

MEDWAY COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE

Quality Assurance Policy

This page outlines to children, parents, foster carers, Panel members, Councillors and staff, our policy for monitoring and controlling the activities of Medway Foster care and ensuring quality performance.

- Statutory framework
- Aims and objectives
- The quality assurance programme
- Regulations 42 and 43

Statutory framework

Standard 4 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards requires fostering services to have clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

A number of other Standards require specified activities to be monitored and records kept. Reference is made to the relevant standards throughout this policy.

Regulation 42 of the Fostering Services Regulations requires independent fostering agencies to establish and maintain a system for:

- monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 (see regulations 42 and 43) at appropriate intervals, and;
- improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.

A report of any review carried out under this regulation must be supplied to the Commission for Social Care Inspection and made available on request to:

- any person working for the purposes of the fostering service
- any foster carer or prospective foster carer of the fostering service
- any child placed with a foster carer by the fostering service
- the parent of any such child.

The system for carrying out such reviews must provide for consultation with:

- foster carers
- children placed with foster carers and their responsible authority

Regulation 43 requires independent fostering agencies to notify relevant persons if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 8 take place.

While Regulations 42 and 43 apply to independent fostering agencies rather than local authority fostering services, we will nevertheless take these into account when designing and delivering quality assurance systems.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of our fostering service quality assurance programme are as follows:

Aims:

- to provide a quality service in which service user feedback and self-evaluation is a constant and valued process.
- to ensure that accurate information is available to inform the work of the service and secure the successful delivery of aims and objectives of the service.

Objectives:

- to ensure that foster carers provide high quality placements that meet the assessed needs of children placed with them.
- to ensure that supervising social workers monitor the work of foster carer and provide appropriate support.
- to ensure that managers are aware of the demands being made on Medway foster carers.
- to ensure that managers are aware of the resources available and needed to meet actual and projected demand.
- to ensure that resources are used effectively to meet the demands placed on the service.
- to ensure that management data is available to assist with reporting on the Government's Performance Assessment Framework indicators.
- to ensure the work of the service continues to meet:
 1. its aims and objectives.
 2. the requirements of children needing foster placements.
 3. the requirements of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and associate Regulations.

The quality assurance programme

In order to demonstrate that we are delivering a well managed and high quality foster care service, the Medway foster care Manager will ensure that an annual report is prepared for members that, as a minimum, shows that the following performance indicators have been met:

- feedback on placements is routinely sought from children, their birth parents and social workers and foster carers (Standard 11.1).
- complaints by or against foster carers are dealt with promptly and clear resolutions reached in accordance with our complaints procedure.
- supervisors audit and countersign foster carers' files on a regular basis (Standard 25.3).
- the Fostering Panel receives management information about the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews on an annual basis (Standard 30.6).
- management information systems are in place that provide regular and accurate data on:
 - the numbers and range of foster carers available.
 - the actual and projected turnover of foster carers.
 - foster carer recruitment, assessment, approval and review (Standard 16.6).
 - potential and actual placement capacity.
 - foster carer training needs and activity, including the effectiveness of training received (Standard 23.9).
 - training undertaken by staff and the effectiveness of the staff training programme (Standard 19.5).
 - frequency of contact between supervising social workers and foster carers including unannounced visits (Standard 22.6).
 - the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care (Standard 9.5).
 - the educational attainment of children placed with foster carers and the numbers excluded from school (Standard 13.6).

This report will also be presented to the Fostering Panel and made available upon request to:

- any person working for the purposes of Medway foster care
- any foster carer or prospective foster carer of Medway foster care
- any child placed with a foster carer by Medway Foster care
- the parent of any such child.

In producing the report the Medway foster care manager will seek and take account of the views of:

- foster carers
- children placed with foster carers
- staff working for Medway foster care.

Regulation 42 and 43

Although applying to independent fostering agencies rather than local authorities, we recognise the contribution that the monitoring and notification requirements of Regulations 42 and 43 can make to the delivery of a high quality fostering service.

We will therefore seek to put in place systems to monitor the matters set out in Schedule 7, these being:

- compliance with the foster placement agreement and the responsible authority's plan for the care of the child, in relation to each child placed with foster carers.
- all accidents, injuries and illnesses of children placed with foster carers.
- complaints in relation to children placed with foster carers and their outcomes.
- any allegations or suspicions of abuse in respect of children placed with foster carers and the outcome of any investigation.
- recruitment records and conduct of required checks of new workers.
- notifications of events listed in Schedule 8.
- use of any measures of control, restraint or discipline in respect of children accommodated in a foster home.
- education, medical treatment and first aid administered to any child placed with foster carers.
- records of assessments.
- records of Fostering Panel meetings.
- records of appraisals of employees.
- minutes of staff meetings.

The notification requirements of Schedule 8 are shown in the table below:

Event	Agencies to notify
Death of a child placed with foster parents	Commission, Responsible Authority, Secretary of State, Area Authority, Health Authority
Referral to the Secretary of State pursuant to section 2(1)(a) of the Protection of Children Act 1999(a) of an individual working for a fostering service	Commission, Responsible Authority
Serious illness of serious accident of a child placed with foster parents	Commission, Responsible Authority
Outbreak at the home of a foster carer of any infectious disease which in the opinion of a registered medical practitioner attending the home is sufficiently serious to be so notified.	Commission, Responsible Authority, Health Authority
Allegation that a child placed with foster parents has committed a serious offence	Responsible Authority, Police
Involvement or suspected involvement of a child placed with foster parents in prostitution	Commission, Responsible Authority, Area authority, Police
Serious incident relating to a child placed with foster parents necessitating calling the police to the foster parent's home	Commission, Responsible Authority
Absconding by a child placed with foster parents	Responsible Authority
Any serious complaint about any foster parent approved by the fostering agency	Commission, Responsible Authority
Investigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster parents	Commission, Responsible Authority