

Children's Services

Guidance for Managing Allegations regarding Standards of Fostering Care

1. Purpose

Dorset Council Children's Services is committed to keeping safe all children and young people in its care. It recognises its duty to respond promptly and effectively where it is aware of a concern about the safety or suitability of the foster care that it provides or commissions.

This guidance aims to promote the safety of children and young people in our foster care by setting out:

- I. The process for determining whether a concern about a foster carer should be dealt with under the Management of Allegations procedure, or the Standards of Care procedure
- II. The steps to be followed if the concern is deemed to fall under the Standards of Care procedure

2. Identifying the correct procedure

When a concern about a foster carer is identified by, or notified to, Children's Services, the steps set out at [Allegations Against Foster Carers](#) S3.1 should be followed. In short, these require the child's social worker, their manager, and other relevant managers to discuss the matter and, within 1 working day, notify the LADO of the concern. This group will determine whether the concern should be investigated under the Management of Allegations procedure or dealt with under the Standards of Care procedure.

If the matter is deemed to require investigation under the [Management of Allegations procedure](#), this should be followed.

3. The Standards of Care procedure

If it is determined that the concern relates solely to Standards of Care, we will take the following steps:

- 3.1 The child's Social Worker and/or their Team Manager will notify the Fostering Social Worker and/or their Team Manager of the Standards of Care concern and provide all relevant information to them.

- 3.2 The Fostering Social Worker and their Team Manager will meet with the Foster Carer within five working days of the decision to share their concerns and gain more information. They will usually link the presentation of their concerns to the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011).
- 3.3 Whilst the Standards of Care procedure is not a formal investigative process, the Fostering Social Worker and their Manager should use the meeting to satisfy themselves that they have understood the nature, extent, and impact of the concern.
- 3.4 The Fostering Social Worker and their Manager should also gain assurance that the Foster Carer understands the concern and their role in remedying it and is both willing and able to take the actions that this will require. The Fostering Social Worker and Manager should be willing to offer both high challenge and high support.
- 3.5 The Fostering Social Worker should consider whether, and at what point, they should discuss the concern with the child(ren) affected and/or with their families. If they decide not to discuss the matter with the child or their family, they should record their reasons for this.
- 3.6 Within 10 working days of the discussion with the Foster Carer, the Fostering Social Worker and/or their manager should convene a Standards of Care Meeting, which will be chaired by the Fostering Team Manager. They should attend this with the Foster Carer and the child's Social Worker. It may also be appropriate for the child or their family to attend.
- 3.7 The minutes of this meeting should be issued to the Foster Carer within five working days; the Foster Carer should sign and return a copy immediately. The minutes will then be added to the child's file, and to the Foster Carer's record. The minutes will include an action plan to remedy any concerns that have been highlighted; it is the responsibility of the Fostering Social Worker to ensure that actions are completed in a timely manner.
- 3.8 Where significant standards of care concerns remain, the meeting may decide to bring forward the Foster Carer Annual Review.
- 3.9 The Fostering Team Manager should share any learning from the Standards of Care Meeting with their team, and with the Quality of Performance and Action Group (via QAPaudits@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk). It is the responsibility of the Child's Social Worker to ensure that relevant learning is fed back to the Annual Fostering Review.
- 3.10 If at any point new information becomes known that suggests that a child or young person has experienced, or is at risk of significant harm, the individual identifying this



should inform the child's Social Worker immediately and follow the Pan Dorset Children's Safeguarding Partnership procedures for reporting abuse.