The supervising social worker will discuss the matter with the Local authority designated officer for child protection, LADO. If it is agreed that this is not a child protection issue but a standard of care concern, the following will take place:

**1 The foster carer’s supervising social worker and the child’s social worker will meet with a fostering manager to consider:**

* the nature and seriousness of the complaint
* a full account of the issue as viewed by all involved
* whether there has been ongoing concern about similar issues
* the fostering manager will explore the pressures on the carer and the child’s needs, what support had been offered and any urgent help the carer needs now

**2 The fostering manager and supervising social worker will arrange to meet with the foster carer, within 7 days**

* to explain the concern which has been raised and to understand the carer’s explanation of the events
* explore whether other people need to be interviewed, and by whom
* look at whether new placements should be made during the investigation and any payments to be made within the finance policy
* consider what suitable support and training can be offered , including whether the Consortium independent advocacy scheme should be available
* agree the date of any follow up meeting
* draw up an agreed plan for fostering supervision social worker visits
* consider whether child protection procedures should be started.

**3 Conclusion**

* the fostering manager will consider the information presented, consider any specialist advice to reach a conclusion
* A clear analysis should be recorded which sets out the conclusions and any issues which have arisen
* A way forward should be considered
* Set a date for a follow up meeting with the carer within 3 months

**4 Actions** The Fostering manager or deputy team manager will , within 28 days:

* write to the carer, explaining the outcome and confirming agreement on specific training, specific support packages, increased visits by the supervising social worker
* confirm the date of the follow up meeting
* Confirm whether the matter should be referred to the Fostering panel

1. **If the matter is to be presented to Fostering panel**

The Panel may recommend that:

* the foster carer’s approval should continue and no further action needs to be taken as the Panel is satisfied that the care standards issues have been fully investigated and resolved
* a recommendation is made to change the terms of approval, eg the number or ages of the children
* There are some areas of concern and that the supervising social worker should address these with the foster carer and identify suitable training and support
* the foster carer’s approval should not continue and should be terminated.

The Panel recommendations are verified by the agency decision maker. The agency decision maker will send the foster carers a letter which clearly sets out the decisions of the panel. If the decision is for deregistration, the foster carers will be given 28 days to appeal this decision and will also be informed of their right to contact the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.

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