



**Children's Safeguarding and
Social Work**

Camden Fostering Service

Review and termination of carer's approval

CONTENTS

	Page no:
1. Legal framework	2
2. Purpose of review	2
3. Procedure	
3.1 Consultation	3
3.2 Annual foster carer review record	6
3.3 Role of the IRO	7
3.4 Applying to the Fostering Panel or Principal Officer	8
3.5 Decision on renewal of approval	9
3.6 Notification of decision and appeals	9
3.7 Resignation of foster carers	10

1 Legal framework and decision-making process

Under Regulation 28 of the Fostering Regulations 2011, all foster carers must have their approval reviewed at least once a year. Reviews of approval are also governed by the National Minimum Standard 13.

The regulation also states that all first reviews must be presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel ("the Panel"), but subsequent reviews may be considered by a senior officer from the organisation.

Camden's policy is that the following reviews of approval must be presented to the Panel:

- all first reviews
- every 3rd review
- reviews for specialist foster carers
- where there have been significant changes to the fostering household
- where there has been an allegation against a foster carer
- where a change of the foster carer's terms of approval is being sought
- where the deregistration of a foster carer is being sought, either at their own request or on the application of the Fostering Service.

All other reviews will be decided by the LAC Head of Service based on information provided by the supervising social worker in the annual review record and other related documents.

2 Purpose of review

- The main purpose of annual reviews is to consider whether or not:
 - the foster carer and their household remains suitable to foster and if their approval should be renewed
 - there should be any change in the terms of their approval, based on evidence shown of the carer's ability to meet fostering competencies.

- As part of the review, the Fostering Service should look at how the care provided by the foster carer has contributed to improving outcomes for the children in the placement.
- The review may also serve as a mechanism for appraisal of the foster carer's performance, providing their supervising social worker with an opportunity to look back at the work undertaken during the year and feedback on standards achieved in fostering competencies and areas that need strengthening.
- Foster carers and supervising social workers should also use the review process to take stock of and plan for the carer's professional development and training and set targets and goals for the coming year. This will form the basis of work to be carried out during supervision sessions during the coming year.
- The review process should enable foster carers to comment on the level and quality of support they have received from the Fostering Service during the year, including any perceived gaps in provision.

3 Procedure

The manager or senior should assign the "Approved Foster Carer Review" episode on MOSAIC to the foster carer's allocated supervising social worker, who should complete the episode.

3.1 Consultation

Under the Fostering regulations, the Fostering Service must gather relevant information and obtain the views of the foster carer, children placed with the carer and the children's social workers. This is in order to provide a thorough overview and evidence of the continuing suitability of the fostering household and the effectiveness of the foster carer in meeting the child's needs and enabling them to achieve good outcomes.

Consultation should involve all children who were placed with the foster carer in the previous year, their birth parents and their allocated social worker. Completed consultation forms should be shared with the foster carer and made available to panel or the Head of Service as part of the decision-making process.

Consultation should begin at least 2 months before the review is due to be considered and supervising social workers are responsible for ensuring that the relevant consultation forms are provided to the relevant individuals.

Consultation forms can be found in the documents section on MOSAIC, and completed forms should be uploaded on to the system. A record of those who were consulted regarding the review should be recorded on the participation screen in the MOSAIC episode.

3.1.1 Views of looked after children

It is important that LAC are able to state their views about their foster carer and the standard of care they receive. Their allocated social worker should encourage them to engage with the consultation process according to their age and understanding.

The decision on whether a child is able to understand and engage with the process should be taken by the child's allocated social worker in consultation with the foster carer. The level of engagement may vary depending on the child's age.

Children aged 8 and over should generally be encouraged to complete the consultation form independently, with the social worker providing limited support. Social workers may need to provide a high level of help to younger children in completing the consultation form.

Where the child has a disability or communication difficulties, the allocated social worker should ensure that a suitable resource is made available in order to facilitate this process for the child so that they are able to make their views known.

3.1.2 Views of birth parents

Allocated social workers are responsible for obtaining the views of birth parents regarding the foster carer and the standard of care they provide to the child. These should be recorded within the social worker's own consultation form.

Supervising social workers may also include comments made by parents about the placement from the child's statutory review and record these in the annual review record.

Parents should also be able to express their views on whether they feel the foster carer is capable of meeting the child's needs and supporting the overall care plan.

3.1.3 Views of the child's social worker

The allocated social worker should complete a consultation form for each child who was placed with the foster carer during the previous year. The consultation form allows the social worker to comment the suitability of the placement in terms of the child's needs, how the foster carer is meeting the child's needs and how this contributes to the child's development and helps them to achieve good outcomes.

The consultation form should be signed by the social worker, their manager, and the foster carer.

3.1.4 Views of the foster carer's children and other household members

Supervising social workers are responsible for obtaining the views of the foster carer's children and other household members by speaking to them and enabling them to discuss the impact that fostering has had on them. These views should be recorded on the consultation form. Checks should be carried out on any new members of the household who are aged over 16.

The decision on whether a child is able to understand and engage with the process should be taken by the supervising social worker, who should use the same guidance as for allocated LAC social workers above in deciding what level of support the child may need.

3.1.5 Views of the foster carer

Foster carers need to be fully involved in the consultation process and supervising social workers should use time set aside during supervisory visits to help them plan for the review.

The foster carer should use the consultation form to reflect on their experiences during the previous year and what work needs to be carried out to help them maintain standards and meet fostering competencies.

The supervising social worker should encourage the foster carer to comment on the support they have received and services provided both to them and to the children they are looking after.

3.1.6 Health and safety audit

As part of the review process, the supervising social worker should carry out a health and safety audit of the foster home to ensure that any previous health and safety issues have been addressed and that the home environment is safe and suitable for the children placed there.

The audit should be carried out during a supervisory visit as agreed with the foster carer. The supervising social worker should use the health and safety checklist for guidance (see the "Assessment of foster carers" policy), and record the outcome of the audit on this form.

3.1.7 Safe caring audit

The supervising social worker and the foster carer should discuss the family's current safe caring policy to ensure that it is relevant to the children who are living in the placement and is being fully implemented by the foster carer and their family.

Supervising social workers should use the safe caring questionnaire as a basis for the discussion and to enable the foster carer to carry out a self-assessment as to the effectiveness of the policy. The questionnaire should then be completed by the foster carer.

3.1.8 Renewing statutory checks

Supervising social workers should refer to the division's "Checks and searches on alternative carers" policy for guidance on arranging renewal of checks and ensure that responses are available in time for the annual review.

- **DBS checks** must be renewed every 3 years on all members of the foster carer's household who are 16 years and over.
- Foster carers must have a **medical** every 2 years to ensure that they remain in good health and are able to cope with the stresses of fostering.
- **Local authority checks** must be renewed every 3 years on the foster carer's current address.

3.2 The annual foster carer review record

3.2.1 Completing the report

The annual review record can be found in the "Approved Foster Care Review" episode on MOSAIC. It should be completed by the supervising social worker and should contain:

- an assessment of the carer's ability to meet fostering competencies
- evidence of the carer's ability to meet the needs of children placed with them in terms of helping them achieve good outcomes
- summarise all the information obtained from the consultation process.

As the record will be used by the Panel or the Head of Service to make an informed decision on renewal of approval, the report should:

- be a fair and objective assessment based on the work undertaken by the carer during the past year
- provide a thorough analysis of the evidence gathered
- provide a clear recommendation on renewal of approval.

Section A of the report should include all basic information about the foster carer and their household.

Section B should be used to record evidence of how the foster carer is meeting the 4 fostering competencies, giving details of strengths and weaknesses. Evidence should be taken from the foster carer's care of all the children placed with them.

Section C contains information on the foster carer's role and their professional development and training, and record any planned training and development work for the coming year.

Part D should contain the supervising social worker's summary, analysis and recommendations regarding renewal of approval and whether terms of approval need to be changed, giving reasons for the recommendation. The Fostering manager should also record their views on the record.

3.2.2 Authorising the report

The completed report should be sent to the manager or senior via the task on MOSAIC for authorisation. The manager or senior may make a decision at this point as to whether the review needs to be presented to the Panel due to any issues arising.

3.2.3 Sharing the report with the foster carer

The supervising social worker should arrange to visit the foster carer with the independent reviewing officer (see below) so that the carer may read through all the consultation forms and the annual review report and make their own comments and clarify any factual discrepancies.

3.2.4 Recommendation to terminate approval

Termination of approval should be considered when evidence obtained from the review process shows that the foster carer is consistently failing to meet fostering competencies or required standards of care and all work to improve their performance over the year has failed to make an impact.

The recommendation should be discussed with the Fostering manager, who may take advice from the agency advisor.

If the supervising social worker recommends that the foster carer's approval should be terminated, they should notify the foster carer of this as soon as possible and explain the reasons for this.

3.3 Role of the independent reviewing officer

It is Camden's policy that the review of foster carer's approval is as fair and transparent as possible, and that decisions are based on all available information which is presented in an objective manner.

To ensure objectivity and independent scrutiny of the procedure and to assure the quality of information gathered and standards of reports, all reviews will be overseen by an independent reviewing officer who is not connected with the Fostering Service.

Once the annual review report is completed, the supervising social worker should contact the independent reviewing officer to make arrangements to visit the foster carer in order to share the contents of the report and the recommendation.

The supervising social worker should ensure that the independent reviewing officer has access to the consultation forms and the annual review report.

The role of the independent reviewing officer is to:

- ensure consultation records and the annual review report meets a good enough standard of information
- ensure that all aspects of the review procedure have been carried out satisfactorily
- advise the supervising social worker on any changes required to the report
- interview the foster carer regarding the review process and to obtain their views on the report . This meeting should provide the foster carer with the opportunity to give their perspective on aspects of the placement that they may view differently from the social worker, which allows for a balance in the report.

- advise the supervising social worker on any issues arising from the review process
- provide a report for the Panel or Head of Service.

3.4 Applying to the Fostering Panel or Head of Service

Where the review of approval needs to be heard by the Panel, the supervising social worker should contact the Panel administrator to book in to the next available Panel meeting at least 1 month before the review needs to take place.

They should also ensure that the following documents are sent to the Panel administrator (at least 14 days before the Panel meeting) or Head of Service:

- the annual review record
- all consultation forms
- the health and safety questionnaire
- the safe caring questionnaire
- the independent reviewing officer's report
- where appropriate, responses from renewed statutory checks.

Foster carers should be encouraged to attend Panel meetings to clarify facts and make their views known. Supervising social workers should also attend to support the foster carer.

3.5 Decisions on renewal of approval

The Fostering and Permanence Panel or Head of Service should consider all the information available and the recommendation of the supervising social worker, and look at renewal in the light of evidence of:

- the foster carer's ability to meet fostering competencies and standards set by Camden
- the foster carer's continued suitability to foster, and suitability of the fostering household.

The Panel or Head of Service should also consider whether the foster carer's terms of approval remain relevant or whether they should be changed. Recommendations made by the Panel must be passed to the Head of Service for authorisation.

3.6 Notification of decision and appeals process

If the Head of Service decides (or accepts the recommendation of Panel) to renew the approval of a foster carer, they should write to the foster carer notifying them of this decision.

If there have been any changes to the terms of the foster carer's approval, these should also be stated in the letter along with the reasons for the change.

If the Head of Service decides (or accepts the recommendation of Panel) not to renew the approval of a foster carer, they should write to the foster carer notifying them of this decision and giving the reasons.

The letter should also inform the foster carer that if they wish to challenge the decision, they should make written representations within 28 days of the date of the decision either to the Head of Service or via the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.

If after the 28 days no written representation is received, or no application is made to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism, the Head of Service may continue with the decision to terminate the foster carer's approval.

If the foster carer makes a written representation within the 28 day period, the Head of Service should refer the matter to the next available Panel meeting for consideration and make a decision on approval having taken Panel's further recommendation into account.

When the Head of Service has made a decision on a foster carer's renewal of approval, the outcome should be notified to the BSS Officer via MOSAIC so that the Foster Carer Register may be updated as necessary.

4 Resignation of foster carers

Foster carers wishing to cease fostering for Camden must give the Fostering Service written notice. Following a period of 28 days of receipt of the notice, the foster carer's approval will then be terminated by Camden.