

Fostering Annual Review Procedure

ISP

The procedure details the annual review process for foster parents approved by ISP. It sets the procedure in the context of relevant legislation, standards and guidance and should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Panel and Approval Procedure and other associated procedures.

The purpose of an annual review is to consider whether the foster parent and their household continues to be suitable and whether the terms of their approval continues to be appropriate.

The review is a key part of our approach to quality assurance. It provides an opportunity to demonstrate that the quality of care provided by the foster parent meets the expected standards. It will consider their fostering experience and their commitment to grow and develop their skills to meet the needs of the children and young people whom they care for.

The review considers any significant changes in the household and support network, and their impact on the foster parent's performance, training and support needs. We invite our foster parents to provide feedback during the review about the quality of support and supervision they have received from us. Such information can then be used to inform and develop the training strategy of the agency as whole.

The purpose of this procedure is to inform quality of practice in all aspects of the review process. The procedure provides a framework for compliance with regulations and national minimum standards and for undertaking an effective evaluation of foster parent's suitability in safeguarding and promoting positive outcomes for children. When writing reports for annual reviews and conducting annual review meetings, managers and staff will ensure that the process is open, fair and balanced and includes the foster parent's views.

This document sets out procedures and practice guidance for the operation and conduct of all annual reviews. The procedure applies to foster parents, registered managers, supervising social workers, fostering social workers, the Foster Care Services Manager, independent social workers, fostering administrators and panel members.

Timing of reviews

Annual reviews must take place within 12 months of initial approval and thereafter every 12 months (Fostering Service Regulations 2011 (England) (28. (1) & (2)). This 12-month period is calculated from the date of the last review meeting. An annual review is therefore considered to have been completed at the point that the review meeting takes place.

Regulations state the fostering service provider is permitted to undertake a review of a foster parent's suitability at any time it considers it necessary. ISP will convene an early review if we consider this necessary or if the foster parent requests this.

Note: There will be times during a foster parent's approval where staff may want to delay a review – perhaps because a foster parent is seriously ill or there is currently an allegation against them. The regulations do not, however, allow for such a delay. We will therefore hold a review as appropriately and sensitively as possible and then consider the need for a further review once the issue causing difficulty has been resolved. Where this review is a first review this will include presenting the review to panel.

Circumstances which may trigger an early review

The Fostering Service Regulations do not distinguish between types of review. However, while most reviews will take place within the usual 12-month time scale, a review may be undertaken early. The following circumstances may result in an early review:

Following a serious complaint or allegation against the foster parent or a member of their household.

If the complaint is not upheld or the allegation is unsubstantiated, the registered manager may decide to undertake an early review.

Where there is a temporary change in household membership

Placing authorities should be informed of the proposed length of stay in the household.

Potential risks and impact for children placed must be considered. Safer Care Plans must be updated for the family and the individual children to reflect these changes.

If the impact of the change is considered to be significant, an early review may be undertaken.

Significant changes in circumstances for the fostering household

Significant changes, e.g. to household composition, the health of family members, new relationships or bereavement may require an early review.

At the request of the foster parent

A foster parent might request an early review if they wish to change their terms of approval.

N.B. If the previous review of approval was within the last 6 months, a review will not be necessary (unless the foster parent is within their first year of fostering), and a request to amend the terms of approval will be made to the agency Decision Maker instead.

Where there are concerns, the early review may be a 'full review of approval' which considers the foster parent's full fostering history in addition to the previous year.

The decision to undertake a full review of approval will be informed by the supervising social worker's ongoing supervision of foster parents, and monitoring of significant events. Supervising social workers must share any concerns with their line manager to enable appropriate management oversight and decision-making. The Registered Manager retains discretion in all cases.

The circumstances in which a full review of approval may be convened are as described below.

Following a serious complaint or allegation against the foster parent or a member of their household.

Sufficient time should be allowed for the conclusion of any investigation, the preparation and collation of reports or feedback, whilst avoiding delay or drift. A full review of approval should be undertaken if the complaint is upheld or the allegation is substantiated.

Where there are persistent concerns about standards of care or the conduct or professionalism of the foster parent

The Registered Manager may wish to consider calling a full review of approval where issues or concerns have not been resolved through supervision or other meetings.

A routine foster parent review might identify concerns that call for a full review of approval.

The outcome of Standards of Care investigation may be to conduct a full review of approval.

Panel may recommend a full review of approval.

Circumstances that require referral to the fostering panel following the annual review

Under Regulation 28 (5) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 (England) all 'first' annual reviews following initial approval are referred to the fostering panel for their consideration.

In addition, reviews must be referred to Panel when:

The agency wants to make a change to the foster parent's terms of approval and the foster parent is not in agreement with this.

There has been a significant change affecting the fostering household and a new Form F assessment has been undertaken.

When a review has been held following a serious complaint or allegation.

On a 4-yearly basis, to enable Panel to monitor the quality of annual reviews. The review will be heard by the Panel and this will take the place of the usual meeting.

There are other circumstances where a return to Panel is not a requirement but constitutes good practice - for example where a review has been held following the conclusion of a standards of care investigation.

Form F Updates/ new Form F assessments

Generally, the annual review process and reports are the way in which the agency updates the foster parent's record. However, there are circumstances in which a Form F update, or a new Form F assessment may be undertaken:

Where an existing foster parent indicates that their new partner wishes to join the household, the new partner will be assessed to become an approved foster parent and a new Form F assessment will be undertaken for the family. If either the existing foster parent or their new partner will not give consent to undertake the above, this will impact the foster parent's approval as the agency will not be able to effectively assess the suitability of the household.

Where a couple who had fostered together separate, and one foster parent wishes to continue fostering alone, the Form F must be updated. The Form F assessment is frequently used to inform local authorities about foster parents when they are seeking placements, and a document that contains information about somebody who is no longer fostering could not be shared.

In situations where one partner in a fostering household has died, the Form F will be updated if the surviving partner continues to foster.

Where a new child is born/adopted into the family.

Following safeguarding concerns that have been resolved. The update will provide a full explanation of the concerns and work undertaken by the foster parent to move forward with fostering.

If the Form F is considered to be out of date and no longer reflects the foster parent's circumstances, skills and experiences.

The Registered Manager will make the final decision on whether a Form F update is required.

Form F updates will be undertaken at a local level and presented to panel at the first available panel meeting following completion of the update.

The review process

The fostering administrator co-ordinates the review process, ensuring that reviews occur within the required timescales. Their tasks include:

- Maintaining a record of review dates and initiating the review process.
- Commissioning an independent social worker (ISW) to undertake the review.
- Requesting feedback from all relevant parties.
- Maintaining communication throughout the process with the independent social worker, fostering social worker and staff at the regional ISP centre to ensure compliance with timescales and deadlines.
- Maintaining the CHARMS record of the review.
- Sharing the review paperwork with the foster parent after the QA process, in good time for the review meeting or Panel.
- Scheduling and organising the review meeting.
- Taking the minutes of the review meeting.
- Informing all relevant parties of the outcome of the review.

Preparation for the review by the regional ISP centre

Through the supervision process, the supervising social worker maintains an oversight of all aspects of the fostering household and maintains appropriate checks, references and recording when periodic updates are required. They will notify the registered manager of any changes to the household that might require an early review. The Supervising Social Worker is responsible for ensuring that the Foster Parent Profiles is kept up to date with any changes, as children will be matched to foster families based on current and significant information.

The supervising social worker develops and maintains the family's Personal Development Plan (PDP) and oversees their care of the children through regular supervision. In preparation for the review, the supervising social worker will update the PDP although there may be occasions where this is supported by the ISW completing the review.

The supervising social worker will update the children's risk assessments/safer care plans and provide feedback for the review. Their feedback will include observations and comments about the foster parent's relationships with children; any known feedback from children; observations and comments about the foster parent's relationship with their supervising social worker and other professionals, including their receptiveness to guidance and advice.

Feedback may also be provided by other members of the regional ISP centre team, including the fostering advisor, advisory teacher and co-ordinating therapist.

Feedback should ordinarily refer to the previous year of fostering, unless reflecting on ongoing issues. Where feedback refers to concerns, the foster parent should already be aware of the issues; it is not appropriate for concerns to be raised in the first instance through

feedback for a review of approval. Any concerns raised must be evidence-based, communicated in respectful language and highlight the support that is being provided or proposed to improve practice.

The QA process should bring any concerns that have been raised in feedback to the attention of the Registered Manager who will ensure that these concerns are already known and are/have been subject to an action plan. The Registered Manager oversees feedback *provided by ISP staff* and has the discretion to withdraw aspects of this feedback that are deemed to be inappropriate, for management through other procedures (e.g. those relating to practice concerns, complaints and allegations).

Preparation for the review by the foster parent

The fostering/centre administrator sends feedback forms to the foster parent for them to complete in preparation for the review. The form asks them to reflect on their practice in relation to Secure Base (being available, responding sensitively, accepting the child, co-operative care-giving, promoting family membership). They will be able to draw on discussions from supervision in identifying evidence to illustrate their Secure Base practice.

Feedback from outside agencies

The fostering administrator sends requests for feedback to the local authority social workers for all children who have been in placement during the review period, including those who left the home during the review period.

Requests for feedback might also be made to young people's education providers. These requests may be made by the fostering administrator, or by the advisory teacher.

Children's feedback

When the fostering administrator sends the foster parent their feedback form, they include forms for the children and young people to complete. These forms are available in an electronic format, or on paper.

The children's feedback forms provide one method for gaining children's views, but these can be used flexibly as required to meet the needs of the child. Consideration needs to be given to who supports the child in giving their feedback and there may be situations where it is appropriate to offer an independent advocate where, for example, the child's placement has been fragile, or they have not formed trusting relationships with their foster parent/s and relevant staff.

The local authority social worker must also be invited to provide feedback from the child.

The ISW also has a lead role to play in obtaining feedback, and some children will be more comfortable discussing how they feel rather than completing a form. The ISW can use the

feedback questions to encourage a child to express their views and feelings. For children in their early years, or who have communication difficulties, ISWs can use their skills to obtain their feedback through open-ended questions and observations of interaction with foster parents during visits.

In relation to children with disabilities, and children for whom English is a second language there is an expectation that the ISW will liaise with the child's social worker to find the most appropriate means of supporting the child to enable them to communicate and/or for interpreters to be used. This should be judged on a case by case basis.

Feedback deadlines

It is important that the ISW who is conducting the review receives feedback at the start of the review process to inform their enquiries and discussions with the foster parent. The fostering/centre administrator will send feedback requests before commissioning an ISW to undertake the review, and set a deadline for completion to ensure that the ISW receives feedback as early as possible.

When received, the fostering administrator will upload feedback to the CHARMS record. ISP staff in Kent will give their feedback directly on the foster parent's CHARMS record.

The Registered Manager will be notified if staff feedback has not been received by the deadline. They will, at this point, be responsible for ensuring that staff provide immediate feedback.

The ISW who is conducting the review is expected to be proactive in obtaining feedback and should attempt to make contact by telephone if email/postal communication has been unsuccessful.

Preparation and content of the review report

The Independent Social Worker (ISW) will be given access to the foster parent's CHARMS record for the duration of the review process. They will audit the status of all relevant checks (DBS, LA, medical), unannounced visit, risk assessments, safer caring plans, and the family's PDP. Any gaps in checks will be notified to the supervising social worker immediately, to ensure that they are addressed in advance of the review meeting.

Unannounced visits should not routinely be completed just prior to the review as it is important to demonstrate that such visits are 'unexpected' and could take place throughout the review period. The frequency of unannounced visits will depend on individual circumstances such as complaints, allegations or standards of care or issues relating to particular children placed. There must be a minimum of one unannounced visit annually, but we will ordinarily conduct two.

For first reviews, the ISW will reflect back on the original panel minutes to assess whether any of the questions raised by panel have been evident, and how these have been managed through supervision. The report should reference the foster parent's motivation and level of engagement in completing the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) within their first year of approval.

For subsequent reviews, the ISW will consider the recommendations from the last review and identify any outstanding actions.

In addition, the ISW will need to review and collate the following information to inform the report and review meeting:

- Children placed in the review period, with a focus on transitions and endings.
- Issues raised and discussed in supervision.
- Details of any complaints, allegations or standard of care investigations including outcome.
- The foster parent's training record, with a particular focus on whether they have completed mandatory training and training specific for the needs of any children placed.
- The quality of the foster parent's record keeping, including their daily log (see GDPR).
- Feedback from young people, the supervising social worker, fostering advisor, registered manager, ISP advisory teacher, ISP therapist, children's social workers and children's education providers.

The ISW will update the household Health and Safety Checklist, identifying any requirements and recommendations and will review the household Safer Care Plan to ensure that it is up to date. They will also review the foster parent's use of social media and parental controls within the home.

If requested, the ISW may assist the supervising social worker in updating the family's Personal Development Plan (PDP) in line with the outcomes of the review. The supervising social worker has overall responsibility for the development and maintenance of the PDP.

The ISW should prepare their review report in consultation with the foster parent in keeping with the principle of there being 'no surprises' in the content of the report. Any shortfall in standards identified should be discussed with the foster parent prior to the review meeting. This ensures that the review process is open and transparent and that the foster parent has the opportunity to contribute their views in relation to the report and feedback provided by relevant parties for the review. It is anticipated that in the majority of cases, discussions with the foster parent will be positive. The ISW will support the foster parent in gathering the information and evidence required for the review e.g. prompting them to recall examples of how care has been provided and helping them reflect on situations and events to consider how they may develop their practice and learn from these.

Where a review follows an allegation and the Designated Officer (or equivalent) in the local authority or trust has requested that the agency undertake an internal investigation, the Investigation Report should be included in the pack presented to panel. This report is structured to provide an effective summary of the relevant events, concerns, actions and outcomes for panel and the ADM.

Where a change to terms of approval is proposed, the review report must provide a rationale for the proposed change, accompanied by details of any additional areas of support arising from this and how these will be met. The foster parent must sign the Approval to Proposed Change in Terms of Approval form to indicate their agreement to this change.

Overall, the ISW must ensure that their report is factual, balanced, and evidence-based in its portrayal of the review year. Whilst it is important that concerns or issues are addressed in reports, it is also important that the report details the whole review period fairly and should not focus solely on incidents or concerns. The review report should reference and analyse all feedback received. The ISW must use this evidence to arrive at recommendations regarding ongoing suitability, terms of approval and any other required actions.

Quality Assurance of Review Reports

The review report will be quality-assured by the Fostering Social Worker or other manager who line-manages the ISW. They will use the Quality Assurance Checklist to quality assure the report. The checklist is for internal use only to reflect management oversight and quality assurance processes and therefore does not form part of the review pack.

The QA process should check:

- The presentation of the report is appropriate (e.g. accuracy of facts, grammar, use of language, signatures).
- Designated timescales have been met.
- That the report is an accurate and balanced reflection of the foster parent's review period.
- That the voice of the foster parent and child is reflected in the reports.
- Any additional reports have been completed e.g. Parent and Child Assessment.
- The health and safety checklist has been updated and any required actions identified.
- The family safer care plan has been updated.
- The PDP is appropriate and up to date.
- All necessary comments and contributions have been requested and taken into account with appropriate comment and analysis where there are any gaps in feedback.
- That any concerns raised in feedback are already known to the Registered Manager.
- That there is a properly evidenced summary, recommendations and support plan regarding approval and any recommended changes in terms of approval.

The fostering social worker will notify the registered manager and supervising social worker of any compliance issues that require immediate action prior to the review meeting.

In situations where the foster parent has indicated their disagreement with some of the report content, the fostering social worker will decide whether the report content is fair, balanced and evidence-based or whether the content should be amended. The views of the foster parent will be recorded and discussed at the review meeting.

If the ISW has concerns about the foster parent's continuing approval and is recommending a full review of approval (to consider wider practice since the date of first approval) or a termination of approval, the Fostering Social Worker will direct the review to be considered at Panel. The Fostering Social Worker can also take this decision during the QA process. The Panel meeting will constitute the review meeting.

The first foster parent review is presented to Panel, and this also constitutes the review meeting. This is repeated on a four-yearly basis.

Annual Review Meetings

Review meetings will ordinarily be chaired by the Fostering Social Worker (the Centre Manager in Hampshire & Dorset). However, in situations where the review is expected to be complex/contentious, or if the foster parent requests it, the review will be chaired by a manager.

The supervising social worker, ISW and foster parent/s must attend the review meeting. The fostering advisor may also attend. An administrator will attend to take the minutes of the meeting.

Role and responsibility of the annual review meeting chair

The key roles and responsibilities of the chair are:

- To critically read in full the review paperwork prior to the review meeting.
- To identify key areas for discussion and note these in relation to the review summary document headings.
- To chair the meeting in an inclusive manner to support full participation by the foster parent - whilst balancing this with a rigorous approach to evidence and analysis.
- To discuss and where possible agree a properly evidenced summary, actions and recommendations, drawing on key areas identified in the review reports and during the review meeting.
- Where views and recommendations cannot be agreed upon these should be reflected in the review summary document, noting any further required actions linked to this.
- To accurately record the recommended 'terms of approval' in line with agency procedure.

Efforts should be made to schedule annual reviews at times and venues that enable both foster parents to attend. In circumstances where one foster parent cannot attend the review meeting, their views and comments must be reflected in the review report.

The review meeting must be conducted in an open and transparent way. The purpose of the meeting is to draw together all the available evidence to assess the ongoing suitability of the foster parent and their household. This should include whether all the fostering standards, outcomes and competencies have been met, any actions required to address a shortfall, and any issues emerging from statutory checks.

The meeting also provides an opportunity for the foster parent to raise any points of disagreement with the content of any report prepared for the review, and to share their experience of fostering with ISP.

An administrator (or appointed person) will take the minutes of the meeting, and record points of discussion and outcomes in the Foster Parent Review Meeting Report.

Any issues and areas of disagreement that do not fall within the remit or purpose of the review meeting (e.g. in relation to foster parent fees), and therefore cannot be resolved on the day, will be recorded in the review meeting report. The report will identify a timescale and person responsible for taking forward the foster parent's concerns.

The foster parent will sign the following documents to confirm their agreement with the contents:

1. The Independent Social Worker's Report
2. The PDP
3. The review recommendation sheet
4. The Change of Approval form (if used)

These can be signed in person, or electronically on CHARMS.

Agency Decision Making Process

The agency is responsible for deciding whether to approve or re-approve foster parents. Decisions arising from reviews, including those involving the fostering panel's consideration of cases and subsequent recommendations regarding approval, rests with the designated Agency Decision Maker (ADM). The ADM must base their decision on all the information available to them.

The ADM cannot consider the review recommendations until the review recommendation sheet (and Change of Approval Form if used) has been signed by all parties. Therefore, the RM should be notified of any difficulties and take appropriate action.

Agency Decision Making – routine reviews

ADMs will use the Review ADM Decision template to evidence agency decisions and qualifying determinations.

Where changes to terms of approval have been requested, the ADM must have regard to appropriate evidence or rationale for the change being requested, that signatures have been obtained to demonstrate the foster parent's agreement to this, that any additional needs arising from the proposed change have been identified and that a plan is in place for how these will be met. Where the ADM has had discussions following the review meeting to clarify or update information to inform their decision, the details of these should be recorded on the ADM record.

If the ADM identifies gaps in the foster parent's compliance or evidence of their ability to satisfy the TSDS or fostering standards, but this does not, in their judgment, warrant refusal of re-approval, the ADM should highlight the shortfalls and indicate the actions required to remedy this.

Where such gaps or concerns apply, the ADM could specify that a full review of approval is scheduled and what the actions and focus of work should be with the foster parent to address these issues. In these circumstances effective oversight and monitoring by the supervising social worker and registered manager is essential.

Examples of such gaps and shortfalls could include: take up of learning and development opportunities; timeliness and quality of recording; relationships with professionals; and unplanned endings.

Where the foster parent is in agreement to a proposed change of approval, and has signed the Review Meeting Report to confirm their agreement, and the ADM subsequently confirms this in their decision, the change may take effect immediately following confirmation by the ADM decision in writing.

Note: Refer to the Panel and Approval Procedure for further details.

Once the Review ADM Decision template has been uploaded to Charms, the supervising social worker and their line manager should review the content to ensure any actions that have been identified by the ADM are followed up in supervision to ensure they are addressed in a timely manner.

Agency Decision Making – Non Routine Reviews (Representations/Terminations/Contested Changes of Terms of Approval)

A foster parent review may result in a recommendation being made to terminate or change terms of approval. The review may have been held early due to significant concerns being raised about the foster parent or significant changes in the circumstances of the foster parent.

If the ADM agrees with the recommendation, and the foster parent is not in agreement, then the ADM must issue a 'Qualifying Determination', and the foster parent has 28 days in which to either appeal to the panel for a review of their recommendation, or appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The foster parent can only take one of these decisions. If no representation is received from the foster parent within 28 days then their approval will be terminated, or the required changes applied.

If an application is made to the IRM, the IRM panel will review the Qualifying Determination and make a recommendation about whether they should remain approved. They may also choose to make a recommendation regarding the terms of the approval. If the IRM does not uphold the ADM's decision, they will ask the ADM to reconsider. However, the IRM has no legal jurisdiction and the final decision remains the ADM's.

Review reports will usually be required by the IRM for consideration (although not the minutes of panel that considered the review); and the chair of the review meeting may also be required to attend the IRM (along with the ISW) to represent the agency. The IRM aims to complete each case within 3 months of receiving an application.

The IRM may also highlight learning for the agency following review of a case. It is therefore very important that information and reports sent to the IRM are carefully checked for completeness and accuracy, and that the Registered Manager signs off the IRM pack before it is submitted.

Advocacy/support for foster parents

Where a foster parent is subject to a serious complaint or allegation, or where a recommendation is made to vary or terminate the foster parent's approval without their agreement, ISP will fund support and advocacy for them from an independent service. The independent advisor will be invited to attend review meetings and/or Panel with the foster parent.

The role of the independent advisor is to:

- Give emotional support
- Provide information and advice to the foster parents about key processes.
- Assist the foster parent in preparing for meetings and attending with the foster parent.

Independent advisors can only attend with, not instead of the foster parent. Their function is to support the foster parent in expressing their views; and not to give their own individual views or opinions. They are not allowed to question the Panel. This role can also be facilitated by a union representative or a friend/family member.

Similar assistance is available to foster parents who may choose to make representations to the IRM about qualifying determinations issued by the ADM.

Such support would normally commence after the originating review recommendation and cease at the conclusion of the process.

Terms of approval

Government guidance and regulations (The Children Act 1989 Volume 4: Fostering Services) form the basis of the agency's approach to foster parent approval. Whilst technically this guidance does not require a fostering agency to set terms of approval, the agency believes that it would be inappropriate to approve foster parents without terms of approval.

Terms of approval are individual and always specific to the foster parent's circumstances, skills and experience. These are identified in the assessment or review report. The approach taken by the agency is based on extending the approval terms to cover all reasonable eventualities, rather than seeking to describe the ideal match. The agency uses specified approval terms (as detailed below) for foster parents that are based on their individual circumstances, such as: skills, competence, experience, bedroom availability, capacity to care etc.

The terms of approval are specified as:

- Short Term
- Long Term
- Parent and Child Placements
- Respite-only
- Maximum number of placements (unless siblings) *
- Age Range (should be 0-18, or 5-18, unless there are particular circumstances that would require a more restrictive age range)
- Gender (should be 'any' with requirement that approval for one gender only is specifically evidenced – otherwise it will be a matching decision)

**N.B.1 if the bedroom is clearly not suitable for more than one child the words in brackets (unless siblings) may be omitted.*

N.B.2 The total number of children in a sibling group should be stated, e.g. '3 children (or 5 as a sibling group)'.

The usual fostering limit is 3 children (unless they are all siblings). Exemptions to this limit require the approval of the local authority in which the foster parent resides.

In the event of an exemption being required, ISP will send an exemption request form to the local authority. An emergency exemption of up to 6 working days requires no changes to the foster parent's terms of approval, but should the placement be expected to extend beyond this duration, an interim paper review is required, which must be approved by the Decision

Maker. The exemption must be recorded on Charms as 'exemption from usual fostering limit', and the request form and the decision of the agency Decision Maker uploaded alongside.

Any exemption granted and still active, will be reviewed at the next foster parent review, the date of which is not changed by the paper review.

Terms of approval should name the children placed under an agreed exemption, e.g. 'approved for 3 children plus [name of child] under an agreed exemption'.

See Polaris Exemptions Practice Advice Note, and ISP procedure checklist (exemptions to terms of approval) for more details.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018

The GDPR applies to any 'personal' data that is kept about an identifiable person. The regulations have introduced new requirements that organisations will be accountable for in how personal data is stored; how it is shared and with whom; and who has access to it.

As foster parents have significant access to information about children and their families, and their day to day role entails the storage, creation, and transmission of information about children; it is important that foster parents understand their role and responsibilities under GDPR. The Foster Care Agreement has been updated to reflect these changes, and to ensure foster parents are aware of what is required of them by the agency. These requirements are very similar to what has gone before, but are more specific about safe storage, and return of children's information to the agency once a child has left the home.

ISWs are therefore required, as part of their evaluation of foster parents' 'ongoing suitability' to discuss with foster parents how they are meeting these requirements. ISWs are not expected to necessarily physically check foster parents' electronic devices, but to have a conversation with foster parents to act as a 'health check' and reminder (this includes a social media check). The supervising social worker will also discuss these issues on an ongoing basis with the foster parents during supervision. For the purposes of the annual review, ISWs need to have sufficient knowledge of how foster parents store and manage children's data that they can evidence this in their report. Any issues that have arisen in relation to this can be identified and actions or support needed to develop or improve this area of the foster parent's practice can be included in the recommendations from the review.

All sensitive data such as medicals, references and any associated documents relating to any review that uniquely identifies an individual foster parent must be uploaded securely to the Charms system and the original should then be destroyed in line with GDPR guidelines. Original documents must not be stored, filed or retained in any way. Please refer to the Data Protection Policy for further guidance.

Documents relevant to this procedure

Charms Ref	Document name
8720	Independent Social Worker Report for Annual Review
8438	ISP Full Review of Approval Template
8540	Fostering Annual Review Meeting Report
8515	Agreement to Proposed Change in Terms of Approval
8546	ISP Quality Assurance Checklist for Annual Review
7759	Form F Quality Assurance Checklist
5941	Form F Update Quality Assurance Checklist
1776	Review ADM Decision Template Review recommendation sheet (for signatures)
5453	Investigation Report
8913	Young Person's Feedback Form (13-18 years)
8912	Child Feedback Form (0-12 years)
9235	Fostering Annual Review Feedback Form (for foster parents)
9237	Review feedback form for ISP regional centre staff
9236	LASW feedback form
2752	Personal Development Plan
8712	Safer Care Plan
8708	Individual Risk Assessment Safer Care Plan
8713	Generic Safer Care Strategy
8520	ISP Health and Safety checklist

References

- [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards \(England\) 2011](#)
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Independent Review Mechanism \(England\)](#)
- [TSD Standards - Guidance for Supervisors](#)
- [Induction Framework for Foster Parents - Guide for Managers and Supervisors](#)
- [GDPR](#)