

SAFEGUARDING (CHILD PROTECTION) POLICY AND PROCEDURE



This Policy and Procedure arises from the Arrangements for the Protection of Children – The Fostering Services Regulations 2011, Regulation 12.

1. Introduction

This policy and procedure is designed to ensure effective inter-agency communication and co-operation. Procedures cannot however replace professional judgement based on a thorough assessment and critical analysis. Child protection requires an exercise of skill and judgement to apply appropriately to individual cases. Social workers must remain constantly alert and discuss/report any actual or perceived concerns to the appropriate manager and never assume anything.

Within this policy and procedure, abuse is defined as physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. This includes cases where the standard of care provided by foster carers, does not adequately support the child's health and development. Children may be abused or neglected through deliberate action to inflict harm or by the failure to act to prevent harm.

2. The Policy

2.1

The safety and welfare of children will be the paramount consideration at all times.

2.2

The aim of the agency is always to protect children and prevent abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place. This will be achieved by rigorous selection, assessment and training of carers, by appropriate matching and a high level of support. The agency expects that foster carers will be provided with detailed information about the child to ensure they are able to provide appropriate and safe care.

2.3

The agency will be alert to safeguarding children in whom illness is fabricated or induced.

2.4

The Foster Carers Handbook contains advice for foster carers on recognising and reporting abuse. This will be amended and updated as required, in line with changes in practice, guidance and legislation.

2.5

In the event of any allegation against a foster carer approved by the agency or a member of their household, Foster Care Link will participate fully in any child protection investigation, including providing access to the foster carers file.

2.6

The agency will also co-operate fully in any child protection investigation where an allegation of abuse has been made whilst the child is in a Foster Care Link foster home, but the alleged abuser is not a member of the foster carers' household.

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2.7

Foster Care Link has a Safe Caring Policy and each foster home will have individual safe caring guidelines.

2.8

Supervising social workers from Foster Care Link will from time to time talk to children in foster placements, to establish whether the children have any concerns about their placement.

2.9

Children and foster carers will be given advice and information about how to report any concerns they may have.

2.10

Foster Care Link will expect and positively encourage and enable children, foster carers and staff to raise any concerns they may have about the health and welfare of children.

2.11

Social work staff and foster carers will receive ongoing training on child protection issues.

See also policies and procedures on:

Safe Caring.

Controls and Sanctions in Foster Placement.

Incidents of Bullying against Foster Children.

Absence of Foster Children from Carer's Home.

Health and Safety Assessments.

Internet policy.

Our policy and procedure reflects local child protection protocols, London carers should refer to the London Safeguarding Children's Partnership policies and procedures available at the following website: <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/>

3. The Procedure

3.1

On placement, Foster Care Link will provide both the child and the foster carer, with details of relevant people and organisations they can contact in the event of any concerns. Foster Care Link will ensure that the child has the necessary understanding and means to report any concerns. Information on reporting concerns is also contained in the Children's Guide and the Foster Carer's Handbook.

3.2

The foster carer's supervising social worker will see and talk to the child within four weeks of placement and approximately every two months thereafter. They will specifically look at any issues relating to the child's placement in the foster home. Their contact with the child is in addition to visits from the child's social worker and not in place of such visits.

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3.3

Both the supervising social worker and the child's social worker should be alert to any signs of increased physical or mental ill health in the child. Where the child, the foster carer or anyone else is reporting an increase in illness, the child's social worker must be informed immediately. A medical assessment should be carried out, to ascertain the cause of the increase.

3.4

If a child is suffering from a serious injury or medical condition, urgent medical attention must be sought from the nearest Accident and Emergency Unit. It is expected that this will normally be the responsibility of the foster carer. If there is reason to believe that the foster carer may be responsible for the child's condition, then the child must be taken to A & E by a social worker.

3.5

Where an allegation of abuse or neglect is made directly by the child concerned, this must be taken seriously and the child carefully listened to. The child should not be pressed for information, led or cross-examined or given false assurances of confidentiality. The initial response by a Foster Care Link social worker or foster carer should be limited to clarifying the child's concerns, reassuring the child about how he/she will be kept safe and explaining what action will be taken. The conversation with the child should be carefully recorded as soon as possible. The written record should state the date and time of the disclosure by the child and the date and time it was recorded.

3.6

Any allegations of abuse or neglect in foster placements must be reported immediately to the placing authority, the area authority where the foster carer lives and FCL's registered manager, who is the designated person for dealing with allegations, on behalf of the agency. The initial report should be made by telephone to the duty social worker for the area authority and to the child's social worker or their manager or the duty social worker for the placing authority. Out of office hours the Emergency Duty Team of both the area authority and the placing authority should be notified. A telephone report must be followed up with a written report, which can be e-mailed or sent by first class post. If there are other foster children in the foster home, the relevant placing authority must also be informed immediately.

3.7

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the area authority will assume responsibility for any child protection investigation. The area authority will need to decide in consultation with the placing authority, whether the child concerned needs to be removed from the placement. Agreement will also need to be reached with the area authority about protecting any other children in the foster home, including the carer's own children. Foster Care Link will assist in the provision of an alternative foster placement wherever possible.

3.8

If an allegation of abuse or neglect, involving a foster child, is made against a person who is not a member of the foster carers household, the same notifications must be made. The area authority, the placing authority and Foster Care Link, must decide as a

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matter of urgency whether the foster child can be adequately protected in the existing foster placement.

3.9

It will be the responsibility of the placing authority to advise the parents of any child who is the subject of a child protection concern.

3.10

Foster Care Link must ensure that in all cases, it not only provides the necessary information, but also receives information from the area authority carrying out the investigation. The agency must also ensure that it receives appropriate information from any other agency involved in the child protection investigation. This is essential for future decisions relating to the foster carers concerned and where the child who is the subject of the child protection investigation, is placed with another Foster Care Link carer.

3.11

Foster Care Link will need to discuss and agree with the foster carers how they will be supported during the course of any child protection investigation. In some cases it will be inappropriate for the support to be provided by Foster Care Link, as this may constitute a conflict of interest. In such situations support will need to be provided by an independent social worker. Foster Care Link will identify a suitably qualified independent social worker to provide support and will cover the cost of any support.

3.12

Foster carers should also be advised to contact the Fostertalk to seek independent help and advice.

3.13

Foster Care Link will advise the regulatory body Ofsted of the instigation and outcome of child protection investigations involving its carers, in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Initially this will be by email using the standard Ofsted form, informing Ofsted that an allegation has been made, the nature of the allegation and the current action being taken. Following the child protection investigation, Ofsted should be sent a concise but detailed report of the outcome of the investigation and what action if any the agency is taking in respect of its foster carers.

3.14

A detailed written record will be kept of any allegations of abuse or neglect and of any action taken in response. This will be kept on the foster carers file.

A separate central record will be kept of all allegations against the agency's foster carers for monitoring and statistical purposes.

3.15

Where an allegation against a foster carer is subsequently substantiated, a foster carer review will be held and a report will be presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration for termination of approval. If the foster carer resigns before the case is presented to Panel, the case should still go to Panel. Panel will then consider a recommendation that if the carer had not resigned, Panel would have recommended termination of approval.

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3.16

Where a foster carer has been the subject on an unsubstantiated allegation and wishes to continue fostering, Foster Care Link will carry out a review of their approval. The review report together with details of the investigation and its outcome will be referred to the Fostering Panel for consideration.

3.17

The Designated Officer to deal with Child Protection issues at Foster Care Link is the Registered Manager, Abdurrahman Sayed.

4. Making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service and Ofsted.

4.1

Where an allegation against an FCL foster carer or a member of their household is substantiated, but there is no criminal prosecution that would automatically bar them, the agency will need to consider whether or not to refer the details to the Disclosure and Barring Service. Foster Care Link will convene a meeting following the Panel's recommendation to terminate approval, to specifically discuss the issue of referral to DBS. In all cases Ofsted should be notified.

4.2

There is a legal duty to refer to DBS if the following two conditions have been met:

Condition 1. Where FCL has withdrawn permission for a person to engage in a regulated activity with children or the person is moved to another area of work that isn't a regulated activity. (*A regulated activity includes fostering and social work and people who are involved in supervising foster carers or social workers*).

Condition 2. Where FCL thinks a person has carried out one of the following:

- Engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children. (See below for definition of relevant conduct). An action or inaction has harmed a child or put them at risk or harm.
- Satisfied the harm test in relation to children, e.g. there has been no relevant conduct but a risk of harm to a child still exists.
- Been cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations).

4.3

Relevant conduct in relation to children

Relevant conduct:

- Endangers a child or is likely to endanger a child
- If repeated against or in relation to a child would endanger or be likely to endanger a child

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

ESSENTIAL CONTACT INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

If you are placed in a foster home and are unhappy about how your foster carers are looking after you or you are unhappy about how you are being treated by another adult or child, you should speak to your social worker as soon as possible. Their details are listed below together with the names of other people and organisations who may be able to help you, if you are unable to contact your social worker.

Your Social Worker is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

Address:

Their Manager is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

Out of office hours you should contact:

Your Foster Carer's Social Worker is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

Address:

Their Manager is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

You can also contact:

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline Telephone: 0808 800 500
Helpline e-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk

CHILDLINE Telephone: 0800 1111
(24 hour Helpline)

OFSTED Telephone: 0300 123 1231
E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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ESSENTIAL CONTACT INFORMATION FOR FOSTER CARERS

If you have any concerns about your foster child's care prior to them being placed with you or you have concerns that they may be at risk from someone they are currently in contact with, you should contact the child's social worker, the duty social worker or your social worker as soon as possible. Their details are listed below together with the names of other people and organisations who may be able to help you, if you are unable to contact a social worker.

The Child's Social Worker is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

Address:

Their Manager is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

Duty Social Worker; Telephone

Out of office hours you should contact:

Your Social Worker is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

Address:

Their Manager is:

Telephone Number: E-mail:

You can also contact:

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline Telephone: 0808 800 500
Helpline e-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk

CHILDLINE Telephone: 0800 1111
(24 hour Helpline)

OFSTED Telephone: 0300 123 1231
E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk