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**Kent County Council Fostering Policy for Foster Carers “On Hold” or “Suspended”**

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| Document Owner | Caroline Smith, County Manager, Fostering |
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This policy should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/made>

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards [*https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/192705/NMS\_Fostering\_Services.pdf*](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf)

1. **Suspension of a Foster Carer’s Registration**

Suspension of a foster carer’s registration should be used where there is an allegation, complaint or a serious concern about the standards of care being provided by a registered foster carer. Where there are concerns about a carers’ practice, this should be presented in a report with either the last Annual Review or Form F (depending on when the carers were registered) to the fostering panel. The report must include a recommendation regarding the carer’s registration status. The report should evidence the social work decision making in relation to the allegations, concerns or complaint with consideration given to the suspension of a carer’s registration for a set timescale, reasons for the recommendation and a clear plan of the investigation. A chronology of the carer’s history including recent events should be included for panel. The process for investigation should follow the procedure as set out in the Allegations and Complaints against Foster Carers Policy. The decision making regarding any changes in the carers registration must give consideration to the impact upon any children living within the household; this includes the foster carers own children and those who are in placement under Staying Put Policy. A child who is looked after and in the care of Kent County Council cannot remain living with a foster carer whilst their registration is suspended.

Foster carers whose registration is suspended should be provided with appropriate support and supervision, as set out within the Allegations and Complaints Against Foster Carers policy. The outcome of the investigation must be presented to panel, with a clear recommendation for whether approval should continue or whether there is sufficient evidence for a recommendation of change of registration or de-registration. Any police investigation does not have to be completed for a foster carer to be de-registered. The decision making and recommendation is based on any likelihood of harm a looked after child may experience even if there is insufficient evidence for police to progress to a conviction or take the matter further.

<http://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_alleg_comp_aga_fost.html>

1. **Foster Carers “On Hold”**

For carers that are taking a short break from the fostering role, this will be termed as “On Hold” meaning they are unavailable to care for children at the current time. If a foster carer meets the criteria to be on hold it will not be required for this to be taken to panel and their registration should not be suspended. The decision for a foster carer to be “on hold” can be made by the Head of Fostering responsible for the area fostering support team. There are a number of reasons where a foster carer can be put “on hold” including:

* Serious illness or a bereavement within the family
* A change in family circumstances such as a relationship breakdown
* An extended break from the fostering role following the ending of a child’s placement
* Following an adoption
* At the carers request, e.g. where they ask for an extended holiday or where they are moving house

A report should be completed by the Fostering Social Worker, signed by the foster carer that sets out the reason for the foster carer being “on hold” and the timescale for this. This should be signed and agreed by the Head of Fostering, recorded as a Case Note and uploaded onto Liberi under documents. “On hold” foster carers must be recorded on Liberi, within the availability section to reflect that they are unavailable. They will then be excluded from the vacancy tool and from reporting. “On hold” foster carers should continue to be visited at a minimum of every 3 months, to ensure it is still appropriate for them to be “on hold” and to recognise that they are still registered foster carers. A foster carer should not be “on hold for more than a period of 12 months, at which point there would need to be a review of their registration. If after 12 months they are unable to return to the fostering role, the review should be presented to panel, with a recommendation to de-register, with agreement that a carer would reapply at a future date if there was a change in their circumstances and they became available to return to the fostering role.

Where an annual review is due within the period of a carer being “On Hold” this should still be completed, as delaying this will impact upon their ongoing registration and the timescale for them returning to the fostering role. There is limited discretion by the Team Manager regarding the delay in an annual review. Any decision to delay a review must be clearly recorded with reasons. Under no circumstances should “On Hold” be used where there are practice concerns with the standard of care provided within a fostering household.

**Template for Panel Report – Suspension of Foster Carers Registration.**

Appendix A

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Foster Carer(s) Name |  |
| Date of last Annual Review |  |
| Current Registration |  |
| Attached | Annual Review (or Form F for carers in their first year of fostering) |

**Chronology including history of allegations/concerns**

**Details of allegation/complaint/concerns**

**Details of investigation and decision making (to include outcomes if known and discussion with LADO)**

**Recommendation:**

Signed and Date:

Fostering Social Worker……………………………………………………………………..

Team Manager………………………………………………………………………………..

Foster Carer…………………………………………………………………………..……….

Foster Carer………………………………………………………………………….………..

**Template for Report for Head of Fostering– Foster Carers “On Hold”**

Appendix B

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Foster Carer(s) Name |  |
| Date of last Annual Review |  |
| Current Registration |  |
| Attached | Annual Review (or Form F for carers in their first year of fostering) |

**Chronology of events**

**Details of reasons for request for “On Hold”**

**Dates for “On Hold” period**

**Does the Foster Carers Annual Review fall in the period of “On Hold”?**

**(if yes, date for completion or reasons for non-completion)**

**Recommendation:**

Signed and Date:

Fostering Social Worker…………………………………………………………….………..

Team Manager………………………………………………………………………………..

Foster Carer…………………………………………………….…………….……………….

Foster Carer……………………………………………………….………

**Head of Fostering Comments**

**Agreed dates for period “On Hold”………………………………………………….**

**Signed and Date:**

**Head of Fostering ……………………………………………………………………….**

Signed report to be uploaded onto Liberi