

Review of Approval

June 2017

Introduction

Reviews are legal requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Approval is given to a named foster carer, but it also includes the suitability of the household. This means all the people who live there and the place itself. This applies to all foster carers, including support foster carers and family and friend foster carers.



In this section we talk about “the foster carer”, but it is important that you tell us about changes to the household as well; do not wait until your next review.

When do reviews happen?

All fostering agencies have to review the approval of each foster carer at least every 12 months.

We also have to review approval if:

- a partner leaves or joins the family
- the family’s circumstances change significantly
- a member of the household requests a review
- a complaint or allegation has been made against a member of the household
- you or any member of your family are cautioned or convicted of an offence
- we need to change the Terms of Approval.

What is the review of approval for?

Primarily the review is required to confirm your suitability to continue to act as a foster carer and the suitability of your household.

We are required to seek and take into account your views, the views of your own children, the views of children

placed with you, (subject to age and understanding) and the views of any authority which has placed a child with you.

The views of social workers for children placed with you since the last review will be sought and considered.

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The review will also decide whether the preferred terms of approval are still appropriate.

From our point of view it is an important opportunity to think about whether we are using your skills and capacity appropriately.

We can look at how your fostering has changed and developed over the year and also discuss what training and support you require.

It is also an opportunity to raise any concerns or questions and to look at your wishes for the future.

Process of reviewing

Usually a review meeting will be chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer, Fostering (IRO) and if convenient, held in your own home.

This is an opportunity to look together at how you have been able to meet the needs of looked after children and to look at the support we have been able to offer you. The review will aim to identify what has worked well, any

areas that may not have worked so well and any area for improvement. It is also an opportunity to reflect together on how fostering has impacted on you and your family.

We will discuss and record your views, along with a summary of your fostering activity, your capacity, future needs and wishes, and a recommendation about your continued approval.

Review decision

The first review, after one year of fostering, will always be considered by the fostering panel. In subsequent reviews, if there is a significant change of any kind, the fostering team manager and the service manager (fostering) will decide whether the changes need to be considered by the fostering panel.

This will always be the case if there is a proposal that your approval be terminated at the recommendation of the IRO.

If it is proposed to end your approval, you will be offered the opportunity to provide a written report to panel and attend panel if you wish.

You will be informed of the outcome of the panel and given a new Notice of Approval or a Notice of the Proposal to Terminate your Approval, after the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) has considered the panel recommendation.

Proposal to terminate approval

A foster carer may give notice at any time that he/she no longer wishes to act as a foster carer. The approval is automatically terminated with effect from 28 days from the date on which this written notice was received. (This can be via email.) There is no provision to extend this period or withdraw notice.

If the fostering panel makes the recommendation to terminate your approval due to concerns and this is supported by the agency decision maker, you will receive written notification and will be given 28 days to decide on three options:

(a) you may choose to accept the recommendation

or

(b) you may make representation to the ADM to refer the matter back to panel for further consideration

or

(c) you may ask for the Independent Review Mechanism (Fostering) to consider the proposal that your approval be terminated.

Independent Review Mechanism (Fostering)

The Independent Review Mechanism (Fostering) - IRM is a review process which prospective or existing foster carers can use when they disagree with a recommendation by their fostering service provider, that it does not propose to approve them as suitable to foster a child, or proposes to terminate their approval or change the terms of their approval.

It has always been possible to ask the agency's decision maker to review and re-consider their recommendation and this still applies, but the IRM now provides the option of having the case considered instead by an independent panel. It is not possible to do both. If you choose the IRM route, prospective or existing foster carers will have to apply to the IRM within 28 working days from the date of the letter from the agency decision maker.



Independent review panels

There are four panels and their membership is very similar to fostering panels and consists of a chairperson and vice chairperson, two social workers who have direct experience of fostering, two lay members who are or have recently been foster carers, and four other lay members. These four will have related experience, such as teachers, psychologists or retired social workers, for example.

The panel also has a professional adviser and will receive written reports from the legal adviser and medical adviser. If there is a medical issue, the medical adviser may also attend panel.

Applicants are invited to attend and the agency is asked to send two representatives, which would usually include the applicants' social worker. The documents that were provided for

the original panel will form the basis for panel's discussion, but applicants and the agency can submit additional information for consideration.

The panel is expected to consider the case afresh and make a recommendation in the same way as any fostering panel. It is not an appeal panel, nor does it carry any higher authority which can overrule the agency decision maker. However, the agency decision maker must give serious consideration to the IRM panel's recommendation alongside the recommendation of the original panel before making a final decision, and give very clear reasons for the decision.

Further details about the IRM can be found on the website:

www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

Renewing reference checks

From time to time, the statutory reference checks which were completed at the time of your approval need to be updated by all your household members over the age of 18.

We update the Declaration of Health and Suitability annually and ask for GP, Child health Unit and Disclosure and Barring Service checks, (formerly CRB checks), every three years.

Access to information

You have the right to see information we hold about your Approval, Review or Termination of Approval, except for confidential information provided by

other agencies or persons who have not given consent for this to be shared with you.