

County Fostering Services

Safeguarding Children & Young People



COUNTY
FOSTERING SERVICES

Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns

Scope of this Chapter

This chapter explains the procedure to be followed where there are concerns that a child placed with a foster carer approved by County Fostering Services has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. It should be read in conjunction with the Information Sharing and Confidentiality Procedure.

Where there are concerns that a child in placement has, or is likely to suffer Significant Harm as a result of the actions of a foster carer, member of staff, volunteer, or any person working on behalf of County Fostering Services, see the Managing Allegations Against Staff and Foster Carers Procedure.

All County Fostering Services staff and foster carers are made aware of these procedures for responding to concerns about the safety and welfare of a child, and these procedures must be followed in all cases.

When a child is placed with foster carers, they will be provided with all relevant contact details, including those of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), their Supervising Social Worker, the child's social worker, and details of who to contact outside standard office hours. Contact information can also be found within Local Resources.

Local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures

Staff and foster carers must follow the safeguarding procedures of the local authority area in which the child resides and any applicable local safeguarding partnership procedures.

Regulations and Standards

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

- Regulation 11 – Independent Fostering Agencies: Duty to Secure Welfare
- Regulation 12 – Arrangements for the Protection of Children

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards

- Standard 4 – Safeguarding Children

Related Guidance

- Information Sharing and Confidentiality Procedure
- Managing Allegations Against Staff and Foster Carers Procedure
- Recognising Abuse and Neglect Procedure
- Missing Children Procedure
- Safer Care Practice and Personal Care Procedure
- Internet, Photographs and Mobile Phones Procedure
- Positive Relationships and Behaviour Support Procedure
- Risk Assessment and Planning Procedure
- Self-Harm and Suicidal Behaviour Procedure
- Radicalisation and Violent Extremism Procedure

1. Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and in particular protecting them from abuse and harm, is everyone's responsibility and depends on effective joint working between staff, foster carers, and partner agencies. County Fostering Services is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people placed in our care so that they can experience a healthy, happy childhood free from abuse and neglect.

The local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and to investigate and take action where there are concerns that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

All staff and foster carers have a responsibility to report any concerns of abuse or neglect and to take all allegations seriously. Concerns should be reported to the DSL, a manager, the child's social worker, Police, Ofsted, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or the NSPCC as appropriate.

The procedures in this chapter are mandatory and any failure to comply with them may be addressed through appropriate disciplinary or professional procedures.

County Fostering Services will ensure that arrangements are in place for staff, foster

carers, and children placed through the service to be provided with contact details for the relevant local authority and Ofsted for the purpose of raising concerns about child welfare or safety. Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231.

1.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

County Fostering Services has appointed Ryan Archer as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The DSL is responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements within the service and providing advice, guidance and support to staff and foster carers regarding safeguarding concerns.

The DSL will ensure that safeguarding concerns are appropriately assessed, recorded, referred and monitored, and that effective liaison takes place with Children's Social Care, the Police, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Ofsted and other relevant agencies where required.

In the absence of the DSL, safeguarding concerns must be reported to the Registered Manager or nominated deputy, who will undertake the responsibilities of the DSL until they are available.

2. Proactive Safeguarding Practice

County Fostering Services sets high expectations to ensure that children feel safe, are safe, understand how to protect themselves, and are protected from significant harm.

This includes protection from:

- Neglect;
- Physical abuse;
- Emotional abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE);
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE);
- County Lines activity;
- Bullying;
- Self-harm;
- Domestic abuse;
- Forced marriage;
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);

- Online abuse and cyberbullying;
- Radicalisation and extremism;
- Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and all other forms of discrimination.

Any discriminatory behaviour must be challenged and children supported to understand respect, diversity and inclusion. Foster carers are prepared and supported to recognise safeguarding risks and respond appropriately. Children are provided with regular opportunities to speak to a trusted adult independently of their foster carers and are encouraged to share worries or concerns.

County Fostering Services promotes a culture of openness, listening and professional curiosity. When children raise concerns, adults must listen carefully, take concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

Care and placement planning must identify known risks and vulnerabilities, including risks associated with:

- Missing from care episodes;
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE);
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE);
- County Lines activity;
- Gang affiliation;
- Drug and alcohol misuse;
- Self-harm and suicidal ideation;
- Online safety concerns;
- Radicalisation and extremism;
- Serious youth violence;
- Domestic abuse.

Risk assessments must be current, proportionate and regularly reviewed. Foster carers must be fully informed of relevant risks and safeguarding strategies.

Children must be helped to understand how to keep themselves safe both within and outside the home environment, including when using the internet, social media and digital technology.

County Fostering Services and foster carers work effectively with local authorities, education providers, health services, Police

and other safeguarding partners to protect children and promote their welfare.

Where concerns do not meet statutory safeguarding thresholds but indicate emerging needs, consideration should be given to Early Help support and multi-agency intervention to prevent escalation.

3. Reporting Concerns or Allegations

The following procedures apply where there are no concerns or allegations against foster carers, staff, volunteers or other representatives of County Fostering Services. Where such concerns exist, staff must refer to the Managing Allegations Against Staff and Foster Carers Procedure.

3.1 Reporting Concerns and Allegations

Any child protection concern must be shared immediately with the placing and/or host local authority and a record of the referral retained.

Any concerns regarding the abuse or neglect of a child placed with foster carers approved by County Fostering Services must be reported promptly to:

- The child's allocated social worker;
- The foster carer's Supervising Social Worker; and
- The DSL.

Outside office hours, the relevant Children's Social Care Out of Hours Service should be contacted.

Allegations that another child, visitor, family member, community member, professional, teacher, parent or any other person has harmed a child in placement must also be reported immediately.

Historical or non-recent abuse concerns must be reported in the same way. No assumption should be made that concerns have already been investigated or addressed.

All actions taken and information received must be fully recorded by the foster carer and relevant staff members.

3.2 Emergency Action

Where there is an immediate risk to a child, foster carers must take any necessary action to protect the child, including contacting emergency services where appropriate.

If a child requires urgent medical treatment or Police intervention, concerns regarding possible abuse or neglect must be shared with the relevant professionals.

The child's social worker, Supervising Social Worker and the DSL should be informed as soon as practicable. However, foster carers must never delay emergency action in order to make notifications.

All actions taken must be fully recorded.

3.3 Action by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Upon receiving a safeguarding concern or allegation, the DSL will assess the information and determine whether a referral to Children's Social Care, the Police, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or another safeguarding agency is required.

Referrals will be made in accordance with local safeguarding partnership procedures and statutory guidance.

Parents should usually be informed before a referral is made unless doing so would place a child or another person at increased risk of harm. Any decision not to inform parents must be clearly recorded with reasons.

The DSL will ensure that referrals are followed up appropriately and that feedback is received from the receiving agency.

Where the response from Children's Social Care is considered inadequate, County Fostering Services will utilise the local safeguarding partnership's professional challenge and escalation procedures.

The following must also be notified where appropriate:

- The child's social worker;
- The Registered Manager;
- Ofsted (where required);
- The Agency Decision Maker (where applicable);
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

3.4 Information Sharing

Information must be shared lawfully, proportionately and in accordance with the Information Sharing and Confidentiality Procedure.

Information regarding concerns or allegations must not be shared with any person who is implicated in those concerns unless this has been agreed with Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

Relevant safeguarding information should be shared with those who have a legitimate need to know in order to protect and support the child.

Where a safeguarding assessment is undertaken, County Fostering Services will fully cooperate with partner agencies and provide all relevant information necessary to safeguard the child.

4. Section 47 Enquiries

Where Children's Social Care initiates a Section 47 Enquiry, County Fostering Services will cooperate fully with the investigation and any associated safeguarding processes. Representatives from County Fostering Services will attend Strategy Discussions, Strategy Meetings, Child Protection Conferences and other safeguarding meetings as required. The service will share relevant records and information promptly to assist Children's Social Care in understanding the child's circumstances and assessing risk.

County Fostering Services will agree with Children's Social Care who is responsible for notifying Ofsted and will ensure that all required notifications are submitted within statutory timescales.