
Foster Carer Reviews and the Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for Placements.



Foster Carer reviews are governed by regulation and require an assessment of whether a Foster Carer and their household remain suitable to care for Foster Children and if their terms of approval are still appropriate.

As a Foster Carer for Hertfordshire, your Annual Review will be completed by a Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering Team. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the past year and identify areas of strength and development. As part of your Annual Review, feedback will be sought from involved professionals and your comments and views must be included. Your Supervising Social Worker and the Fostering Team Manager will make a recommendation regarding your continued approval and this recommendation will be endorsed by the Agency Decision maker.

There are specific reasons when an Independent Review is required. Your Supervising Social Worker will inform you if this is the case and talk you through the process. You will be allocated a Placement IRO who is part of Independent Review Team and works within the Quality Assurance, Improvement and Practice Service.



Reasons for an Independent Review:

- Following an allegation made by, or about a child you have cared for.
- When there are concerns about the standard of care offered in the placement.
- Following the disruption of a long-term matched placement in some circumstances.
- If there has been a complaint or concern raised regarding your practice as a Foster Carer.
- If you as the Foster Carer have raised a complaint or concern about the Fostering Service.
- If there are concerns regarding your compliance with regulations and standards, or your ability as a Foster Carer to continue to meet the competencies required, and expectations set out by Hertfordshire Fostering Service.
- Independent Reviewing Officers may also complete random sample reviews, first reviews, oversight of specialist reviews, and at the request of the service.

An Independent Review meeting will be scheduled with you. This meeting will include your Supervising Social Worker or a representative from the Fostering Service.

Foster Carers can be offered independent support by someone outside of the Fostering Service who can attend this meeting and the subsequent panel. There is clear guidance on this role, and further information about this is available from your Fostering Team.

The IRO will have had sight of the Fostering Review report ahead of the meeting and will have prepared questions to address any areas which require further exploration. This is not an investigation; the purpose is to review a Foster Carers' approval following any issues or concerns raised and aims to support a shared transparent understanding.

The IRO will chair the meeting and will also provide an opportunity for you to share your views, experiences, and any concerns you may have about the service you or the child/ren you care for have received. Based on information in the records and reports, and the Review meeting, the IRO will form a balanced view and make an independent recommendation to panel.



The recommendations available to the IRO include:

- Continued approval under the existing terms
- Changes to the terms of approval
- Termination of approval

Specific action plans with clear targets can also be made to support practice improvements and learning for the service.

Timescales

Following an allegation which has been heard by LADO, the IRO Review meeting should be held within 28 days of the conclusion of the enquiry. The Fostering Review report should be shared with the IRO and Foster Carers a minimum of 7 days prior to the Review meeting, and should include feedback from the child, birth children, relevant professionals and represent the Carers views.

In the event of a recommendation to terminate approval, Foster Carers need 28 days right to reply before panel. Foster Carers can submit their views in writing up to 5 days before panel via their SSW, and can also give verbal feedback on the day of panel.

In all cases, Panel make a recommendation which goes to the Agency Decision Maker to take a decision on behalf of the Service. Information on the panel process and how to appeal is available from the Fostering Service.



