

# **Allegations, causes for concern and complaints against Warwickshire County Council foster carers**

## **Guidance for the Fostering Service**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is guidance for the Warwickshire Fostering Service to inform best practice in circumstances where:
  - a foster carer is alleged to have harmed a child in their care;
  - the level of care a foster carer has provided may be in breach of the [Foster Care Fostering Services National Minimum Standards](#) or Fostering Agreement;
  - there is a complaint about a foster carer's care or behaviour.
- 1.2 This guidance **does not replace** [Allegations Against Staff or Persons in Positions of Trust](#) procedure which has precedence.
- 1.3 Evidence has shown that children in care can be subjected to abuse by adults in a position of trust including those approved as foster carers or living within a fostering household. This guidance sets out what should happen in these circumstances as well as in cases where a complaint is made about the standard of care offered. It is important to be clear whether the action or behaviour by the foster carer constitutes an allegation, a cause for concern or a complaint, as this will inform the course of action to be taken.
- 1.4 An actual or potential allegation investigation (definition below) will always take precedence over a cause for concern or complaint against or made by a foster carer due to the level of seriousness. If a matter has been investigated and resolved as an 'allegation', the same issues should not be looked at again as either a cause for concern or complaint.
- 1.5 Investigations into allegations will be overseen by the Local Authority Designated Officer (formerly known as LADO)
- 1.6 Concerns about foster carers can be referred through the Multi agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and in this case the completed referral should then be emailed to the Fostering Services Operations Manager. Allegations against foster carers employed by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) should be referred by the Fostering Service to the Designated Officer at their direct email address which is [lado@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:lado@warwickshire.gov.uk)
- 1.7 Where the Warwickshire foster carer lives outside of Warwickshire, the relevant local authority LADO is to consult the Warwickshire LADO to agree who will have oversight of the investigation. The wider West Midlands protocol which offers guidance on making this decision can be accessed [here](#).

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 What is an allegation against someone who works with children?

2.1.1 The procedure regarding allegations should be followed where there are concerns that a foster carer or a member of their household has:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they may pose a risk of harm to children

2.2 A few (not all) examples of the above may include neglect of a child (e.g. insufficient clothing, inadequate diet); of sexual abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching); emotional abuse (e.g. constant criticising); or physical abuse (e.g. thumping, bruising, burn marks, hitting, smacking or rough handling).

2.3 The [Allegations Against Staff or Persons in Positions of Trust](#) procedures apply whenever there is an allegation or concern against any person who works with children, in connection with their employment, voluntary or personal activity and applies to all foster carers. The allegations may be contemporary, historical or both.

### 2.4 What is a cause for concern?

2.5 Firstly it needs to be agreed with the fostering team manager that the level of concern meets the criteria for a formal Cause of Concern meeting. A cause for concern arises where there is a potential breach of a [Foster Care National Minimum Standard](#); where a foster carer has possibly failed to meet an expectation which has implications for their caring for a child or young person.

2.5.1 Examples of a cause for concern/breach of standard would include:

- allowing another adult to move in to the home without notifying the fostering social worker;
- refusing to store hazardous substances safely;
- not advising the child's social worker within the required time of a serious accident or violent incident;
- stopping contact between a child and their parents without the social worker's consent;
- moving another child into the household without informing the service (which impacts upon shared bedrooms, capacity to provide the looked after child with the level care required);

- and more generally breaching procedures and guidance that are in place to promote the welfare of children and young people in foster care.

## **2.7 What is a complaint?**

2.7.1 A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, which requires a response. This is of a more general nature and can include either a child/young person or someone on their behalf, claiming that the child/young person is being treated unfairly within the foster home. Examples include how the combined allowances are spent, foster carers not meeting the requirements of the placement plan e.g. supporting contact with birth family or other family members.

## **3. Responding to an allegation**

- 3.1 Clear and specific communication between the fostering service and placing children's teams is essential in the investigation of allegations. The investigation needs to be carefully planned under the direction of the LADO.
- 3.2 Investigations should be dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair and thorough investigation, and following the guidance on timescales set out in section 5 of the [inter-agency procedure](#).
- 3.3 Government guidance for fostering services sets out target timescales, but these will depend on factors such as the nature, seriousness and complexity of the allegation. It is expected that 80 percent of investigations should be resolved within one month, 90 percent within three months, and all but the most exceptional cases should be completed within 12 months ([The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services © Crown Copyright 2011](#)).
- 3.4 Normally the local authority in which the foster carer permanently resides (i.e. where they pay their council tax) will take responsibility for overseeing the management of the investigation. The fostering service must contact the LADO to report the allegation and agree the actions to be taken. Where there is disagreement between the LADO in another LA and the LADO in Warwickshire about where the responsibility lies, the LADOs must discuss this together and agree the most appropriate way forward in the best interests of the child.
- 3.5 Where the LADO identifies that the concern/allegation may meet one or more of the relevant criteria, information will be shared and discussed between all relevant social workers.

- 3.6 Where there is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a criminal offence the children's team manager and LADO should determine whether immediate police or local children's services involvement is necessary. A strategy meeting, chaired by the appropriate social work team, would normally include both the LADO and fostering services.
- 3.7 Where the initial evaluation concludes that no further action is to be taken, this decision and the reasons must be recorded. In accordance with the [Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations](#) caution should be exercised in removing children from placements while investigations are underway or when the significant harm threshold is not met.
- 3.8 Where a Position of Trust or Allegations Management meeting is to be convened this will involve:
- The relevant LADO, who will chair the meeting;
  - Representatives from the placing children's social work team(s);
  - Fostering manager/fostering social worker for the carer;
  - Police;
  - Social workers undertaking s.47 (child protection) enquiries;
  - Other agencies as appropriate e.g. schools for the carers own children, other employers if the foster carer works with children or adults with care and support needs in another capacity.
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- \* The foster carer should not be told about the allegation as this may place the child at further risk or hinder a police investigation. What and when information can be shared with foster carers must be agreed by all agencies.**
- 3.9 When the foster carer has a Warwickshire address (and the allegation relates to their practice as a Warwickshire foster carer, or other work with children they carry out in Warwickshire), the Warwickshire LADO will oversee the allegation, and the WSCB Inter-agency procedures will apply. Any s.47 (child protection) enquiry will be carried out by the Warwickshire social work team responsible for the child. If the allegation does not require a s.47 or police investigation then the investigation will be undertaken by Warwickshire fostering team.
- 3.10 When the foster carer's home address is outside Warwickshire, the host LA LADO will normally oversee the allegation (this will be agreed between the two LADO services). A child protection referral should also be made to the host LA, if required, as they are responsible for any s.47 enquiries. If no s.47 or police enquiry is required, an internal investigation will be undertaken by the Warwickshire fostering team.

- 3.11 If the allegation relates to the foster carer's work with children elsewhere (e.g. teaching), the location of this work will determine which LADO and social work service is responsible for overseeing and investigating the allegation, but the Warwickshire fostering team should expect to be involved in their allegations management process, and invited to POT meetings. The appropriate LSCB procedures should be consulted for details.
- 3.12 A Position of Trust (POT) or allegations meeting may be used both to plan an investigation of the allegation, and agree how to manage risk and safety while the investigation is underway. Further POT meetings might be used to keep a complicated investigation under review, and a final POT meeting may be used to hold a determination discussion which agrees whether or not the allegation is substantiated. In some straightforward situations early decision making may be made in discussion between the LADO, the fostering and children's services operations manager without a POT meeting.
- 3.13 An initial POT meeting should consider:
- A chronology of the foster carer's history with the fostering services;
  - What further information is required to inform decisions;
  - Whether the foster carers own children or children within their extended family should be interviewed;
  - Whether the fostered children should be removed from the placement and if so, how this will be planned and managed (refer to 3.7);
  - Suspension of any new placement during the course of the enquiries, any other work with children or vulnerable adults undertaken by the foster carer;
  - Whether previously fostered children should be interviewed;
  - How and when the foster carer will be informed of the allegation and the support to be given to the foster carers during the investigation;
  - Information to be shared with the parents of the fostered children in placement/previously placed;
  - Likely impact of any media interest and if so, what action to be taken to ensure the child, family and foster carer(s) are afforded privacy, protection and support;
  - What interim protective measures should be taken and in particular whether the individual against whom the allegation is made should be allowed to continue in their fostering role at present;
  - the impact on the foster carer and their family;
  - Proposed timescale for the conducting the investigation ensuring that there is no unnecessary delay;
  - Consideration of whether the LA is required to notify Ofsted;
  - Proposed dates for any Review POT Meeting/s;
  - Actions of tasks clearly identified.

- 3.14 When not in attendance at the meeting the operations manager for the fostering service MUST be informed of the outcome and recommendations by the relevant fostering manager.

## **4. Investigating the allegation**

- 4.1 The threshold for s.47 enquiries is 'reasonable cause to suspect significant harm'. Not all 'allegations' against people who work with children require a s.47 investigation or police investigation. The decision that this threshold is met may be clear when the allegation is first reported, or may become clear in a POT meeting or at some other stage in the process. If the threshold for s.47 enquiries or a police investigation is not met, the allegation will be investigated internally by the fostering team as the 'employer'.
- 4.2 Where a s.47 enquiry is being undertaken, the appropriate social work team (see paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10) will convene a strategy discussion and undertake the s.47 enquiries. The fostering service, police and LADO should be invited to take part in the strategy discussion.
- 4.3 Both strategy discussions and POT meetings will need to share what is known about the allegation, and the alleged perpetrator history. It may be useful therefore to hold these meetings back to back.
- 4.4 If a s.47 is not needed, an internal 'employer's' investigation will be conducted by a suitable member of staff in the fostering service, appointed by the Fostering Operations Manager.
- 4.5 An internal investigation should make clear recommendations about:
- Whether the original allegation is substantiated, unsubstantiated, false or malicious;
  - Whether any other matters which have come to light in the course of the investigation constitute an 'allegation' or cause for concern, and whether or not these have been substantiated;
  - The recommendation being made to Fostering Panel about the future use of the foster carers.

## **5. Support to the foster carer**

- 5.1 The fostering service will inform the foster carer about the allegation to the level of detail agreed with the other agencies involved (This is usually agreed at a POT meeting). The 'Allegations Pack' will be provided.
- 5.2 The foster carer will be given an indication of the timescale for the conclusion of the investigation. At a minimum the foster carer should expect to be



contacted within 5 working days with an update on the process of the investigation and thereafter on a weekly basis.

- 5.3 In cases where the foster carer is arrested they are to be advised (whether they consider themselves to be guilty or innocent) to access legal support. If the foster carer does not have membership to an organisation that provides a free 24 hour legal service, they must be strongly advised to use the duty solicitor. If an informal interview request is made, foster carers are advised that prior to attending the police station they access legal support and arrange a convenient time to attend for interview with their legal advisor.

## **6. Concluding the investigation and making a determination**

- 6.1 At the conclusion of the investigation, a decision should be made with the LADO about whether the allegations being investigated have been substantiated or not. This is called the 'determination'. A final POT meeting is usually held to do this.
- 6.2 The final outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the foster carer in writing by the fostering team within 7 working days where possible. Timescales may be longer where there is police involvement.
- 6.3 If the outcome is substantiated, a full foster home review (regardless if one is due) or a termination report (if it deemed appropriate) is to be submitted to Fostering Panel.
- 6.4 If an organisation or agency removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work in a regulated activity with children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, they must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to consider whether to add the individual to the barred list. See section 12 Notifications to the Disclosure and Barring Service. Warwickshire have a duty to fulfil this task and will inform the foster carer accordingly.

## **7. Monitoring allegations against foster carers**

- 7.1 The fostering service in conjunction with the LADO service will be responsible for producing an annual report that will monitor the outcomes of allegations against foster carers. These will be used by the fostering service to inform practice in terms of foster carer recruitment, assessment, preparation, training and support.

## 8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 Throughout the investigation confidentiality should be respected and people only told on a 'need to know' basis; this would include parents or others with parental responsibility. Where a child is required to move to another foster carer then they may need to have some information passed to them. If the matter becomes subject to media speculation, the local authority, will need to consider what information should be shared with the parents, children or the public.

## 9. Investigation into a cause for concern

- 9.1 The decision of whether a formal cause of concern is held lies with the fostering service after having full discussions with the placing children's team. Some concerns raised may be dealt with in a less formal way, for example through the foster carer's supervision.

- 9.2. The investigation into cause of concerns should be in line with the WCC employee [Conduct and Capability procedure](#) see extract below:

'We are committed to dealing with issues of performance and capability in a fair and consistent way. The aim of the procedure is to resolve problems in performance and capability, at the earliest possible stage, in a supportive way, whilst employees continue carrying out their roles. This is achieved by making the employee aware of any performance which falls below the required standards and encouraging, supporting and giving them the opportunity to improve'

- 9.3 The placing children team social worker is responsible for notifying the fostering service immediately if they have concerns about a foster carer (see appendix 1, Cause of Concern referral). The fostering social worker will discuss the matter with their line manager.
- 9.4 The child social worker and/or the fostering social worker will undertake a visit to the foster carers to discuss the content of the concerns and their responses are to be clearly recorded.
- 9.5 The fostering team manager will hold initial discussions with the fostering social worker to clarify the following:
- Information about the cause for concern;
  - The foster carer's response to the current concern raised?
  - Information about the carer(s) history of fostering;
  - Has there been discussion with the carer(s) on this specific issue previously? What was their response?

- Are there any outstanding training or support needs for the carer(s) in respect of the cause for concern?
- 9.6 The fostering manager will decide (in consultation with the placing children's team) if a formal Cause of Concern meeting is needed or if a less formal process is more appropriate; this will be evidenced and recorded as a manager's decision on the foster carer's record.
- 9.7 If it is deemed a formal Cause of Concern meeting is not needed, a discussion will be held within the foster carer's supervision with clear actions, recommendations recorded (i.e. support, additional training etc.).
- 9.8 All the above will be recorded as a key event on the foster carer's record and the referrer will be notified of this outcome in writing. The carer should also be informed of contact details for them to access the independent support of the Fostering Network Advice and Mediation Service.
- 9.9 If further concerns are raised then the fostering team manager may escalate to a formal Cause of Concern meeting.

## **10. Cause of Concern Meeting**

- 10.1 A Cause for Concern Meeting will be held, chaired by the fostering service, between the carers, the fostering social worker and the child's social worker with their line managers as appropriate. The foster carers can request to have an independent support person to also attend. Fostering services will ensure all attendees have a copy of the Cause of Concern referral and the potential breach of standards will be identified and provided in writing in no less than 5 working days before the date of the meeting.
- 10.2 The investigating fostering worker is responsible for preparing the report before the meeting. This will include information from other sources such as reports provided by social workers, foster carers, end of placement reports and correspondence. S/he will make enquiries with other professionals in order to gather further information to inform the investigation that in turn will inform any future decision making.
- 10.3 The final report (after the meeting is held) will outline:
- The alleged issue/cause for concern identifying the regulations and standards which have allegedly been breached;
  - Details of who has been interviewed and their views;
  - Any other relevant information or circumstances that have a bearing on the issue;

- Recommendation with reasons as to whether the cause for concern should be upheld or not;
  - Recommendation as to further work, action, training or support to the carer/placement.
  -
- 10.4 Upon receipt of the report the fostering team manager will make a recommendation as to whether the concern is to be upheld or not; this will be recorded as a manager's decision on the foster carer's record.
- 10.5 All parties will be provided with a copy of the report, including the recommendations of the fostering team manager.
- 10.6 The foster carer(s) will be required to sign that they have received a copy of the report and are in agreement with the recommendations/decision made.
- 10.7 Where the foster carer(s) are not in agreement with the recommendations, fostering will need to consider whether a full foster home review is required that will be presented to Fostering Panel.
- 10.8 Foster carers are to be reminded of the services of the Advice and Mediation Service throughout the investigation process.
- 10.9 Where the cause for concern is significant, or when three separate causes of concern are raised within a 12 month period or when there is a repetition of a concern, a full Foster Home Review is to be held (even if it is not due) and presented to the Fostering Panel at the earliest possible opportunity. This could have implications for the foster carer(s) continued approval, approval category or skill level.
- 10.10 The fostering service should also consider whether the cumulative impact of a series of causes for concern meets the criteria for an 'allegation' which should be referred to the LADO.
- 10.11 The review will not only concentrate on the cause for concern issue/s, but will provide a balanced perspective on the foster carers skills, experience and competencies. It will outline whether personal factors are having a bearing on the foster carer/fostering household. This will enable the Fostering Panel to give full and fair consideration of the foster carer's position. The foster carers will be invited to attend the Fostering Panel to make any representation either writing or verbally.
- 10.12 All causes of concern and the outcome of any enquiries and investigations will be recorded on the electronic social care record as a key event and presented in the chronology as part of the Annual Foster Home Review process.

- 10.13 Where the agency decision maker's determination is to terminate a carer's approval with the service based on the cause for concern history, in all cases the Disclosure and Barring service will be notified (by the Fostering Operations Manager) and it will be clearly recorded on the electronic social care record. The foster carer will be informed of this action in writing concurrently. Further, where a foster carer chooses to resign as foster carers before the investigation into the cause for concern is concluded, the matter is still referred to the Fostering Panel and agency decision maker for information and to be noted. Foster carers will have the opportunity to see the final reports of the issues and will have 2 working weeks to submit a response to the report and both will be presented to the Panel for information.
- 10.14 The foster carer will be advised by letter of the above and also be informed that details of the concerns will be shared in the event of future reference requests to the local authority. This will also apply should they wish to take up a related activity such as child minding when a local authority check is completed as part of the approval process.

## **11.Complaints about a foster carer**

- 11.1 A complaint in essence is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, which requires a response and can relate to a current issue or an event in the past. A complaint can be of a more general nature and can include either a child/young person or someone on their behalf, claiming that the child/young person is being treated unfairly within the foster home, issues of the how the combined allowances are spent, foster carers not meeting the requirements of the placement plan e.g. supporting contact with birth family or other family members. Good practice dictates that at the outset it is clarified with the complainant the outcome they are seeking through the complaint process.
- 11.2 Where the complaint/representation is being made on behalf of the child/young person, it is essential to consider the child/young person's age and make appropriate enquiries as to whether the child/young person is happy for this person to make representations on their behalf, and the whether the complaint or representations accords with their views.
- 11.3 Complaints about foster care cannot be considered if they would prejudice any other action that is being taken in respect of the carer. For example where action is being taken under the in Positions of Trust procedure or where the carer is party to a legal process in respect of the child or young person in their care.
- 11.4 In these circumstances the complaint can be addressed once the above matter has been resolved.

- 11.5 Where it is agreed that the complaint falls within the [Children Social Care Complaints procedure](#), the operations manager for the fostering service should be advised of the complaint so that arrangements can be agreed for the matter to be investigated by the fostering service.
- 11.6 Foster carers should be told as soon as possible after a complaint has been received in writing and given a timescale of completion (no longer than 28 working days).
- 11.7 Both the child/young person and the person representing their interests through the complaints and representation process and the foster carer should be advised in writing of the outcome of the complaint investigation.
- 11.8 In all cases the allocated social worker and independent reviewing officer for the child/young person should be advised of the complaints and consulted throughout the process and informed of the outcome.

## **12. On hold pending termination of approval or resignation by a foster carer**

- 12.1 Following the POT meeting or during a cause for concern investigation the foster carer may be temporarily suspended from fostering or from taking any new placements during the process of the investigation. This decision rests with the Fostering Operations Manager who will be guided by the outcome of the POT discussion.
- 12.2 A foster carer's approval will always be put on hold when:
- there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm;
  - the allegation warrants a police investigation;
  - it is serious enough to be grounds for ending fostering approval.
- 12.3 Decisions regarding the foster carer's ongoing suitability to foster are a matter for the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker following a Foster Home Performance Review once the investigation is completed.
- 12.4 When a foster carer who is under investigation because of allegations about them or concerns about their fitness to practice as foster carer tenders their resignation, the fostering service (allocated fostering social worker) must write to them confirming that:
- their letter of resignation has been received which will take effect on dd/mm/yyyy (note: foster carer's resignation takes effect 28 days after it is tendered),

- they are aware that the foster carer is currently being investigated (add details) and that the investigation will continue and a report with the conclusion of the investigation will be put to the Fostering Panel and agency decision maker,
- that they will be given an opportunity to comment on the report, their views being taken on the allegations and concerns, however they cannot attend the Fostering Panel.
- where the allegation is substantiated and meets the threshold for referral, the findings will be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service, following discussion with the agency decision maker (Assistant Director) and included in any future reference or similar request. The foster carer is to be advised of this referral in writing.

12.4 Further the letter should confirm that their resignation will not prevent the investigation from continuing, and that, their resignation will preclude them from the right of appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism in the event that the agency reaches a decision that, had the carer not resigned, it would have been presenting a recommendation to the Panel to terminate their approval at the conclusion of the investigation.

## **13. Notifications to the Disclosure and Barring Service**

13.1 The local authority has a statutory duty under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#) and [Working Together](#), to report the foster carer(s) to the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) for consideration of barring the foster carer(s) from, or placing restrictions on them, working with children or young people, if:

- they have engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child or
- if the person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child, because they are considered unsuitable to work with children.

13.2 Referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service will usually be made by the Fostering Operations Manager who will ensure that a letter is sent to the carers explaining the process, including their right to make representation.

13.3 A foster carer's resignation will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate or a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service being made if appropriate.

## **14. The fostering services responsibilities towards foster carers subjected to POT, cause for concern and complaints procedures.**

- 14.1 The fostering social worker will ensure that the foster carers have a copy/access to the relevant safeguarding policies and procedures and information leaflet so that they can access support/legal advice as necessary.
- 14.2 The fostering social worker's role is to:
- Advise the foster carer(s) to seek support from the Fostering Network, Advice and Mediation Service;
  - Keep the foster carer(s) up-to-date with the progress of the investigation;
  - Keep the foster carer(s) up-to-date with any fostering matters if they are suspended;
  - Ensure that where foster carers are individual members of Fostering Network or Foster Talk they are accessing their own legal advice.

## **15. Support, foster carer entitlement and the financial arrangements for carers subject to investigation**

- 15.1 Foster carers who are the subject of an allegation, complaint or cause for concern must be offered support. Allegations, causes for concern or complaints are extremely stressful for foster carers and their families. At the end of an investigation, the fostering service will set a date for an Evaluation Meeting with the foster carer(s), to discuss the impact of the investigation on the foster family and whether as a consequence additional support is required.
- 15.2 As a result of the allegation where it is agreed by the operations manager of the social work team responsible for the child that the placement/s should end, but where the allegation is subject to further investigation or pending the decision from the investigation, the foster carers will continue to receive their skill level fostering fee per child in placement at the time of the allegation, for two weeks, where applicable. This will provide them with time to make any necessary changes to their financial arrangements.
- 15.3 Where the foster carer decides to end the placement pending the investigation but is not prevented from taking further placements despite there being an outstanding, allegation, cause for concern or complaint the foster carer will not



be entitled to the 2 weeks fee level payment as they are available for other placements.

- 15.4 Where the child/ren remains within the placement allowances and skill level payments will continue as usual although there is the possibility following the investigation that a recommendation will be made for a reduction in the skill level payment. In these circumstances the fee reduction/loss will take effect from the date of the agency decision maker's decision.
- 15.5 Throughout any investigation process foster carers may make a representation to the investigating social worker, or their managers about the conduct of the investigation or in order to seek clarification of the issue/s or process.
- 15.6 Foster carers may also access the [Complaints and Representation process](#). However, the allegation will need to be resolved before the foster carer(s) complaint can be taken forward. The foster carers are still approved during this period and should continue to access all services and support including training and support groups throughout until the approval status is resolved through the internal or Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) processes where applicable.
- 15.7 If a complaint or cause for concern has been made, but it is agreed that children in placement will remain with the foster carer while the investigation is being undertaken, or that further placements can be made, then a foster carer can continue to attend training and work on their QCF award and can continue as an assessor, mentor or internal verifier for the fostering service.

# Appendix A

## Cause for Concern Referral Form

Date referral received:	
Name of person taking referral with contact details:	
Name of person making referral and contact details:	
Name of foster carer subject of this referral:	
District fostering team supervising foster carer subject of this referral:	
Name of fostering social worker for the foster carer subject of this referral:	
Date forwarded to relevant fostering team leader with their name and contact details:	

### Details of referral

<p><i>(What is the concern – why is the person making the referral)</i></p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------

Date discussed by supervising fostering social worker:	
Date discussed by the fostering team leader:	
Date this discussed by the Operations Manager: (name alternative if used)	

## Outcome of discussions

1. No further action required: not to be recorded as formal Cause for Concern.

(Record of discussion with reasons for why no further action required)

2. Concern noted. To be resolved via discussion with foster carer or through supervision but not investigated as formal cause for concern. Foster carer to be advised of concern and that if further concerns of this nature are referred to fostering team, a formal cause for concern investigation may be initiated.

(Record of discussion with reasons and recommendations for dealing with matter)

3. Concern either of such significance or is a repeated concern that formal investigation to proceed.

(Record of discussion with instructions on how the investigation is to proceed. (see 4a 4 of full procedure)

Outcome of formal investigation including decisions made, recommendations for future use, approval, training support etc (see 4b of full procedure). Full record required.

**To be signed and dated by:**

Fostering Social Worker:	<b>Date:</b>
Fostering social worker undertaking investigation if different:	<b>Date:</b>
Fostering Team Manager:	<b>Date:</b>