

**Allegations in
Foster Care Toolkit:
The 5 Ps Model
Best Practice Guidance**

**Preparation
Planning
Prevention
Proportionality
Protection**



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A Welcome from Lyssa Elster, Chair of The Fostering Network

An allegation is one of the most challenging and distressing experiences a foster carer can face. As a foster carer myself, I know how deeply we all value safeguarding children and I also know how overwhelming the allegations process can feel when it doesn't fully protect or support everyone involved.

Too often, carers tell us they feel isolated, unheard, or left in the dark during an allegation. Even when concerns are unfounded, the impact can be long-lasting, and for some, it becomes a turning point that leads them away from fostering. That is a loss for children, for families, and for the whole fostering community.

As an organisation dedicated to standing alongside foster carers, we recognise the need for a more balanced and transparent approach — one that

upholds the highest standards of child safeguarding while ensuring foster carers are treated with dignity, clarity, and fairness. This toolkit has been developed in response to that need.

We also want to acknowledge here that the first edition of this toolkit, published last year, did not offer the reassurance carers deserved. That was never our intention. We withdrew it, listened carefully to your feedback, and worked with foster carers and the foster caring community to reshape it.

This revised edition reflects what we heard. It aims to provide a more respectful, inclusive, and practical resource, one that supports everyone involved in the allegations process.

Lyssa Elster

Introduction from Sarah Thomas, CEO of The Fostering Network

As a supervising social worker, I supported many fostering families through the allegation process. I can recall almost every one of those families, along with the variety of emotions that they shared with me at the time. Fear, sadness, loss, regret and frustration to name but a few.

I remember the children moved from their foster homes as a direct result of the allegation. An 18-month-old little

girl, moved in an emergency to a new family just weeks before she was due to be moving to her adopted family; a ten-year-old boy, who had been thriving with his fostering family since he was three, moved from the only home he knew; and a sibling group where the only option was to separate the children in an emergency, due to a lack of suitable alternatives. They said goodbye to each other at the school gates and did not return to live together again.





Safeguarding is, and always will be, everyone's responsibility, and the examples I share were all decisions made by skilled, experienced practitioners, acting on their duty to safeguard children from harm, who believed this was necessary to secure immediate safety.

In each case, the outcome of investigations, lasting many weeks or months, was "unfounded". The evidence presented during the investigation enabled practitioners to conclude that the alleged event did not occur. However, the impact of the process was irreparable. The children and adults involved experienced trauma which led to several unintended consequences.

Foster carers and fostering social workers tell us these situations are increasing. It is universally agreed in the sector that everyone should be working to do everything possible to improve outcomes for children.

While it may be that removing children from their foster family is the only option, it is essential this is done in a way that is child-centred and trauma-informed while still always ensuring every child is safeguarded.

Research and evidence into allegations in foster care, across the UK, remains limited. Improvements are urgently needed to help inform child-centred practice however, from the insight and data currently available, some trends are clear.

The number of children looked after is increasing across much of the UK while the number of foster carers is decreasing. Many of these children are looked after by foster carers, and every year, children are moved from their (often stable and loving) foster homes because of a safeguarding concern.

Choosing to foster means choosing to be a 'person in a position of trust', under UK safeguarding law. As with all those who choose to work with children, this position comes with great responsibility and it is right that all applicants to foster are subject to rigorous preparation, checks and assessment. This will be explored within this guide and recommendations are made to build sector awareness, and 'normalise' learning and preparation for allegations in foster care.

I want to express my deepest thanks to all the young people, foster carers and practitioners who engaged with us in the production of this resource. Your insight, reflections, and constructive feedback are at the heart of everything that we do.

Whatever your role in the fostering community, I hope you find this practice guide and toolkit a useful resource.

Sarah Thomas





Introduction to the toolkit

The Fostering Network's Advocacy and Mediation service supports foster carers who are experiencing allegations. Through this work we have developed a deep understanding of the issues foster carers face and we have gained insight into what is needed to ensure decision making and risk assessment when managing allegations is proportional. Timescales for the completion of investigations are a particular source of concern and worry for foster carers. Many foster carers report that advertised timescales are not adhered to, and this can have a significant impact on the foster carer and their family, including all children in the home.

The aim of this toolkit is to provide a guide for practitioners investigating allegations in foster care, ensuring everyone involved in the process is supported.

This toolkit:

- Introduces the 5 Ps Model of allegations practice.
- Explores opportunities to reframe how allegations are viewed and how to better prepare prospective and approved foster carers.
- Provides advice and practice guidance to improve risk assessment and responses, following an allegation.
- Clarifies what constitutes an allegation, concern or complaint.
- Clarifies the terminology used and explains what each outcome means.
- Offers guidance on how to improve stability for children, as safely as possible to reduce the likelihood of children being removed from their foster homes.
- Offers guidance on how to reduce the likelihood of foster carers resigning due to their experiences, through developing improved understanding of the processes involved and proposing options for support.





This toolkit is intended to provide best practice guidance to support all those involved across the spectrum of the fostering journey, from recruitment onwards. It provides templates and tools for practitioners to focus on the aspects of allegations practice where foster carers and practitioners have shared that there is the greatest need for improvement.

This toolkit is part of a programme of work to provide better support for those managing allegations, to contribute to better outcomes for children and foster carers. It is best read alongside its companion Allegations, Concerns, and Complaints: Information for Foster Carers and Those Who Support Them and The Fostering Network's publication on Protective Care for Fostering Families.





Impact: Children and foster carers

The importance of listening to children

This guide is intended for practitioners and is written with children's best interests at heart. Across the UK, foster carers are responsible for looking after some of the most vulnerable children in society. We know that adverse childhood experiences, and being subject to 'significant harm' by a trusted adult can have serious, long-term consequences for children. Whilst the evidence is that most foster carers offer safe, loving care, it is important practitioners recognise abuse may occur in any form of care, and don't make assumptions that children are safe.¹ Learning from Serious Case Reviews tells us that a child can be subject to abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm by any individual, in any setting, and children must always be cared for and protected from harm.

The child's welfare, wishes and feelings are paramount in safeguarding and enshrined in our safeguarding legislation, most notably the Children Act 1989. This informs the most important messages in this resource: **all children should be listened to when they tell us their experiences**, and we should act on the information we receive.

Serious Case Reviews, Practice, Learning and Case Management Reviews have often highlighted the difficulties of clearly establishing the wishes and feelings of children and young people. The Ofsted Thematic Review of Serious Case Reviews (2014)², and Cleaver and Rose in their thematic review of case reviews concerning foster carers, adopters and special guardians 2007-2019, highlight that the voices of young people 'have not been sufficiently heard'.

It is widely believed that children who have experienced early trauma may be more likely to report allegations of abuse by foster carers, due to difficulties understanding and interpreting the actions and behaviours of others.

While it is important for practitioners to be aware of the context and impact of trauma on young people, this must never be assumed as an explanation of the behaviour of adults caring for them. Practitioners responsible for the protection of children, have a duty to safeguard children whatever their experiences or the setting they are in.

As such, they should always conduct a risk assessment in accordance with legal responsibilities.

1 Cleaver and Rose (2020) Safeguarding children living with foster carers, adopters, and special guardians: Learning from Case Reviews 2007-2019
2 Department for Education (2016) Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews 2011 to 2014



The prevalence of allegation investigations against foster carers is high, and the likelihood of children being moved as a result is rising. In The Fostering Network's most recent State of the Nations' survey³ (2024), a third of foster carers said that a child they fostered was removed from their home during the most recent allegation investigation, up from a quarter (25%) in 2021.

"I was taken from my foster family, no one told me why and I was moved to another city without even packing my own bags. When I asked to go home, they said there had been an allegation made by another child. I loved my foster mam, but I never saw her again, I just wanted to go home to her, and no one would listen to me."
Sam, aged 14⁴

Allegations can have a significant and traumatic impact on the child and fostering families involved. It is essential that trauma-informed practice is at the forefront and both the fostering family and child involved are adequately supported. This guide explores alternative approaches and makes recommendations to improve stability for children.

It also explores the importance of communicating with children using empathy and acceptance to understand their experience and support them with any feelings of shame, blame or fault that may happen after an allegation.



3 Ellis, S. and Williams, N. (2025) State of the Nations' Foster Care 2024, The Fostering Network

4 Consultation with young people, 2022-2024



Prevalence and the experience of foster carers

Over three-fifths of children and young people in care in the UK are living in foster care.⁵ Foster carers are caring for children within their own homes and providing a high level of care in most circumstances. Foster carers provide a vital service for society supporting children the state has decided are unable to live at home with parents.

While the safety of children and young people must always be the priority, many foster carers have reported that, even when an allegation has been unfounded, the investigation impacted them negatively. An allegation can bring a foster carer's reputation and integrity into question. Many foster carers experience feelings of distress when facing an allegation and it has a damaging effect on their confidence to care for children in the future.

"We felt totally unbelievably and isolated. After 22 years we very nearly resigned over it... Having asked for more support and not receiving it."⁶

"Fully understand the need to investigate any allegation and happy to work with those involved. However, the process did make us question our role as foster carers, particularly the impact on current employment etc. Did not feel supported, merely left waiting for a decision."⁷

"The process needs to be clear and communicated. It's a mess."⁸

"It was a nightmare from start to finish. I had no contact from my supervising social worker and no explanation as to why."⁹

Foster carers also report feeling unsupported by their service when facing an allegation from practitioners, whose role has been to formally support them and the children in their care. They highlight a lack of practical, emotional and financial support for themselves and their families.

5 Combined latest stats from: Department for Education (2025) Children looked after in England including adoptions. Department of Health (2025) Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland. Scottish Government (2025) Children's Social Work Statistics – Looked After Children. Stats Wales (2024) Children looked after by local authorities. Actual figure is 64%.

6 Foster Carer, State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024

7 Foster Carer, State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024

8 Social Worker, State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024

9 Roberts, L. M., Rees, A., Elliott, D., Wood, S. (2024) 'The worst day of my life': Foster carers' experiences of allegations, *Adoption & Fostering*, 48(1), 7-29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03085759231212501>



Complaint, concern or allegation?

Improving practice in this area must begin with clarifying what constitutes a complaint, concern or allegation. Having a clear understanding of what each of these are will support improved safeguarding practice, stability for children, and retention of foster carers.

Evidence from practice indicates that complaints, concerns and allegations are a key element of a continuum of professional concern. Therefore, it is important to consider the history and background to build a holistic picture when conducting an assessment.

Table 1: Key factors: Complaints, concerns and allegations

<p>Complaint</p>	<p>A complaint can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction provided verbally or in writing. It could be an objection to something that is considered unfair, unacceptable or not meeting the standards expected.</p> <p>In fostering, complaints can be about anything and everything. They should be considered as opportunities to learn, explore different perspectives and consider if improvements can be made. A complaint may be investigated and resolved or could identify the need to move to investigation as a practice concern.</p>
<p>Concern</p>	<p>In fostering, when concerns are raised about a foster carer’s practice, they are sometimes referred to as ‘care standards’ or ‘quality of care’ concerns. They can be directly related to the quality of the care provided to a child/ children. They are sometimes raised where there are concerns about a foster carer’s ability to meet the regulatory requirements expected of them. Concerns differ from allegations in that they are not deemed to meet the criteria for safeguarding procedures to apply.</p>
<p>Allegation</p>	<p>The definition of an allegation differs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This information is provided in Appendix 3.</p> <p>The Fostering Network’s definition for best practice is:</p> <p><i>Where it is alleged that a person who works with children has</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child</i> • <i>possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child</i> • <i>behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children</i> <p>The information reported must meet the clearly defined threshold above in order to be deemed an ‘allegation’ in safeguarding terms.</p>



Investigation process

Across the UK there are small differences in legislation and the interpretation of legislation about allegations against foster carers. This new guidance is designed to complement and work in harmony with the relevant legislation and guidance in each country. A table with the relevant legislation and guidance in each country is included in Appendix 1.

This publication should **not** be viewed in isolation from relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance. Every fostering service should have a policy and process that sets out how allegations, concerns and complaints are investigated. This publication can be used to support the design and regular review of local policy and procedure in services, with the aim of improving outcomes for everyone involved in the allegations process. If your service's policy is not aligned to current best practice, this guide acts as a basis for a robust review which will enable any changes to be made on a holistic basis.





Outcomes

During the review of research and practice undertaken to inform this publication, it became apparent that the final recorded outcome following an allegation's investigation process was not always clear. Practitioners and foster carers told us the terms used often differed as did their understanding of the terms used. In particular, there is a common misunderstanding in the meaning of the term "unsubstantiated" and, it has been reported, it is often incorrectly used interchangeably with "unfounded". Across the UK, this aspect of practice causes confusion and uncertainty for fostering families and those who support them. To provide clarity, this publication consistently uses the terms below to define outcomes and how they should be interpreted.

Unfounded: There is evidence to **disprove** the allegation.

Unsubstantiated: There is not enough evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. Rather, it is reflective of an inconclusive outcome.

Substantiated/Founded: There is evidence to show the allegation has been **proven**.

We are aware practitioners may also use the terms "malicious" or "false" to describe an allegation. It is no longer considered best practice to use these terms.

Malicious: Where it has been used, it means the allegation is entirely false and there is clear evidence to prove that there has been a deliberate act to deceive.

It is important to be aware that it is often extremely difficult to determine if an allegation has been made maliciously. The NSPCC's publication, "Why Language Matters", highlights the need to avoid labelling allegations as "malicious".¹⁰ Following the Child Safeguarding Practice Review into the murder of Star Hobson¹¹, the review panel also concluded that the use of the term malicious "has many attendant risks and [we] would therefore discourage its usage as a professional conclusion."

Key points

- Recording allegations as "malicious" impacts the way practitioners perceive and respond to concerns.
- Allegations of abuse should be **fully** investigated before a decision is made about their validity.
- The focus of the investigation should be on evidence of harm or risk of harm to a child and what is in the child's best interests.
- By sharing information with other agencies working with the family, it is possible to identify whether there is a pattern of allegations, which might require a safeguarding or criminal justice response.

¹⁰ NSPCC Learning (2023) Why language matters: why you should avoid labelling allegations as 'malicious'.

¹¹ Hudson, A. and Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2022) Child protection in England: national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. London: HM Government



In cases of **substantiated/founded** allegations, where the foster carer agrees they regret their actions and want to prevent it from happening again, services should develop a safety plan to allow for increased monitoring. This will ensure actions are taken to safeguard against future harm. This is particularly important for children who wish to remain in the care of the foster family with whom they may have been living for many years.

Unfounded outcomes prove that the allegation did not occur. However, other factors, such as events leading up to the allegation and/or an assessment of the foster carers' wellbeing and ability to continue to foster, may also identify learning and development opportunities which the assessing social worker should consider.

Unsubstantiated outcomes are often the most difficult to assess when it comes to consideration of continuation of approval as a foster carer. This is also the most common outcome recorded when a foster carer is subject to an allegations investigation.

In such situations, a team of senior, multi-disciplinary practitioners have

effectively been unable to ascertain if an allegation did or did not occur, based on evidence, assessment and analysis. Inevitably, this can be very challenging for both the foster carer and their fostering service. From a starting point of uncertainty, it then falls to the fostering service to assess continued approval and to make recommendations to the fostering panel.

It should be understood that the outcome of an investigation into an allegation does not constitute the end of the process for foster carers. Reaching an outcome is important as it concludes the safeguarding process. However, it also informs the next stage in which there is an assessment of the foster carer's ability to meet the regulations to foster. This stage must be undertaken separately, in line with the foster carer review process.

For guidance and more information on how to undertake continued assessment following the conclusion of an allegation process, please go to pages 52-54.

Reframing allegations

The 5 Ps Model

At the heart of this toolkit is the 5 Ps Model, which reframes how allegations are managed in a more child-centred and holistic way, recognising the needs and concerns of all involved. The 5 Ps are: Preparation, Planning, Prevention, Proportionality, and Protection. These core practices will support you in delivering best practice when managing allegations in foster care.

Preparation

Prepare foster carers for the allegations process. Use factual, local, and evidence-based information.

Planning

Plan for everyone's needs. Create a specific plan for the foster family and have an overarching allegation plan.

Prevention

Prevent children from experiencing unplanned moves, when it is safe to do so, and prevent children from feeling blame or responsibility.

Proportionality

Proportionate, well-informed decision making and risk assessment for all, with all.

Protection

Protection when an allegation does occur. Specialist legal advice, financial protection and emotional support should be provided to all foster carers.



Preparation

When assessing or providing prospective foster carers with information on the realities of fostering, it is imperative to be clear about the prevalence and possibility of facing an allegation during their fostering journey. Fear of the unknown is something applicants and foster carers cite as one of their primary concerns when learning about the possibility of facing an allegation. However, foster carers report that such conversations about allegations are few and far between and when they do take place, it is presented as something to be fearful of, and something against which they should try to 'protect' themselves.

Although a well-established narrative and practice norm, advising foster carers to 'protect themselves' against allegations, is not conducive to child-centred, trauma-informed practice. With limited research in this area, it is also not possible to link the use of protective measures to a reduction in the likelihood of facing an allegation. Rather, it is preferable to advise foster carers to 'prepare themselves'. Services should accept it as a duty to prepare foster carers for a possible allegation as a critical part of the overall process. Preparation can take many forms. It should start by talking honestly about allegations in a sensitive, child-centred way. These conversations need to take place as early in the fostering journey as possible. Services should provide clear guidance, either their own in-house guide or those such as The Fostering Network's [Allegations, Concerns and Complaints Signpost](#). The Fostering Network's [Allegations FAQs for Foster Carers](#) also provides helpful advice. Fostering team staff should be well versed in answering questions about allegations and should have knowledge of local data to provide context and

perspective.



Can foster carers protect themselves from allegations?

Describing that foster carers need to 'protect themselves' against allegations could result in feeling that protection is needed from children. While this is not what is intended, it is important that we consider this and the message it could be giving.

Children who have experienced trauma can find it difficult to communicate their feelings and understand the behaviour of others and world around them, which can be shown through their behaviour. The Fostering Network recognises that 'protective measures' such as boundaried physical contact, additional monitoring of a child's behaviour and, in extreme circumstances, using cameras in the fostering household, have been used as a way to reduce the likelihood of allegations occurring and viewed as a protective measure for carers.





However, these measures do not support connection and understanding between carers and children and are not supportive of creating a positive, trusting and safe home environment.

Rather, maintaining an open, honest and transparent relationship with children, families and practitioners is the greatest protective factor for foster carers.

If applicants express fear of an allegation, it is best to acknowledge their fear and support them to make an informed decision on whether they wish to foster. Downplaying the likelihood of allegations will simply delay this conversation to a later stage.

It can be helpful to explain the impact trauma can have on children and how this can affect their behaviour and their ability to trust adults. Supporting applicants to better understand the needs of children in care can aid in their understanding of allegation and the necessary process which is involved following an allegation being made.

It can also be helpful to share information about the number of foster carers who have experienced allegations in your service during the previous year, as a percentage of the total number of fostering households. This can help applicants to gain perspective about allegations and understand the likelihood of their occurrence.

Allegations can be a difficult part of fostering for new applicants to comprehend. Accepting the anxiety and fear applicants may have surrounding allegations is important, as this is a difficult reality of fostering that we must not minimise. However, preparing and informing applicants about the needs of children who have experienced trauma, the allegation process and the support they will receive can help in managing the concerns they might have.

Preparation for allegations should continue during the **initial training**. Services should ensure robust learning opportunities are available to new applicants, and all training courses they can access should cover allegations. Recently, The Fostering Network's Skills to Foster preparation courses and all other foster carer training have been revised and updated, and include all the guidance contained in this resource.

The **assessment stage** provides further opportunity to discuss allegations in a private and safe environment. To assist foster carers in understanding the allegations process you should share as many examples as possible to build trust in the process.

Talk to applicants about the support mechanisms they can access. Tell them who they will be able to talk to, and explain what restrictions they might need to follow. Be clear about what they can expect from their fostering service,





their supervising social worker, the children's social workers, and the wider interactions with practitioners.

Following approval, every fostering service should ensure their new foster carers have a robust **induction period**. This provides a further opportunity to refresh and review the foster carers' understanding and preparation for a potential allegation. Many services introduce **peer support** at this stage, introducing newly approved foster carers to an experienced 'buddy' or 'mentor'. This can prove to be an essential relationship. Training for peer mentors should be reviewed regularly to ensure it is aligned to the 5 Ps Reframing Allegations approach.

Learning and development

opportunities provide ongoing support to continuously reinforce the foundations laid in the assessment and induction periods.

In summary, preparation for allegations should start early, with honest, factual conversations during the initial enquiry, assessment and induction. Learning and development and peer support should focus on: normalising terms and processes; deepening understanding of trauma; and the reasons why allegations occur. Building an understanding of the importance of responding to allegations in a child-centred way is essential.

The first few weeks and months following approval can be a steep learning curve for foster carers and this is where training can prove very useful.

Too many foster carers experience an allegation before they have attended any specific training on understanding the allegations process.

Services should continue to ensure foster carers can access this essential learning as soon as possible in their journey. They should also have plenty of opportunities to refresh their knowledge of the allegations process.

The Fostering Network has a bespoke training offer based on the 5 Ps Model which supports the implementation of this toolkit.

This Introductory training for foster carers is available on [The Fostering Network's Learning Management System](#).



Preparation checklist

Initial enquiry stage phone call/contact

Is the initial call always answered by an experienced supervising social worker, who is confident to share information and answer questions about allegations honestly? Are they able to provide factual information and respond with reassurances?

Real life examples are particularly important at this stage. Applicants are increasingly asking these questions, and the answer they receive can affect their decision to proceed to the next stage.

Initial home visit

Are supervising social workers able to use this visit as an opportunity to raise awareness of allegations, and provide honest, factual, child-centred reassurance in response to any worries?

It is best practice for the visit to be undertaken by the same supervising social worker who took the initial call where possible. This enables the crucial trusting relationship to grow and prevents applicants from having to repeat information and questions. If applicants receive different messages, conflicting answers or detect uncertainty at this point in the relationship building, they may lose trust and this can also impact on their decision to proceed.

Know your annual data

Does every supervising social worker know how many foster carers in their service were subject to an allegation and of these, what were the outcomes – and how many of these carers continued fostering?

Do you use team meetings as an opportunity to review and learn from allegations in the service?

Facts matter. They dispel myths, build trust and provide perspective to balance any fear. Make best use of team meetings to review processes and outcomes. Explore opportunities to learn and share good practice on an ongoing basis.



Preparation training

Does your training include factual, honest, child-centred and trauma-informed information regarding allegations?

Does it start to introduce the process and explain how you support foster carers through allegations in your service?

Is initial training provided as soon after the home visit as possible and before proceeding to assessment stage?

Delays at this stage can result in loss of engagement and reduce trust in the service. Initial training should be considered as the opportunity to learn enough information to assist applicants in the decision-making process, and should always be undertaken before any assessment begins. Applicants should be given protected time to attend this training, to reflect on the question 'Is fostering right for me/us, and am I/are we right for fostering?' The Fostering Network's Skills to Foster preparation training is designed to ensure that applicants are empowered to answer this critical question.



Question and answer sessions with approved foster carers

Do you provide an opportunity for applicants to talk to approved foster carers to ask questions after the initial training stage?

Does this opportunity include a foster carer with experience of the allegation process?

One of the best ways to facilitate this can be to invite a selection of foster carers with a wide range of experiences to a round table event and facilitate a question-and-answer session.



Assessment stage

Are assessments undertaken by the same supervising social worker that applicants have built a trusting relationship with?

Do assessors ensure the inclusion of a wide range of anonymous case studies, including an example of an allegation experience?

Ensure the case study is based on the guidance in this toolkit, to support applicants to build a picture of what might happen. This will help them visualise how they might respond and what they will need to support them through the process. It is important to keep these conversations focused on reality and perspective. Managing uncertainty and maintaining resilience are critical skills for all foster carers, and this should form an important part of the assessment process.





Local induction sessions

Does your local induction process include everything a newly approved foster carer needs to know about fostering with your service?

Ensure this includes recording and reporting, and asking appropriate questions when discussions are taking place about the possibility of a child or young person coming to stay with a foster carer, with a reminder of how this links with the allegation process and the further training available on these areas of practice.



Peer support/buddy

Do you match all newly approved foster carers with a peer support buddy, either before panel, or as soon as possible after approval?

For support and guidance around establishing a robust peer support service, contact our team of practice consultants at The Fostering Network at practice@fostering.net



Continuous development

Do you create robust continuous learning and development plans, with access to ongoing training on all aspects of the allegations process?



Planning

Previous practice guidance about allegations often included recommendations to create 'safer caring plans'. The Fostering Network has reviewed and updated its popular publication, Safer Caring, to reflect current thinking and best practice. This new publication, Protective Care, focuses on what is needed to ensure children in care are cared for, protected and safe. It provides guidance on how this can be achieved for each child through implementing Protective Care. Children and foster carers tell us that, in their experience, safer caring practice was introduced at the very beginning of their fostering journey and created a 'blanket ban' approach to showing affection. It was completed as a checklist of dos and donts and led to risk averse practice. Protective Care recommends the creation of three plans which can be woven into everyday practice. This ensures a person-centred approach where everyone's needs, vulnerabilities and strengths are considered.

■ Fostering Family Protective Care Plan

This plan should initially be created during the assessment process. It should record family norms and any adjustments the family have agreed to make as part of their transition to a fostering family. The plan should be a live document which should be reviewed and updated regularly to enable everyone to be responsive to changing needs. Visitors and new family members should be familiar with the plan. It should form part of the discussions at regular supervisory visits.

■ Child's Protective Care Plan

This plan should be presented in a child-friendly format and is about the child's personal needs. It should cover what the child needs from their fostering family. This should include: their views; what works well for them; what they need from adults to support their behaviour; and why they might react in certain

ways. This plan should be shared with relevant adults connected to the child so that school and home life can feel consistent and safe.

■ Allegation Plan

The Allegation Plan is an opportunity to explore what might work well for the family should an allegation occur. It should capture where they can get their best support, record a note of who might move in to be a safe adult and clarify where an adult might be able to stay if they were asked to move out of the family home. This plan helps the whole family to think about what they might need in the event of an allegation and provides an opportunity to put measures in place in advance.

Further guidance on these plans, including templates, can be found in Protective Care (2026).

Planning checklist

- Does your fostering service ensure that every fostering family completes a Protective Care Fostering Family Protective Care Plan and an Allegation Plan during the assessment process?**

Provide anonymised children's referrals to help applicants think about what a child would need and how they might provide trauma-informed care. Support them to think about the practical help they would need if an allegation were raised and who might provide this, including the support you will provide them.

- Are these regularly reviewed, updated and agreed?**

It is important these are up to date documents that are reviewed when there are any changes in fostering families, including when a new child comes to live with a foster family, if a child turns 18, if an allegation is made and at foster carer annual review.

- Does your fostering service request that the child's social worker completes a Protective Care Child's Protective Care Plan prior to, or as soon as possible after placement?**

Make this part of your best practice processes and emphasise the difference that this plan can make to how a child settles with your foster carer and how your foster carer understands their needs.

- Is the Child's Protective Care Plan regularly reviewed, updated and agreed, at a minimum in line with care planning review meetings?**

Involve children in this plan as much as possible so they can say how they feel and know that this matters to those they are living with. This should be shared with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) as a key person in their life.

- Do you offer regular training for foster carers on how to provide Protective Care and meet the individual needs of children?**

This is important for newly approved foster carers and to update foster carers on a regular basis. The Fostering Network provides regular Protective Care training for foster carers and fostering services which can be found at thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/learning-and-development, or for specific support and guidance, contact our team of Practice Consultants at practice@fostering.net.

Prevention

Whilst we advise shifting practice language from *prevent* to *prepare* for adults involved in allegations investigations, there is also much more that can be done to **prevent children from experiencing unplanned moves and further broken attachments** during the allegations process. Too often children are subject to an unplanned move to another fostering family, either because of sharing an allegation themselves or because of an allegation shared by another child in the household.

Our consultations with young people previously subject to allegation procedures indicate that they would like to be asked for their view before being removed from their foster family home. Those affected by an allegation did not always understand that they could be moved because of sharing information with practitioners.

"Social workers left me at home for years when I was little and tried really hard to help my mum to be able to care for me, even when things were really bad, like really bad. My foster carer Jane made one mistake, and I was taken away immediately. I had to move school, lost contact with my best friend and I felt like it was all my fault. Nearly a year later they said I could go back to Jane; I had lived with three different foster carers during this time and none of them knew me or loved me like Jane did. Does anyone think about the impact on us when there's an allegation?"

Bethany, aged 15.¹²

Children and young people need to know who is thinking about their best interests when an allegation is made against their foster carer. They want practitioners to do more to enable them to stay in their own bedroom, in their own home. They don't want to move unless it is their choice to do so, or the risks are so high that they must. In a situation where moving to another fostering family is the only way to secure their safety, they want to be able to say goodbye to people they care about and to be able to pack and collect their own personal belongings.

¹² Consultation with young people, 2022-2024



As such, alternative options should be considered as part of the safety planning process following an allegation, where it is safe and appropriate. These alternatives can include:

- Moving **an identified safe adult** into the foster home while investigations are carried out. This could be a fellow foster carer or someone from the fostering family's support network.
- Or having the **adult subject to the allegation** move out of the family home for a temporary period.

Both options remove the need for the child to bear the trauma of further disruption and uphold child-centred, trauma-informed practice. Adults should be supported to understand the impact of unplanned moves on children and how removing themselves can be the best thing for the child until investigations are concluded.

Wherever possible, an unplanned move should be avoided. The disruptive impact of moves on children in foster care is well documented.¹³

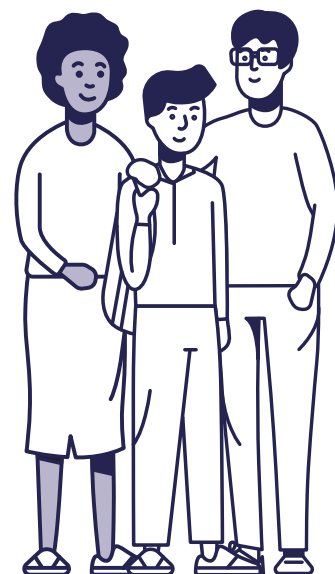
In common with child protection referrals that occur when children are in the care of their birth family, responses to allegations in foster care should also be proportionate to the perceived/assessed risks.

The decision about whether a child is safe to remain in the foster home should

be made carefully, weighing up the negative impact of moving the child against the risk of harm to the child if they stay at home.

Table 2 outlines good practice options for safety planning when children are to remain in a foster home following an allegation. These options can be used together or separately and at various points during the investigation process. It is important to note that the suitability of each option may vary based on individual circumstances and the perceived risk to the child.

Additionally, these safety plans will require careful monitoring and regular review to ensure their effectiveness and appropriateness over time. It is essential that any plans are in line with the recommendations from the professional strategy meeting.



¹³ AFKA Cymru (2021) *Improving Placement Stability for Children Looked After in Foster Placements*





Table 2: Best practice approaches for safeguarding children during an investigation

Approach	Option 1: Create a safety plan.	Option 2: The person the allegation is against is asked to leave the home.	Option 3: Support person or member of the extended family moves into the home.
Actions	<p>This plan is drawn up by the social workers, foster carer(s) (and their network if appropriate), child or young person and any other relevant professional. It will set out the actions and requirements that will keep the child safe during the process of investigation.</p> <p>This may include stipulations about who can or cannot visit the home and how the child or young person will be supervised.</p>	<p>This option can be included in the safety plan.</p> <p>The stipulations should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where the person will stay • consideration of ongoing contact • finances available to support this arrangement • likely timescales for the arrangement • support available to the non-resident foster carer and the fostering family • how and when arrangements will be reviewed. 	<p>This person will be asked to provide supervision to the care of the child until the investigation is concluded and resolved.</p>
Outcome	<p>The child will remain safely in the foster home, minimising disruption while the investigation is ongoing.</p>	<p>The child will remain safely in the foster home, minimising disruption while the investigation is ongoing.</p>	<p>The child will remain safely in the foster home, minimising disruption while the investigation is ongoing.</p> <p>It also provides the foster carers with practical and emotional support in the home during the investigation.</p>

Prevention checklist



Children first

Has the child or young person been asked what they would like to happen? Can their views be acted upon?

If the decision to remove children from the fostering family is the agreed course of action, when will they be told, who will seek their views, what will they be told, will this be a temporary arrangement, and can they have contact with the foster carer or wider fostering family?

Can enough safety be achieved to enable the child or young person to pack and collect their own belongings?

What actions will be taken to prevent a child from feeling that they are to blame? How will any children involved be supported during and after the process? Who will take the lead on this work, what will they do and when will they do it?



Support networks

Does your fostering service include the assessment of a support network as a standard part of the recruitment process?

Are approved support networks involved in the creation of the Protective Care Allegation Plan and aware of the expectations? Are they offered access to training, so they are better placed to be able to support the foster carer and the child?

Are the policies and processes in place to support this approach?

No foster carer should be expected to foster without a robust support network. They should always be assessed in line with local requirements for babysitters/significant adults¹⁴ who can be utilised for regular, ad-hoc, or emergency support to ensure normal family life for children.



Allegations policy, procedures and training

Does your allegations policy, procedures and training for foster carers cover the need to remain child-focused at the point of crisis, and therefore the possibility of being asked to temporarily leave the fostering family home if required?

It is critical to highlight the low likelihood of this occurring and any agreed, reasonable costs incurred for taking this action should be fully covered by the fostering service.

¹⁴ A person identified as a significant support and care provider attached to the foster carer's approval, usually a member of the foster carer's support network.



Proportionality

This P refers to **proportionate decision making and risk assessment** when managing allegations involving foster carers. The Fostering Network's Advocacy and Mediation service supports foster carers who are experiencing allegations. Through this work we have developed a deep understanding of the issues foster carers face and we have gained insight into what is needed to ensure decision making and risk assessment when managing allegations is proportional.

From this, we make the following recommendations for proportionate practice in three specific areas.

■ Assessment and annual review

Every approved foster carer has been subject to extensive, rigorous, statutory assessment to meet the regulatory requirements to foster. This assessment process is live and continuous. Those who have led on this assessment and hold overall responsibility should form a significant part of risk assessment processes.

Supervising social workers, annual review chairs and fostering service managers should be involved in allegations risk assessment processes and the extensive information held on foster carers should form part of the assessment process.

■ Continuous professional contact

A variety of practitioners have regular interaction with fostering families in which they build professional, accountable relationships. Foster carers do not practice in isolation and records of their practice are made daily. **These practitioners, and**

any records they hold, should also form a significant part of the risk assessment process.

■ Team around the child

Foster carers are equal members of the team around the child. **Safeguarding procedures should be applied to foster carers in the same way they are applied to teachers, social workers, nurses and other staff in positions of trust.**

Allegations investigations can vary in practice and it is preferable that each service sets clear expectations and provides guidance to staff to ensure consistency of practice in terms of who is involved in the investigatory meetings, the information gathered and considered, and the manner in which matters are communicated. Consistency of practice will contribute to greater clarity for all involved and, importantly, will improve the experience for the child and the foster carer.





"Before I fostered, I was a teacher for 20 years. I had attended extensive safeguarding training and I understood that just merely being qualified as a teacher or being approved as a foster carer didn't automatically mean that you were a safe adult. I remember being taught that a DBS check is only as good as the day it is issued! However, when an allegation was made against me I did expect that someone would have gone to my file and reviewed the robust and in-depth process that I went through; my last annual review; last week's supervision session; spoken to the Health Visitor, who practically lived in my house, she made so many visits for the little ones with their complex needs; spoken to the school, I was there everyday, so many staff had observed my approach and interaction with the children; collected my daily records to read about the events of the day in question. I didn't want to stop the investigation from happening, but I wanted people to consider all of the information available."

Maria, retired teacher and foster carer.¹⁵

Introducing the context and insight meeting

Where there is a child protection concern, or an allegation is made that suggests a child is at risk of harm from a foster carer, the matter should be referred to a safeguarding lead within the local authority. The local authority designated officer (LADO), the designated officer safeguarding (DOS), designated manager or equivalent safeguarding lead will play a key role in

leading child-centred risk assessment, consulting with stakeholders, providing advice and ensuring that the allegation against a foster carer is rigorously and fairly evaluated. It is best practice to ensure that all relevant information is considered at this initial point as part of the **context and insight meeting**.¹⁶ Thorough assessment of the information at this stage can ensure a proportionate approach is taken and can result in improved outcomes for children and foster carers, if safety planning and risk assessment are put to best use.

The introduction of this meeting, which is effectively a pre-consideration discussion for exchanging information and providing context, aims to reduce the number of investigations instigated against foster carers where the threshold for child protection led investigations is not met.

Many of the allegation cases reviewed while creating this guidance highlighted that the information shared could have been investigated as a complaint, concern, or as a standards of care investigation.

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)¹⁷ in England has investigated a number of these cases, learning from which has been incorporated into this guidance.

It may be difficult at first to determine whether the information received meets the threshold for an allegation investigation, or if it should be

¹⁵ Consultation with foster carers, 2022-2024

¹⁶ See Meetings, Roles and Responsibilities table

¹⁷ lgo.org.uk



considered as a serious concern or complaint. The initial consultation with the safeguarding lead, using the context and insight meeting approach, should be undertaken as soon as possible to determine the most appropriate, proportionate and child-centred action.

It is essential that the child's social worker, the fostering social worker and their respective managers are included in this consultation. It is good practice to include the child's independent reviewing officer (IRO) in these early discussions. They often have a good overview of the child's history and can offer valuable insight to contribute to decision making.

Consideration should be given to seeking the views of other significant practitioners involved who could offer additional insight. If the decision taken at this meeting is that the matter cannot be investigated as a complaint or a standards of care concern, and does meet the threshold for child protection, a professional strategy discussion should take place to determine the appropriateness of a child protection investigation. A template to support the information required at a context and insight meeting is provided in appendix 2.

Safeguarding procedures apply to every member of the team around the child, irrespective of employment status. Therefore, a foster carer's experience of safeguarding procedures should be comparable to the experience of a fostering team manager or supervising social worker.

In practice, this is not always the case. Foster carers' experiences can be very different from the experiences of other practitioners. It is acknowledged that there are differences between employment law for employed practitioners, and the legislation and regulations that govern foster care, but the experience for a foster carer can be brought much closer to the experience of others. **By applying the principles of this Toolkit, and the use of a proportionate approach, every fostering service can apply an equitable approach to supporting everyone in the team around the child through allegations.**





What foster carers need

To create a fair and proportionate experience, foster carers need the same core protections and support offered to other practitioners. This can be created by embedding the **5 Ps (Preparation, Planning, Prevention, Proportionality, and Protection)** in your practice to ensure:

- **Immediate access to independent support and advocacy**, so they understand the process and can confidently share their perspective.
- **Financial stability**, including continued fee payments throughout the investigation.
- **Clear, timely communication**, even when information is limited.
- **Consistent support** from their supervising social worker, not withdrawal at the point of crisis.
- **Access to emotional wellbeing support**, such as counselling.
- **Decision-making that is proportionate and informed by their full history of care and practice.**

Providing this level of support is not additional, it is essential to ensuring equity, maintaining trust, and enabling foster carers to continue providing stable, high-quality care.



Proportionality checklist

- Child and foster carers' chronology/relevant information for initial decision making

Does your service ensure that all the relevant information regarding the fostering household is included in early decision making to inform risk assessment and safety planning?

It can be helpful to have a template for supervising social workers to draw down the information that is required, quickly and with ease. An example is included in Appendix 2.

Are all relevant staff included in the context and insight meeting to determine the initial decision making, risk assessment and safety planning?

Is everyone involved in this decision making skilled, experienced and clearly able to define if this a concern, complaint or allegation?

Relevant staff will vary, but we would recommend that this group is as wide as possible to bring together everyone with relevant insight at this critical point.

Are foster carers' daily records accessed and at what point?

- Professional experience

Does your service treat foster carers, fostering team managers and children's social workers in the same way, when subject to an allegation?

This question is likely to evoke a response of "Of course they do", as safeguarding procedures are regulatory and apply equally to everyone who works with children in a position of trust. The key here is to test if this is the reality in practice. For example, compare the payment and support arrangements in place for all parties throughout this process, and adjust your policies and practices to bring them into line.

- Context and insight meeting

Are all relevant staff included in the context and insight meeting, to determine the initial decision making, risk assessment and safety planning?

Does your fostering service ensure an context and insight meeting takes place to confirm the threshold is met for safeguarding and child protection procedures?



Protection

The fifth and final P refers to the **legal and financial protections all services can, and should, put in place for foster carers**. These protections enable foster carers to feel confident that, should an allegation occur, they are not only prepared but are confident they can access **specialist legal advice and protection**, without personal cost or delay. The Fostering Network provides access to a market leading legal insurance scheme for all its foster carer members. We believe this is the most basic protection every service should provide to their fostering families, without a cost to them personally. Unfortunately, many fostering households are asked to undertake their fostering duties without this protection being provided by their service. Some foster carers independently take out membership with The Fostering Network, as advised by their service. However, it should not fall to foster carers, looking after children on behalf of the state, to fund their own legal protection.

- Support for foster carers should include the provision of good quality, restorative and solution-focused, independent support, as well as advocacy and mediation. Even when foster carers have received extensive preparation, the moment they face an allegation is deeply emotional, requiring intensive levels of support. Supportive and reflective supervision will be key for supervising social workers in this role to enable them to provide impartial and compassionate support to fostering families throughout the allegation process.
 - Financially, the impact of an allegation, combined with outdated practices around payments to foster carers, can prove catastrophic for many families. Every approved fostering family should be able to experience a basic level of financial security. The evidence shows that many more people would consider fostering if financial stability could be achieved as part of the role.¹⁹ The Fostering Network recommends, as a minimum, that a fee should be paid 52 weeks of the year to every approved fostering family. This payment should continue when a foster carer is subject to an allegation and throughout the investigation process.
- Fostering families may also benefit from an independent person to support them at this time. Funding to access this should be available and form part of the standard protection available to every fostering family.

¹⁹ The Fostering Network (2024) *Out of Pocket – Fairer Fees for Foster Carers*



Protection checklist

- Does your fostering service secure and fund membership with 24 hour, 365 days a year, legal protection for every fostering family?**

Foster carers should have peace of mind that they have support and protection at all times. The Foster Network's household membership provides this for every family. For further information, contact our Membership Team at membership@fostering.net.

- Does your fostering service have an up-to-date protocol for the management of allegations? If so, is it easily accessible for fostering households and their support networks?**

Management of allegations is key to foster carers feeling supported and continuing to foster. Review your protocol on an annual basis so it remains up to date with current research and learning from your service practice. Review it alongside your foster carers or your foster carer association and make sure foster carers know where they can find it when they are looking for it.

- Does your fostering service have systems in place to ensure that staff can be available to support their foster carers should an allegation occur?**

Do you have a duty system that means staff can be available to support foster carers when they need it most?

- Does your fostering service have good quality out-of-hours support available, should an allegation occur outside of usual working hours?**

Consider speaking to your foster carers who have had an allegation raised outside of office hours to see whether the support they received was helpful and if they have any suggestions to make it even better.

- Do you provide peer support and maintain an up-to-date list of foster carers available to support others in times of crisis?**


- Do supervising social workers understand their role and responsibilities when a foster carer is subject to allegation procedures? Do they understand the importance of increasing support and contact with the family?**

During an allegation process is the time when supervising social workers should be most present and providing emotional support, but we know this is often when foster carers describe feeling alone and isolated. It is imperative that supervising social workers receive appropriate training to overcome any barriers that may prevent them fulfilling this aspect of their role. Services can discuss their needs by contacting The Fostering Network at learn@fostering.net.







Protection checklist

- 
Does your fostering service have an up-to-date protocol for the management of allegations? If so, is it easily accessible for fostering households and their support networks?

Management of allegations is key to foster carers feeling supported and continuing to foster. Review your protocol on an annual basis so it remains up to date with current research and learning from your service practice. Review it alongside your foster carers or your foster carer association and make sure foster carers know where they can find it when they are looking for it.

- 
Does your payment policy for foster carers provide financial stability and guarantee a basic level of continued fee payment through an allegation process?

Removal of payments for foster carers can lead to increased stress and anxiety in an already difficult situation resulting in foster carers resigning disrupting children's lives.

- 
Does your fostering service have a contract or spot purchase agreement with a recognised agency to provide high quality independent, restorative advocacy and mediation during the allegation process?

The Fostering Network has been supporting foster carers in this area for over 30 years and provides services with a range of options. For further discussion about the support options available, please contact independent.support@fostering.net.



Too many foster carers experience their supervising social worker stepping away from them during an allegation. This can leave them feeling extremely vulnerable and should be avoided wherever possible. Supervising social workers must step into the support space during an allegation with great skill. Whilst it may not be possible to share the nature of the allegation, and many of the foster carer's questions cannot be answered, the person who they know and trust should be by their side. Explaining the process, helping foster carers to understand why information cannot be shared at this stage and how this facilitates a thorough investigation is crucial for foster carers at a time of great vulnerability and uncertainty. In the next section we will explore what support can and should look like for foster carers.



Supporting foster carers during allegation investigations

Many foster carers report feeling unsupported and undervalued by social workers during allegation investigations. Once an allegation has been made, foster carers, despite having exemplary records of practice, report feeling immediately judged, which leads to a sense of being isolated from the team around the child. Preparing foster carers to better understand the safeguarding processes involved in investigating allegations, particularly the importance of listening to the child, can go some way to helping foster carers understand what is happening and why. It is also vital there is increased support for foster carers during the investigation process. This is the time for fostering staff to increase their levels of interaction and support.

Alongside the personal and financial impacts, experiencing an allegation can lead to foster carers considering leaving fostering at a time when services across the UK are experiencing significant challenges in recruiting foster carers and providing enough stable, loving homes for children. The retention of

experienced carers (where appropriate and safe) should be a priority for all fostering services.

It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to share information with the foster carer about the investigation and actions that will be taken as part of the safeguarding process. The foster carer's supervising social worker should continue to support and visit foster carers under investigation, despite their restrictions on sharing information.

There should be clear agreement in any meetings taking place as part of the investigation as to what information can be shared and when. A key skill of the supervising social worker is balancing the level of support and communication required, without withdrawing from the foster family.

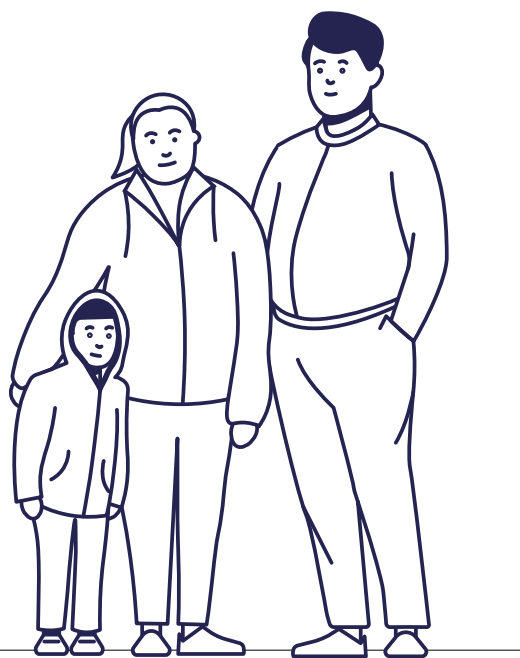
Support can take many forms. Having pre-existing, trusting relationships in these situations can make a significant difference to fostering families and children. Everyone should be working towards maintaining stability and the best outcome for the child. Strong relationships and good support can contribute to this outcome.

Timescales

Timescales for the completion of investigations are a particular source of concern and worry for foster carers. Many foster carers report that advertised timescales are not adhered to, and this can have a significant impact on the foster carer and their family, including all children in the home. In England, Ofsted found that almost half of all allegations (45%) in 2024-2025 were resolved within 21 working days, but over a quarter (28%) took over fifty working days.²⁰ The Fostering Network's 2024 State of the Nations' survey found that the most common duration of allegations investigations across the UK was up to one month (33%). Concerningly, one in six respondents (17%) said their latest investigation took six months to one year to conclude, while one in ten said the investigation took over a year.²¹

There are no timescales set out in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, other than the general principle of timeliness. Many factors can impact the length of time an investigation takes, but it is important to balance the need for a robust and considered investigation with the impact on the child, the foster carer and the fostering family. Some factors that can contribute to the length of investigation are the involvement of the police, or where more than one local authority is involved. Delays can be a source of frustration, but are often out of the control of the individuals coordinating the enquiries.

When the investigation is taking longer than anticipated, it is important to ensure that the foster carer is kept up to date. The next section considers the importance of communication and information sharing involving a range of stakeholders, including children and young people.



²⁰ Ofsted (2025) *Fostering in England 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025*

²¹ Ellis, S. and Williams, N. (2025) *State of the Nations' Foster Care 2024*, The Fostering Network



Table 3: Best practice for supporting foster carers during the allegation process

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus should be on providing therapeutic support, embodying understanding and empathy towards the fostering family and the child involved. The trauma involved with allegations and the significance on the lives of those involved should be at the forefront for those involved in managing the allegation and providing support. • Ensure the staff involved are skilled, adequately supported and suitably trained to balance the communication and support requirements of responding to allegations. • Ensure every fostering family has a Fostering Family Protective Care Plan and an Allegation Plan. Copies should be stored in foster carers' files. • Ensure procedures for managing allegations set out expectations in terms of support for foster carers. This should include provisions for financial, practical, and emotional support. • Ensure financial support is provided when foster carers are asked to work with a safety plan, or leave the fostering home at a financial cost.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure risk assessments concerning the stability of children's fostering arrangements and safety are clearly documented, authorised by senior managers and copies given to the foster carers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all foster carers under investigation for safeguarding concerns are offered independent support from a suitable provider, such as The Fostering Network. • Ensure support for foster carers takes account of the full range of potential impacts, including employment, legal, and mental health support. • Ensure good communication with foster carers throughout the process, particularly when investigations take longer than expected. • Ensure the support needs of foster carers are considered on an individual basis and consider increasing contact or visits by the supervising social worker. • Ensure practitioners clarify if counselling services are available to foster carers during the process and in its aftermath.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the family Allegation Plan includes full details of the family's identified support network. Ensure practitioners discuss and agree the support available to a foster carer from family, friends, and other foster carers, and the confidentiality implications of sharing information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that foster carers receive sufficient preparation and post approval training in understanding of the needs and experiences of children in care, and the management of concerns, complaints, allegations and Protective Care.





Importance of communication

Communication at all levels is an essential component of safeguarding children. Case reviews across the UK emphasise the importance of information sharing and collaboration between agencies and practitioners. It is essential to create an environment where children and young people are confident to ask for help when they need it, and are provided with sensitive, age appropriate and clear information about what is happening, to minimise any negative impact.

To be effective, an investigation of allegations against foster carers requires clear communication between a range of individuals at different times and in different ways. During the investigation, several meetings will take place (see Table 4) which set out the actions required by practitioners. These meetings will also cover how communication with foster carers and other parties will be managed.

Communication about these meetings will depend on the individual circumstances of the case but, in most cases, an individual who is subject to an allegation should be told that a strategy discussion has taken place on the same day it occurs. However, they cannot be provided with details of the allegation at this stage, as doing so could potentially impact the investigation or increase the risk of

harm to a child.

It is best practice for foster carers to be informed of the strategy discussion and provided with relevant information by the fostering manager/ supervising social worker, jointly with the safeguarding social worker/ social worker for the child.²² Any verbal notification should be followed up in writing. The letter provided to foster carers (printed and electronic) should explain the investigation process and expected timescales, the support to be provided to the foster carer, sources of independent advice, and any financial arrangements. The foster carer is likely to be informed that they will not be able to foster more children until the outcome of the investigation. This is a decision for the safeguarding lead to make in consultation with the fostering service and the foster carers should be informed.

Foster carers often report that not knowing details of an allegation is one of the most difficult parts of the allegations process. Services usually cannot share this information as doing so can prevent a robust investigation from taking place. Not knowing what has been alleged until after the investigation concludes ensures that the evidence provided by the foster carer is not compromised.

²² The Fostering Network (2026) '[Allegations, concerns and complaints: information for foster carers and those who support them.](#)'



The supervising social worker will play a key role in keeping the foster carer updated on the progress of the investigation and actions that are agreed at the professional strategy meeting. One of the key challenges for supervising social workers is the conflict they experience in providing a robust, objective assessment of the situation, while also providing support to potentially very distressed foster carers. The fostering service should ensure that their safeguarding policy, including the management of allegations against foster carers, is available to all foster carers and sets out the role of the supervising social worker in any child protection investigation. This should include:

- **The information they will and will not be able to share with the foster carer.**
- **The support that they can offer the foster carer.**
- **The statutory requirements on the supervising social worker and the safeguarding social worker during the investigation.**
- **The foster carer's legal and procedural rights.**
- **Where the foster carer can go for additional, independent support.**

This information should be shared verbally and in writing by the supervising social worker at the start of the investigation, to help the foster carer understand their role, and to help maintain an effective working relationship between them.





Meetings, roles and responsibilities

Several discussions and meetings are required during the investigation process which are set out in legislation. The table below sets out the required meetings and introduces several recommended additional meetings to support best practice during the investigation process and to assist with achieving a resolution and planning for the future.

Table 4: Meetings

Context and insight meeting - recommended to explore if threshold is met for an allegation	
Who convenes and chairs?	The safeguarding lead
Who is involved?	<p>Child's social worker and manager, supervising social worker and fostering team manager</p> <p>Independent reviewing officer</p> <p>Others deemed relevant by the safeguarding lead, including members of the team around the child who have valuable information and context to share.</p>
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose: To determine if a professional strategy discussion is required, or if the information should be investigated as a concern or complaint.</p> <p>This meeting should be recorded, and actions should be monitored and appropriately stored on the child and foster carers' records.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the safeguarding lead to confirm if the threshold is met for a professional strategy discussion, and to proceed to this stage if required.</p> <p>Agenda to consider: Reason for meeting – allegation, safeguarding concern or complaint – and description of information received (who, what, when, how).</p> <p>Summary of relevant background, context and professional perspectives, including the child's views and lived experience (where known), placement history and context, and relevant safeguarding or practice history.</p>





Purpose and agenda	<p>Threshold consideration: discussion of whether the information meets the threshold for a professional strategy discussion, including consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Nature and seriousness of the concern · Risk of harm and impact on the child · Intent, context, and proportionality · Relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and local procedures <p>Decision made by safeguarding lead and rationale for decision</p> <p>Actions and next steps including recording, oversight and monitoring actions and review</p>
Timescales	<p>As soon as information that could be considered to constitute an allegation/concern/complaint is received.</p>

Professional strategy discussion (PSD) - required by legislation²³	
Who convenes and chairs?	The safeguarding lead
Who is involved?	<p>The police</p> <p>Child's social worker and social work manager</p> <p>Supervising social worker and fostering team manager</p> <p>Any other appropriate agencies</p> <p><i>Consideration should be given to informing relevant inspectorates (Ofsted, Care Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate Scotland or the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland) and any relevant professional bodies.</i></p>
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To review the information reported with a relevant member of police staff and consider if the legal threshold for significant harm has been met for progression to a professional strategy meeting. Where it is agreed the threshold is met, this meeting should then extend to include a safety planning meeting (details on next page). All England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, multi-agency strategy discussions are legally required where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm. While terminology differs, the legal threshold, purpose and expectation of timely multi-agency decision-making are consistent.</p>

²³ See Appendix 4 for further details





<p>Purpose and agenda</p>	<p>Agenda to consider:</p> <p>Identification of any other activities (paid or voluntary) or caring responsibilities that the individual subject to the allegation has outside of their fostering role.</p> <p>Decision about what information can be shared with the individual subject to the allegation, the child and their parents.</p> <p>Decisions about employer involvement with the process.</p> <p>Agree any further actions needed prior to the professional strategy meeting.</p> <p>Decide whether immediate briefings to senior management are required.</p>
<p>Timescales</p>	<p>As soon as possible following the context and insight meeting when threshold has been met.</p>

<p>Safety planning meeting - recommended</p>	
<p>Who convenes and chairs?</p>	<p>The team manager of the child's social worker</p>
<p>Who is involved?</p>	<p>Child's social worker and social work manager</p> <p>Supervising social worker and fostering team manager</p> <p>Any other appropriate agencies</p> <p>Consideration should be given to informing relevant inspectorates (Ofsted, Care Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate Scotland or the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland) and any relevant professional bodies.</p>
<p>Purpose and agenda</p>	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To plan any actions identified by the professional strategy discussion that would require changes to the care arrangements for the child.</p> <p>NB: moving the child from the foster home should always be the last resort.</p>





<p>Purpose and agenda</p>	<p>Agenda to consider:</p> <p>Plans to arrange for supervision of the individual subject to the allegation whilst both they and the child remain in the home.</p> <p>Plans to move the individual subject to the allegation out of the home.</p> <p>A change of foster home for the child/ren.</p> <p>Plans for communication with children about changes to their care arrangements.</p> <p>Plans for communication with carers about changes to arrangements to care for the child/ren.</p> <p><i>This meeting is considered best practice in ensuring that plans identified as being necessary by the professional strategy meeting or discussion are implemented in a way that is child-centred and respectful of foster carers.</i></p>
<p>Timescales</p>	<p>Following recommendation from professional strategy discussion. Please note: a safety planning meeting can be convened at any time during an investigation and prior to any action to change the care arrangements for the child/ren in the home.</p>

Professional strategy meeting (PSM) - required by legislation

<p>Who convenes and chairs?</p>	<p>The safeguarding lead</p>
<p>Who is involved?</p>	<p>Police</p> <p>Child's social worker's manager</p> <p>Child's team manager</p> <p>Independent reviewing officer for the child</p> <p>Supervising social worker</p> <p>Fostering manager</p> <p>Health representative (safeguarding lead for health)</p> <p>Education/early years representative (teacher, head teacher, education safeguarding lead)</p> <p>Representative from the relevant care inspectorate (Ofsted, Care Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate Scotland or the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland).</p> <p>Legal representative for the local authority</p> <p>Employer of the foster carer (if their employment involves working with children or vulnerable adults)</p> <p>Human resources or personnel representative</p> <p><i>The chair will consider representation at the meeting and may invite other individuals as appropriate.</i></p>





Professional strategy meeting (PSM) <i>continued</i>	
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose: To ensure proper coordination of child protection, criminal and employment procedures.</p> <p>Agenda to consider: Share all relevant information about the allegation.</p> <p>Consider what action may be needed to protect the child at risk.</p> <p>Consider the likelihood of harm to other children within the household or with whom the individual subject to the allegation has contact, and agree any actions.</p> <p>Consider and evaluate the risk of harm to the children of the individual subject to the allegation or those for whom they have parental responsibility.</p> <p>Consider the welfare and support needs of the child or other children in the household.</p> <p>Discuss any previous allegations or concerns.</p> <p>Plan any enquiries needed and allocate tasks and timescales.</p> <p>Identify a lead contact manager within each agency.</p> <p>Decide what information can be shared with whom, when and who will do this, including the individual subject to the allegation.</p> <p>Agree dates for further strategy meetings.</p> <p>Consider whether the adult’s suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults in their employment/volunteering capacity has been called into question.</p> <p>Consider any disciplinary issues to be followed up.</p> <p>Consider any other factors relevant to the case such as a media strategy.</p> <p>Confirm arrangements about who will speak to the child or children involved.</p> <p>Identify the need for a safety planning meeting to coordinate changes to care arrangements if necessary.</p> <p><i>Further/follow-on strategy meetings can be convened as part of the process to monitor and coordinate actions as required.</i></p>
Timescales	<p>Following the initial strategy discussion and recommendation that threshold is met for a professional strategy meeting.</p> <p>Timescales are set by the respective national and local child protection procedures.</p> <p>Good practice determines that the professional strategy meeting should take place within 24-48 hours after the initial professional strategy discussion.</p>





Outcomes strategy meeting - required by legislation	
Who convenes and chairs?	The safeguarding lead
Who is involved?	As per the initial strategy meeting, the chairperson of the meeting will confirm and agree the necessary representation from each agency.
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose: To consider the analysis of all the information from the investigation and confirm how enquiries should be concluded.</p> <p>The following outcomes are possible:</p> <p>Unfounded: There is evidence to disprove the allegation.</p> <p>Unsubstantiated: There is not enough evidence to prove or disprove the allegation, rather it is reflective of an inconclusive outcome.</p> <p>Substantiated/founded: There is evidence that the allegation has been proven.</p> <p>Malicious: Where it has been used, it means the allegation is entirely false and there is clear evidence to prove that there has been a deliberate act to deceive. Use of this term is no longer considered best practice; see page 12.</p> <p>Ensure that the appropriate referrals are made to the Disclosure and Barring Service/Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme in Scotland, and registering bodies of the adults involved if applicable.</p>
Timescales	Following confirmation from relevant agencies that the investigation has concluded.





Post outcome planning meeting (where the outcome is unsubstantiated or substantiated/founded) - recommended	
Who convenes and chairs?	The safeguarding lead
Who is involved?	<p>Attendance at this meeting should, if possible, include those present at the strategy outcomes meeting and include, at a minimum, the following members of staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering team manager Supervising social worker Child's social worker Child's team manager Independent reviewing officer Any other participant deemed necessary
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose: To analyse findings and make a recommendation in relation to continued suitability to foster, following an unsubstantiated or substantiated/founded outcome. This may include restrictions on future approval statuses and expectations in respect of continued assessment, such as progressing to standards of care assessment.</p> <p>Agenda: Consider the ongoing care of, or return of, children in view of professional strategy meeting outcome decision.</p> <p>Analysis and consideration of fostering regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Agree next steps in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any care standards assessments and timescales • future children being matched and timescales • review of approval status • learning and development needs (service and foster carers) • enhanced monitoring requirements. <p>A unsubstantiated or substantiated/founded outcome does not automatically indicate that a termination of approval is required.</p> <p>These further assessments are required to be completed prior to annual review and return to fostering panel.</p>
Timescales	Immediately following the conclusion of the outcome strategy meeting.





Foster carer resolutions meeting - recommended	
Who convenes and chairs?	Fostering team manager
Who is involved?	<p>Fostering team manager (chairperson)</p> <p>Supervising social worker</p> <p>Child's social worker</p> <p>Foster carer</p> <p>Foster carer's support or advocate</p> <p>Any other participant deemed necessary to support the resolution of matters</p>
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To debrief following an investigation and consider the impact on the foster carer and their family.</p> <p>To consider wellbeing, endings, relationship repair and counselling needs.</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>The impact of any decision to remove a child.</p> <p>The needs of everyone in the foster carer's family.</p> <p>The perspective of the fostering service.</p> <p>Clarification of the foster carer's current approval and communication about any further assessments or review of approval.</p> <p>Feedback from the fostering family on the way the investigation was conducted and how the fostering service undertook their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Lessons to be learnt for the foster carer and implications for future children.</p> <p>Lessons to be learnt for the local authority or fostering service about things that could be done differently.</p> <p>Learning and development needs of the foster carer or the fostering service.</p> <p>Any ongoing welfare issues for the foster carer or members of their household arising from their experiences.</p>
Timescales	To be agreed by fostering team manager, particularly if there is to be a care standards assessment prior to a return to fostering panel. Best practice is to convene no later than two weeks after an investigation has been concluded.



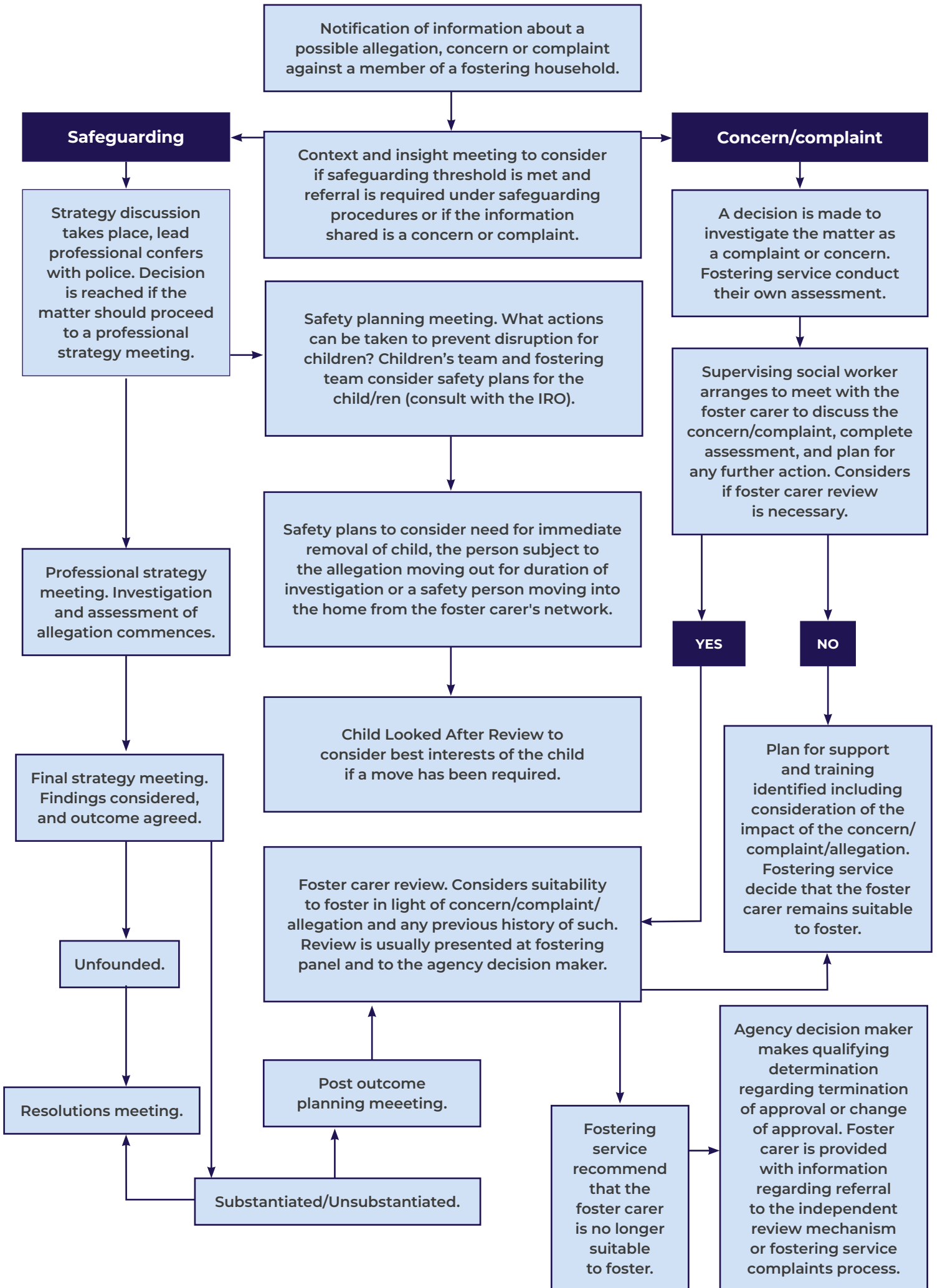
Child's resolutions meeting - recommended	
Who convenes and chairs?	Child's social worker and supervising social worker
Who is involved?	Child Foster carer Child's social worker Supervising social worker Child's advocate (if applicable)
Purpose and agenda	<p>Purpose: To ensure that all involved have an opportunity to conclude what has happened positively. For the child to know they are not to blame. An opportunity to have a positive ending if the child has moved on. To consider wellbeing, endings, relationship repair and counselling needs.</p>
Timescales	<p>Following the foster carer's resolutions meeting and only if deemed suitable for all involved.</p> <p>Meeting is to be positive, trauma-informed and in the best interest of the child. If this is unlikely to be achieved then it should not be convened.</p>

The table above (*Table 4*) outlines the meetings that are necessary for the investigative process when an allegation has been made against a foster carer.

The allegations flowchart on the next page provides an “at a glance” guide to managing allegations meetings.



Allegations process map (Figure 1)



Roles and responsibilities – key primary practitioners involved in the process

While the following list of roles and responsibilities is not exhaustive, it provides a summary of the key responsibilities of the practitioners involved in the allegations process. All actions are to some extent dependent on individual circumstances and the recommendations from the professional strategy meeting.

The safeguarding lead

England, Scotland and Wales have a nominated role within a local authority responsible for managing and monitoring safeguarding allegations in relation to paid, and unpaid, social care workers. This includes provision of advice, information and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations about safeguarding.

These roles are:

The Local Authority Designated Officer (England/Wales)

The Designated Officer for Safeguarding (Wales)

The Designated Manager (Scotland)

In Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Trusts Gateway Services and Social Care Governance departments undertake these roles.





Manager of the fostering service (local authority) or manager of the regulated fostering service

The fostering service manager is responsible for ensuring the fostering service complies with statutory child protection guidance and fostering regulations in relation to the treatment of foster carers and the actions required when an allegation is made. Their responsibilities include:

- Informing the safeguarding lead within 24 hours of when an allegation is made about a foster carer.
- Communicating with the children's team manager about the allegation and any action required to safeguard the child/ren.
- Deciding what information is shared with the foster carer at this stage.
- Ensuring that the foster carer is informed verbally and in writing following the decisions of the strategy meeting.
- Ensuring that there are policies in place for safeguarding young people in foster care and procedures for dealing with allegations, and that all staff and foster carers have access to these and have regular training and supervision.
- Ensuring that the fostering service is represented at strategy meetings and other meetings, and all relevant fostering information is provided to assist with the investigation (see Appendix 2).
- Ensuring that foster carers are provided with the relevant training and support in accordance with regulatory responsibilities.
- Ensuring that information about any allegation is recorded and stored confidentially.
- Notifying relevant regulatory bodies (Ofsted, Care Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate Scotland, and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland) if required.
- Making decisions about financial or other support for foster carers in accordance with local policy and procedure.





The supervising social worker

The role of the supervising social worker when an allegation is made is to:

- Alert the fostering manager and consult with the child's social worker as soon as a report is received.
- Make a referral to the local authority if requested. (For staff within regulated fostering services.)
- Attend all meetings and provide relevant information to assist in the investigation.
- Keep detailed recordings throughout the process, ensuring that factual information is distinguished from opinion.
- Ensure that copies of relevant foster care recordings are shared with the child's social worker and added to the child's case file.
- Support the child's social worker when notifying the foster carer verbally of the allegations.
- Stay in contact with the foster carer and keep them updated in accordance with the agreement of the professional strategy meeting.
- Plan for support including independent support and financial support.
- Arrange the foster care annual review at the end of the process.
- Ensure that the outcome is recorded on the foster carer's case record.
- Contribute to any further meetings after the outcome strategy meeting, such as professional planning meetings or resolutions meetings.

The child's social worker

When an allegation is made against a foster carer it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to:

- Notify their manager as soon as an allegation has been made.
- Ensure that the fostering service is made aware of the allegation as soon as possible.
- Assist the line manager and fostering manager in deciding whether the child is currently safe, and whether a medical examination is needed.
- Arrange a child protection medical if required.
- Notify the child's independent reviewing officer that an allegation has been made and where a move is being proposed.
- Notify the foster carer that an allegation has been made (supported by the supervising social worker).
- Support the child or young person during the process, including communicating what will happen next and arranging to support with a move if required.
- Be present if the professional strategy meeting agrees that the child will be interviewed by the police. Alternatively, talk to the child directly if a single agency investigation is agreed.
- Keep detailed recordings.
- Attend all professional strategy meetings and other meetings as required and keep their line manager informed and updated.
- Attend any further professional meetings or resolution meetings as required to conclude the process.

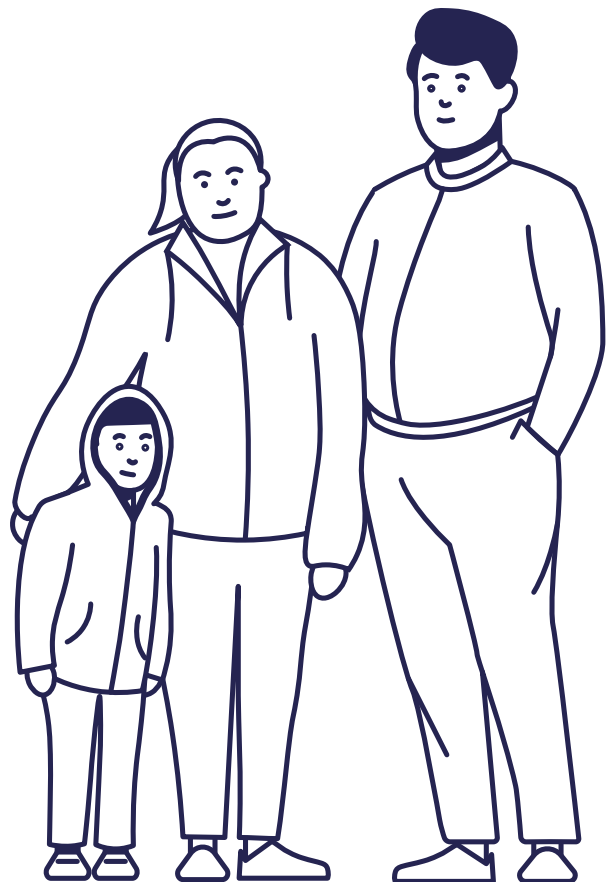


The police

The police have legal responsibilities and a range of powers to investigate crimes against children and take protective action where necessary, along with the local authority.

When an allegation is made against a foster carer, their responsibilities include:

- Establishing if a crime has been committed requiring a police investigation.
- Assessing the risk of harm to a child and taking any immediate action required to protect them.
- Sharing relevant intelligence and background information at the professional strategy meeting. This includes any cautions or convictions recorded on the police database.
- Considering a formal interview with the foster carer who is subject to an allegation.
- Consider the need for an ABE (achieving best evidence) interview with the child or young person who has made the allegation.





Conclusion of the process

At the end of the investigative process, the outcomes strategy meeting should provide clarity on the conclusion that has been reached. This outcome will inform and determine the next steps for the foster carer and the fostering service.

Once the strategy meeting has fulfilled its statutory remit, the investigation is concluded and it is the responsibility of the fostering service to make recommendations regarding the foster carer's future approval status.

The children's social work team is responsible for decisions regarding the child, arranging a child looked after review and updating and supporting the child with the outcome where necessary.

At the conclusion of the final strategy meeting, the supervising social worker will communicate the outcome verbally to the foster carer. The foster carer will also receive communication in writing from the chair of the strategy meeting, advising them of the outcome. It is good practice for the fostering manager to confirm the outcome in writing, setting out the implications of the outcome and the plan for any further action if required.

Actions required following an unfounded outcome

If the allegation is unfounded, it should be recorded and made clear to the foster carer in writing. It is important to protect the foster carer from any lingering doubts and suspicions. It is the responsibility of the fostering manager to determine whether an early annual review and presentation to fostering panel is required following an unfounded outcome but, in most cases, this is not necessary.

The allegation can be explored as part of the routine annual review process, in line with the service's usual practice. The fostering service should use this opportunity to reflect with the foster carer on how they engaged in what was likely to be a very stressful situation, and their ability to keep the child's best interests at the centre of all their actions. The fostering manager and the supervising social worker should consider whether any further support is required by the foster carer or the fostering family.

Additionally, a resolutions meeting should be convened with the foster carer to de-brief and allow the carer to express their feelings and views about the investigation. This may help to re-establish trust and confidence, and limit the potential for the foster carer to resign from their role.





Actions required following an unsubstantiated outcome

The outcome strategy meeting may be unable to reach a conclusive decision as to whether the allegation against the foster carer is substantiated/founded or unfounded.

It is important to bear in mind that an unsubstantiated outcome does not mean that the allegation was true or untrue. Rather, it means that there was not enough information for practitioners to reach a firm conclusion and this can be a difficult and distressing outcome for the foster carer. It is essential that the fostering service undertakes any further assessments and should use this opportunity to reflect with the foster carer on how they engaged in what was likely a hugely stressful situation. The fostering manager and the supervising social worker should provide any additional support to the foster carer and their family, as quickly as possible.

It will be necessary to convene a post outcome planning meeting to review the unsubstantiated outcome in the context of the fostering regulations. This meeting will agree a plan for further assessment of the foster carer's continued suitability and/or to address gaps in the foster carer's training and knowledge, and consider future expectations and proportionate levels of monitoring. While some foster carers may experience this as unnecessarily intrusive, it can be a helpful way of confirming with the foster carer whether their fostering service is satisfied that the outcome does not indicate

unresolved matters. It also provides an opportunity to acknowledge any identified gaps or learning outcomes for the service.

The assessment should involve a transparent discussion between the fostering service provider and the foster carer. It should consider the allegation and the outcome and be balanced alongside the foster carer's views with all relevant background information. It should also acknowledge there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the allegation is substantiated/founded.

Every situation will be unique. The focus for an assessment of continued approval should include consideration of the needs of any children and whether the foster carer can achieve the best outcome for them.

It may be that the foster carer can continue to meet the regulations to foster within their current approval status, or perhaps for a specific child only, or with a change to their approval status. A foster carer annual review should be arranged following completion of the assessment. This will consider the foster carer's continued suitability to foster, and/or whether a change of approval status should be recommended.

Actions required following a substantiated/founded outcome

It will be necessary to convene a post outcome planning meeting to review the substantiated/founded outcome in





the context of fostering regulations, and agree on a plan for further assessment. A substantiated/founded outcome does not automatically result in termination of approval. Every situation is unique, and the focus for an assessment of continued approval should include consideration of the needs of any children, and the best outcome for them.

It may be that the foster carer can continue to meet fostering regulations for a specific child only, or with a change to their approval status. A foster carer annual review should be arranged following completion of the assessment. This should consider the foster carer's continued suitability to foster, or whether a change of approval status should be recommended.

If there is evidence of serious harm or conduct that is incompatible with continued approval as a foster carer, then the fostering service is likely to recommend termination of the foster carer's approval.

A resolution meeting with the foster carer should be convened at the earliest opportunity following the conclusion of the strategy meeting process, to de-brief and provide feedback to the fostering service. This may help to re-establish trust and confidence and limit the potential for the foster carer resigning from their role. If the foster carer decides not to continue to foster or is no longer deemed able to meet the regulatory requirements to foster, a resolutions meeting may support the relationship to end on a positive note, with feedback and learning considered and addressed.





Reviews of foster carers' approval following allegations, concerns or complaints

Following the outcome of an investigation, the main task for the fostering service is to consider the foster carer's continued suitability to foster. It is the responsibility of the fostering manager to determine whether an early annual review should follow the outcome of a child protection investigation. This is likely to be determined by the outcome and the individual circumstances of the case. However, in most cases it is good practice to convene an annual review following the outcome of an investigation into an allegation or serious concern.

The review provides a focus for considering information from the investigation, as well as the foster carer's experiences from the preceding year. Considering a range of information can provide a more robust and reflective experience rather than just focusing on recent safeguarding issues.

It is vital to consult with all relevant parties as part of the review process. This will include the child's social worker, the independent reviewing officer, the child or children in foster care and any other child in the household, as well as the foster carer. In situations where the allegation has led to a child being moved from the foster home, it is necessary to get an end of placement feedback report from the child's social worker, and understand the views of the child who has moved home. It is

essential to listen to, and understand, the views of children in the household in child-centred practice.

The annual review can consider:

- The current issue in the context of any previous allegations or concerns.
- The impact of the allegation and investigation on the carers, their household, and the child or children in their care.
- Whether the foster carer has had an opportunity to give feedback on the concerns.
- The strengths, as well as vulnerabilities or worries, evidenced over the preceding fostering year.
- Identification of gaps in the foster carer's practice and knowledge.
- Formulation of a view as to whether the foster carer's terms of approval are still appropriate.
- Making recommendations about the foster carer's training and development, monitoring and support requirements, such as counselling services or mediation.

The reviewing officer will evaluate all the information presented and make recommendations for future action and approval. It is best practice for the annual review to return to fostering panel to consider the outcome. Fostering panels should have oversight of the overall fostering service's concerns, complaints and allegations as part of the quality and monitoring requirements.





Fostering panel

The fostering manager will read the review and consider the recommendations for further action. It is the responsibility of the fostering manager to determine if the review should be presented at panel (except in the case of the first annual review and those where there is a recommendation for a change of approval). In most situations where there has been a child protection investigation that has led to an early annual review, the fostering manager should recommend a return to fostering panel to ensure that the recommended outcome is subject to an appropriate level of scrutiny. The fostering panel plays a vital role in ensuring foster carers remain suitable to look after children. This is particularly important following a child protection investigation where there have been concerns about a foster carer's ability to safeguard a child in their care.

Fostering panel advisor

Although the presence of the fostering panel advisor is not a statutory requirement across the UK, they play a key role in ensuring the fostering panel has all the relevant information to recommend continued approval following child protection enquiries.

Fostering panel chair

The panel chair is responsible for leading the panel discussion and ensuring that the information presented to panel, following an investigation into a foster carer, is evaluated. The panel chair has a responsibility to support the panel in reaching a recommendation about the future approval of the foster carer. They also ensure that recommendations provided to the agency decision maker are carefully considered and explained.

The chair also helps to ensure that foster carers are treated fairly and their views are listened to and considered. The foster carer may wish to bring a support person with them to panel, or a representative from an independent agency. The panel chair and panel advisor will be responsible for deciding whether they can attend, explaining to any support people the remit of panel and the limitations of their involvement. It is good practice to accept a foster carer's request for additional support, unless the individual circumstances deem this to be inappropriate.

The agency decision maker

The agency decision maker is usually a senior manager within the fostering service or local authority who can make decisions on behalf of the service.

When a fostering panel has made a recommendation for the termination of a foster carer's approval, or a change of their approval status, the agency decision maker must make a qualifying





determination about the foster carer's suitability to foster. This means they must make a proposed decision. The foster carer will be provided with a qualifying determination letter, ideally within seven working days of receipt of the minutes from the fostering panel. The foster carer can contact the agency decision maker to challenge this decision within twenty-eight working days or alternatively can apply to the independent review mechanism in England and Wales for a review of the qualifying determination.²⁴

Foster carer resignation during an investigation

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for foster carers to offer their resignation during a standards of care or an allegation investigation. Taking the steps outlined in this toolkit to provide foster carers with support, respect and timely communication can help to reduce the risk of this. However, in situations where a foster carer does resign, their approval will end automatically at the end of their 28-day notice period.

However, the assessment of the foster carer's continued suitability to foster should be completed and referred to fostering panel, regardless of their resignation.

It can be difficult to complete a thorough and holistic assessment if the

foster carer does not wish to engage in the process.

Every attempt should be made to encourage and support their engagement and any limitations in this should be made clear in the assessment report. It is very important to ensure that any reports presented to fostering panel are also shared with the foster carer, even if they have resigned.

They should be given the opportunity to respond in writing to any assessment of continued suitability and the outcome being recommended to the panel.

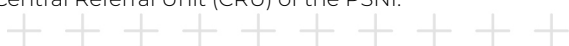
This ensures that the records held by the fostering service and any referral to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) or Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme in Scotland continue to be actioned and provide an accurately recorded audit trail. This is particularly important in the context of foster carers who resign during the process and then apply to foster in the future with another fostering service.

Notifications

Fostering services should check if there is a requirement to notify their regulatory body when a foster carer has been the subject of an allegation and been referred to the relevant barring service.²⁵

²⁴ <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/being-foster-carer/reviews>

²⁵ England – The Fostering Regulations 2011 state referral to Ofsted. Wales - The Local Authority Regulations Services (Wales) 2018 and the Regulated Fostering Services (Wales) 2019 set out the duties for Care Inspectorate Wales. Scotland - Scotland - Managing allegations against foster carers and approved kinship carers: How agencies should respond (2013) states referral should be made to the Care Inspectorate and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Vetting and Barring Scheme. Northern Ireland -The Oak Procedure - Regional Operational Procedure for Managing Concerns, Complaints and Allegations made in respect of Foster Carers in Northern Ireland (December 2025, currently in draft) states referral to the 'Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers' process via the Central Referral Unit (CRU) of the PSNI.





Moving on: A restorative approach

Investigation can be a painful and potentially life-changing event for foster carers, with a range of serious consequences.

They can experience detrimental impacts on their emotional and physical health, relationship difficulties, and financial consequences arising from changes to their fostering finance during the process.

The Fostering Network's 2024 State of the Nations' survey highlights the potentially devastating impact such experiences can have on the retention of foster carers, with 18% of former foster carers naming allegations as a factor contributing to them resigning. 26% of current foster carers who said they had considered resigning from fostering named allegations as a factor contributing to this.²⁶

Best practice approaches to supporting foster carers to continue in their role following an allegation should be considered by all fostering services. This is particularly important for the welfare and wellbeing of foster carers, as well as for addressing the shortage of foster carers and supporting stability for children in care.

Resolutions meetings

A best practice approach suggests that, in most circumstances, foster carers

should be offered the opportunity to engage in a resolution meeting following the end of the investigation.

This is different from a disruptions or placement stability meeting in that it focuses primarily on the foster carer and their family, rather than the fostered child.

The resolutions meeting is best chaired by the team manager or line manager of the supervising social worker, and should include the foster carer, their family members and support person (if requested), as well as the child's social worker where appropriate. It is important to ensure that this meeting is not a replay of the investigation but takes a restorative approach, in which both sides are listened to and any hurt caused is acknowledged, while agreeing steps to repair the relationship²⁷.

This approach is particularly helpful in situations where there has been conflict and professional relationships have become fractured because of the allegations process. It encourages both parties to reflect on what has happened, take responsibility for their actions, understand the impact of harm on the foster carer and their family and remedy or 'make good' any harm caused.

26 Ellis, S. and Williams, N. (2025) *State of the Nations' Foster Care 2024*, The Fostering Network

27 Finnis, M. (2021) *Independent Thinking on Restorative Practice*, Independent Thinking Press





It is important that this meeting happens as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the investigation. This has been shown to help minimise the impact on foster carers and promote accountability and learning for both parties.

The meetings table (Table 4) sets out potential agenda items for this meeting. The key thing to bear in mind is that a restorative approach is concerned with listening to both sides, acknowledging any hurt caused and taking steps to repair the relationship.

This approach is not inconsistent with the implementation of actions or practice recommendations arising from

the investigation, or an assessment of suitability to continue fostering. It is rooted in a high degree of transparency, clear expectations, and consequences for noncompliance.

Where deemed suitable, it is also good practice to consider facilitating a meeting between the foster carer and the child involved in the allegation. The purpose of this restorative meeting is to ensure that both parties have an opportunity to conclude what has happened and if the child has moved on, to say goodbye in a calm and measured manner. Best hopes are for the child and the foster carers to respect the part they have played in each other's life and for all involved to move on.





Historic allegations

Many allegations of a safeguarding nature are not made until a child has left care.²⁸ It is not unusual for fostering services to receive complaints and allegations about foster carers by adults who were once looked after in foster care. The NSPCC refers to this as non-recent abuse.²⁹ These allegations may be accompanied by subject access requests (SARs) which require the fostering service to provide a copy of the social care records of the person raising the allegation.

Statutory guidance in all four nations is clear that all allegations of non-recent abuse must be followed up and investigated in the same rigorous manner as any other safeguarding enquiry.

However, while the process of referral and investigation will be similar, enquiries are likely to be more complicated. They will likely be made more complex by a range of individual circumstances, for example, if the foster carer is still approved and has children in their care; if more than one individual is involved; or if more than one local authority is involved.

Historic investigations can also be impacted by incomplete or incorrect information held on systems or in files. Where historic foster carer daily recordings have not been stored electronically or are incomplete, this can compromise an investigation.

Maintaining accurate records, and ensuring that all relevant information is recorded, can help to prevent the loss of essential insight and information held by those who are no longer employed by the service when an investigation into a historic allegation is instigated.

In circumstances where a historic allegation about a foster carer is made, the fostering manager, or other responsible manager, must make a referral to the designated safeguarding lead, who will consider if safeguarding procedures need to be followed.

28 Biehal, (2014) A Sense of Belonging: Meanings of Family and Home in Long-Term Foster Care, *British Journal of Social Work*, 44, 955-971, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcs177>

29 NSPCC (n.d.) [Non-recent abuse](#)

Appendix 1

Legislation**Table 1: Legislation, regulations, statutory guidance and non-statutory guidance for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.**

Country	Allegations and child protection concerns	Concerns and complaints
England	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Sec 47 Children Act 1989</p> <p>Sec 11 Children Act 2004</p> <p>Statutory guidance</p> <p>Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (DfE)</p> <p>Regulations</p> <p>Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Vol 4)</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)</p>	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p> <p>Statutory guidance</p> <p>Getting the Best from Complaints: Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People, and Others: Statutory guidance for local authority children's services (DfE 2006)</p> <p>Regulations and guidance</p> <p>Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 4: Fostering Services (2011)</p> <p>Local Government Ombudsman service https://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint/what-we-can-and-cannot-look-at</p> <p>Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)</p> <p>A recent judgement (Oni and others v Walthamstow and others, Jan 2025) has made it possible for foster carers to take issues of discrimination and/or whistleblowing to an employment tribunal. Cases must be lodged within 3 months minus a day from the date of the incident. It would be recommended to seek legal advice if you wish to explore this option.</p>

Country	Allegations and child protection concerns	Concerns and complaints
Wales	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p> <p>Social Services and Well Being Act 2014 (Replacing Part 3 of the Children Act with Part 3, 4 & 6 of the SSWBA)</p> <p>Local Authority (Wales) Fostering Services Regulations 2018 (as amended)</p> <p>Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers & Responsible Individuals) Regulations (Wales) 2019</p> <p>Statutory guidance</p> <p>Working Together to Safeguard People 2014 Vol 5: Handling Individual Cases to Protect Children at Risk (Wales)</p> <p>Statutory Guidance Fostering Services: Regulated Fostering Services (Wales) 2019</p> <p>Regulations and guidance</p> <p>Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Chapter 11 and Section 5: Safeguarding Allegations: Concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust</p> <p>The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Code of Practice 2018</p>	<p>Legislation</p> <p>The Local Government Act 1974 (Part 3)</p> <p>Regulations</p> <p>A guide to handling complaints and representations by Local Authority Social Services. Welsh Government (2014b)</p>

Country	Allegations and child protection concerns	Concerns and complaints
Scotland	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012</p> <p>Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011</p> <p>Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014</p> <p>Children (Scotland) Act 1995</p> <p>Children (Scotland) Act 2020</p> <p>Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968</p> <p>Local Government in Scotland Act 2003</p> <p>Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007</p> <p>Statutory guidance</p> <p>National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021</p> <p>Regulations</p> <p>Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>Health and Social Care Standards – My support, my life (2018)</p> <p>Managing allegations against foster carers and approved kinship foster carers: How agencies should respond (2013)</p> <p>Guidance on Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009</p>	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, Part 5</p> <p>Regulations</p> <p>Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>Health and Social Care Standards – My support, my life (2018)</p> <p>Guidance on Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009</p>

Country	Allegations and child protection concerns	Concerns and complaints
Northern Ireland	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.</p> <p>Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007</p> <p>Statutory guidance</p> <p>Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Department of Health 2024)</p> <p>Regulations and guidance</p> <p>Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 Guidance and Regulations Vol 3: Family Placements and Private Fostering</p>	<p>Legislation</p> <p>Children and Northern Ireland Order 1995 (S45)</p> <p>Regulations and guidance</p> <p>The Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996</p> <p>UK National Minimum Standards for Foster Care (1999)</p> <p>Oak Procedure Working Draft (2025): Regional Operating Procedure for Managing Concerns, Complaints and Allegations made in respect of Foster Carers in Northern Ireland</p> <p>The Foster Placement and Fostering Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025</p>

Country	Allegations and child protection concerns	Concerns and complaints
Northern Ireland	<p>The Review of Children’s Cases Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996</p> <p>The Foster Placement and Fostering Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025</p> <p>The National Minimum Standards for Foster care (1999)</p> <p>The Arrangements for the Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1996</p> <p>The Regional Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures for NI 2018</p> <p>Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers of Alleged and Suspected Cases of Child Abuse NI 2021</p> <p>Interface Protocol between HSC Trust and PSNI re Children Missing from Care 2023</p> <p>Looked After Children Handbook of Policies and Procedures – Volume 2</p> <p>Protecting Looked After Children Guidance 2018</p> <p>A Life Deserved – A Strategy for Looked After Children 2021</p> <p>SPPG Procedure for the Reporting and Follow Up of Serious Adverse Incidents 2016</p>	



Appendix 2

Template 1. Context and insight meeting

Date of completion	
Name of foster carer	
Name of supervising social worker	
Name of fostering team manager	
Name, D.O.B., social worker and placement start dates of children currently looked after in the household	
Name and D.O.B. of foster carer's own children and/or other children in household (e.g. children for whom the foster carer is a special guardian)	
Other persons in the home	
Detail of allegation (including date of referral)	
Emergency action taken to protect child (if required)	
Foster carer's approval status	
Foster carer's approval date	
Foster carer's DBS/PVG status and date	



Foster carer's next annual review date	
Date of last supervision/ supervising social worker visit	
Previous children cared for	
Training attended	
Any previous allegations, concerns or complaints (dates and details)	
Other information (<i>if relevant</i> dependent on individual circumstances) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedroom sharing – attach risk assessment. • Fostering Family Protective Care Plan and Child's Protective Care Plan. • Health and safety assessment/information. • Record of accident, illness, and injury. 	
Any other relevant information	



Appendix 3

Allegation threshold definitions and investigation outcome categories across the UK

The threshold definitions recognised as best practice by The Fostering Network align with the NSPCC recognised definitions:

Where is it alleged that a person who works with children has:

- *behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child*
- *possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child*
- *behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children*

Source: [Managing allegations against or concerns about people who work or volunteer with children](#)

Table 1 on page ten of this toolkit sets out clear guidance and best practice on defining concerns, complaints and allegations.

The investigation outcome categories recommended as best practice are:

- **Unfounded:** There is evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated:** There is not enough evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. Rather, it is reflective of an inconclusive outcome.
- **Substantiated/founded:** There is evidence to show the allegation has been proven.



Across the UK there are differences in the definitions and outcomes prescribed in legislation, regulations and guidance that relate to fostering and safeguarding procedures.

Country	Allegation threshold definitions	Investigation outcome categories
England	<p>“People in positions of trust</p> <p>An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child • possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child • behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children • behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.” <p>Source: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)</p> <p>Standard 22 - Handling allegations and suspicions of harm</p> <p>Source: Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)</p>	<p>No outcome categories are prescribed in legislation, regulations or guidance in England.</p> <p>In practice, English allegation-management and LADO processes commonly apply some or all, of the following five outcomes: substantiated, unsubstantiated, false, malicious and unfounded. The definitions attached to these outcomes vary at local level.</p>

Country	Allegation threshold definitions	Investigation outcome categories
Scotland	<p>"Concerns relating to a person in a position of trust</p> <p>3.14 Referrals relating to a person who has a position of trust over a child or young person under the age of 18 years and who may have caused harm to a child or young person through abuse, neglect or exploitation, should always be considered for IRD. The IRD process outlined below should be followed, with the additional considerations of whether to inform the relevant employer or organisation and whether this person continues to be a risk to the child or young person and/or any other child or young person.</p> <p>3.15 If the threshold of significant harm has not been met and an IRD is deemed not suitable, consideration should be given to the referral details by the receiving agency. It may be necessary to notify the employer or relevant organisation of a person's actions, as whilst not significant harm, the employer/ relevant organisation may wish to investigate further.</p> <p>Professional judgement about risk of significant harm</p> <p>3.12 Professional judgement is needed about the severity and immediacy of the risk of harm. This will be reviewed as relevant information is shared. There is no statutory definition or uniform defining criteria for significant harm. Significant harm refers to serious interruption, change or damage to a child's physical, emotional, intellectual or behavioural health and development."</p> <p>Source: National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023</p>	<p>The allegations guidance in Scotland states:</p> <p>"In most instances the outcomes of the investigation will fall into one of the following four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal charges will be processed through the criminal justice system and further review of implications for foster/ kinship carer's future in caring for looked-after children will be needed; • No criminal offence is being pursued, but concerns continue to exist and further review is needed of the implications of aspects of the carers' practice or conduct; • No concerns have been substantiated about the carers' practice, but the investigation has highlighted or resulted in stress between the carer and one or more of the children placed, so the implications of this will need further review; • No concerns have been substantiated about the carers' practice or their relationships with the children currently in placement." <p>Source: Managing allegations against foster carers and approved kinship carers: How agencies should respond (2013)</p>

Country	Allegation threshold definitions	Investigation outcome categories
Wales	<p>“Safeguarding allegations / concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust</p> <p>[These procedures] should be used in all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children or adults at risk has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or adult at risk · May have committed a criminal offence against a child or adult at risk or that has a direct impact on the child or adult at risk · Behaved towards a child, children or adults at risk in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with both children and adults” <p>Source: Wales Safeguarding Procedures Section 5 (updated 2021)</p> <p>Please note: updated Safeguarding Procedures will be published 1 July 2026</p>	<p>The Safeguarding Procedures in Wales state:</p> <p>“Allegations will have outcomes within the following four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Substantiated – a substantiated allegation is one which is established by evidence or proof. · Unsubstantiated – an unsubstantiated allegation is not the same as an allegation that is later proved to be false. It simply means that there is insufficient identifiable evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence. · Unfounded – this indicates that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively they may not have been aware of all the circumstances. For an allegation to be classified as unfounded, it will be necessary to have evidence to disprove the allegation. · Deliberately invented or malicious – this means there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.” <p>Source: Wales Safeguarding Procedures Section 5 (updated 2021)</p> <p>Please note: updated Safeguarding Procedures will be published 1 July 2026</p>

Country	Definition of an allegation	Possible investigation outcomes
Northern Ireland	<p>“Abuse by a Person in a Position of Trust</p> <p>Abuse can be perpetrated by adults working in a position of trust, either in an employed or voluntary capacity, in a variety of settings or within an organisation that has responsibility for, or provides services or activities, for children.”</p> <p>Source: Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (updated 2026)</p> <p>“Allegation:</p> <p>An allegation is information which suggests that there has been alleged or suspected abuse of a child which could include physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation or ill treatment of another or abusive behaviour directed at another.</p> <p>Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2024) contains definitions of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation and the ill treatment of others. These are set out in Appendix 1.</p> <p>When the information provided amounts to an allegation of child abuse, or there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, the case shall be referred into the ‘Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers’ process via the Central Referral Unit (CRU) of the PSNI.”</p> <p>Source: Oak Procedure Working Draft (2025): Regional Operational Procedure for Managing Concerns, Complaints and Allegations made in respect of Foster Carers in Northern Ireland</p>	<p>The allegations guidance states:</p> <p>“A conclusion will be made utilising the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allegation was founded: enough information was available and the investigation was able to establish, on the balance of probabilities, that the allegation was true. • The allegation was unfounded: enough information was available and the investigation was able to establish that the allegation was false. • The allegation was unsubstantiated: not enough information was available and the investigation was unable to establish that the allegation was true or false.” <p>Source: Oak Procedure Working Draft (2025): Regional Operational Procedure for Managing Concerns, Complaints and Allegations made in respect of Foster Carers in Northern Ireland</p>

Appendix 4

Legislation and statutory guidance around professional strategy discussions**Table 2: Legislation and statutory guidance for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**

Country	Equivalent to professional strategy discussion' should be replaced with 'Discussion/meeting'	Legislative/statutory basis
England	Professional strategy discussion/meeting	Children Act 1989 s47; <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)</i> – statutory guidance
Wales	Professional strategy discussion/meeting	Children Act 1989 s47; Social Services and Well being (Wales) Act 2014; <i>Working Together to Safeguard People (2021)</i> - statutory guidance
Scotland	Inter agency referral discussion (IRD)	Children (Scotland) Act 1995; Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; <i>National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)</i>
Northern Ireland	Strategy discussion	Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995; <i>Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2026)</i> ; SBNI Core Policies and Procedures

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity and membership organisation. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of children in foster care.

We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all children and young people in foster care experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

We have been leading the fostering agenda for 50 years, influencing and shaping policy and practice at every level.



This toolkit was created thanks to the generosity of practitioners, foster carers and young people who shared insight, knowledge and experiences to improve outcomes for others.

The authors of this product worked together to collate and create this collection of best practice guidance and tools.

This work is a collaboration and includes expertise and content from Non Davies, Tracy Bowen and Sarah Thomas.

Published 2026

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