



**The
Fostering
Network**

Promoting Good Practice in Allegations
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**So what is the difference between
Allegations and
Complaints/Standards of care?**

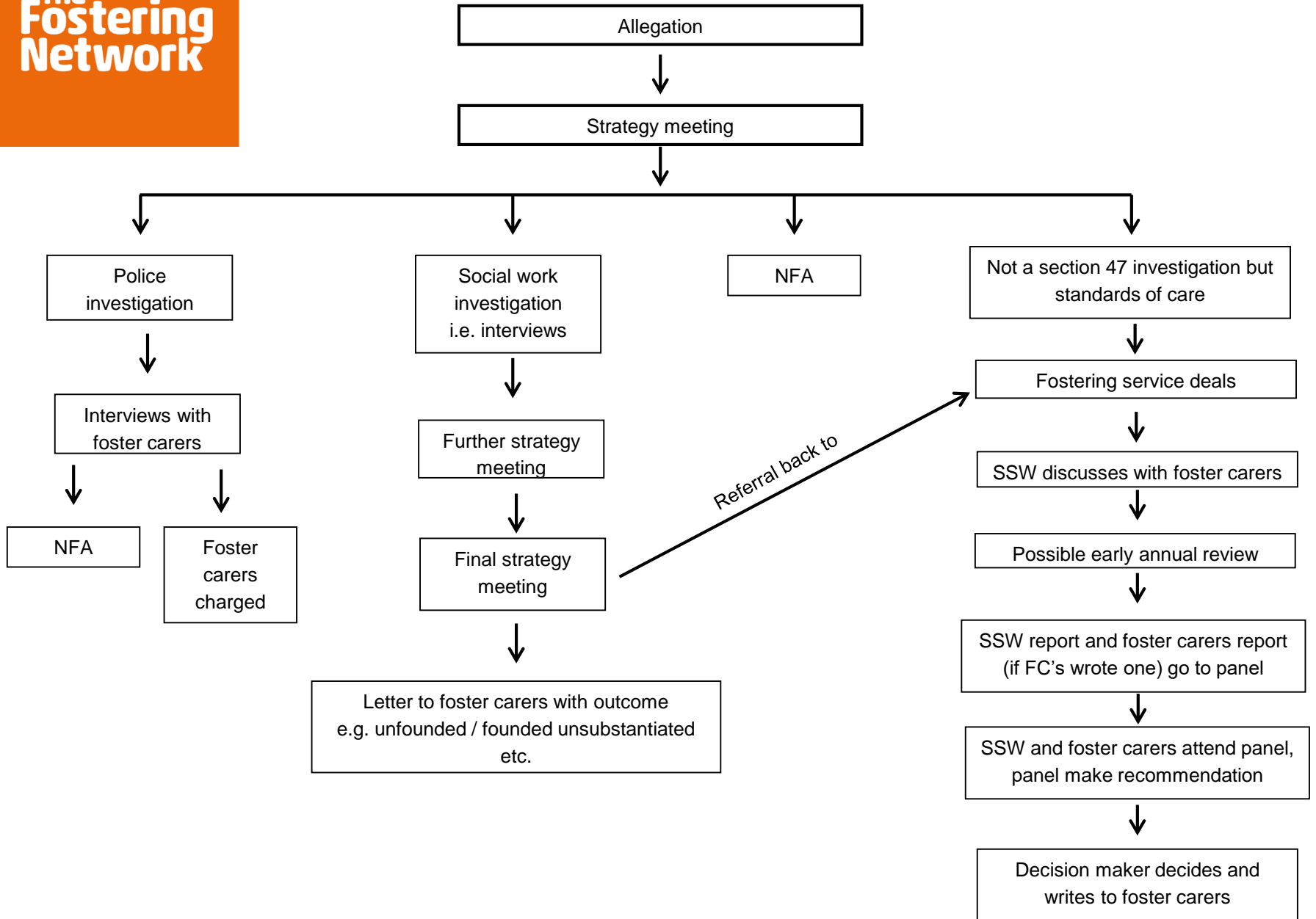
THRESHOLDS

What is an allegation?

- An allegation is an accusation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or serious neglect of a child or young person by the foster carer or any other member of the fostering family
- The outcomes are:
 - Substantiated or proven
 - Unsubstantiated
 - Unfounded
 - Malicious

What are concerns/Complaints/ standards of care

- A **standards of care/complaint/concern** refers to inadequate practice by a foster carer which is unacceptable, even though it is not causing significant harm to a child. Examples of unacceptable standards of care may involve issues of disciplining a fostered child, or not co-operating with contact arrangements for fostered children's families.
- All fostering services have a procedure for investigation complaints against foster carers.



Why are allegations made?

- **Children and young people can be mistreated in foster care**
- But an allegation can be false
 - Misinterpreting actions such as a comforting hug
 - Struggling with the closeness of family life
 - Trying to gain control
 - Birth parents or young person wanting the placement to break down

Why are allegations made?

- **Children and young people can be mistreated in foster care**
 - I cant look after my child so I expect perfection from a foster carer
 - Distraction from own faults
 - Feelings that foster carers want to keep the children
 - Different cultural practices
 - Parents wanting to show they fought for their children
 - Empowered by contact staff/solicitors
 - Young people firing off

What support is expected

- The National Minimum Standards 2011 are very explicit
- Standard 22 - foster carers should be provided with written information that makes clear:
 - How they will be supported; this should be independent and provide information and advice, emotional support, mediation and advocacy including attendance at meetings and fostering panel hearings
 - What payment will be received

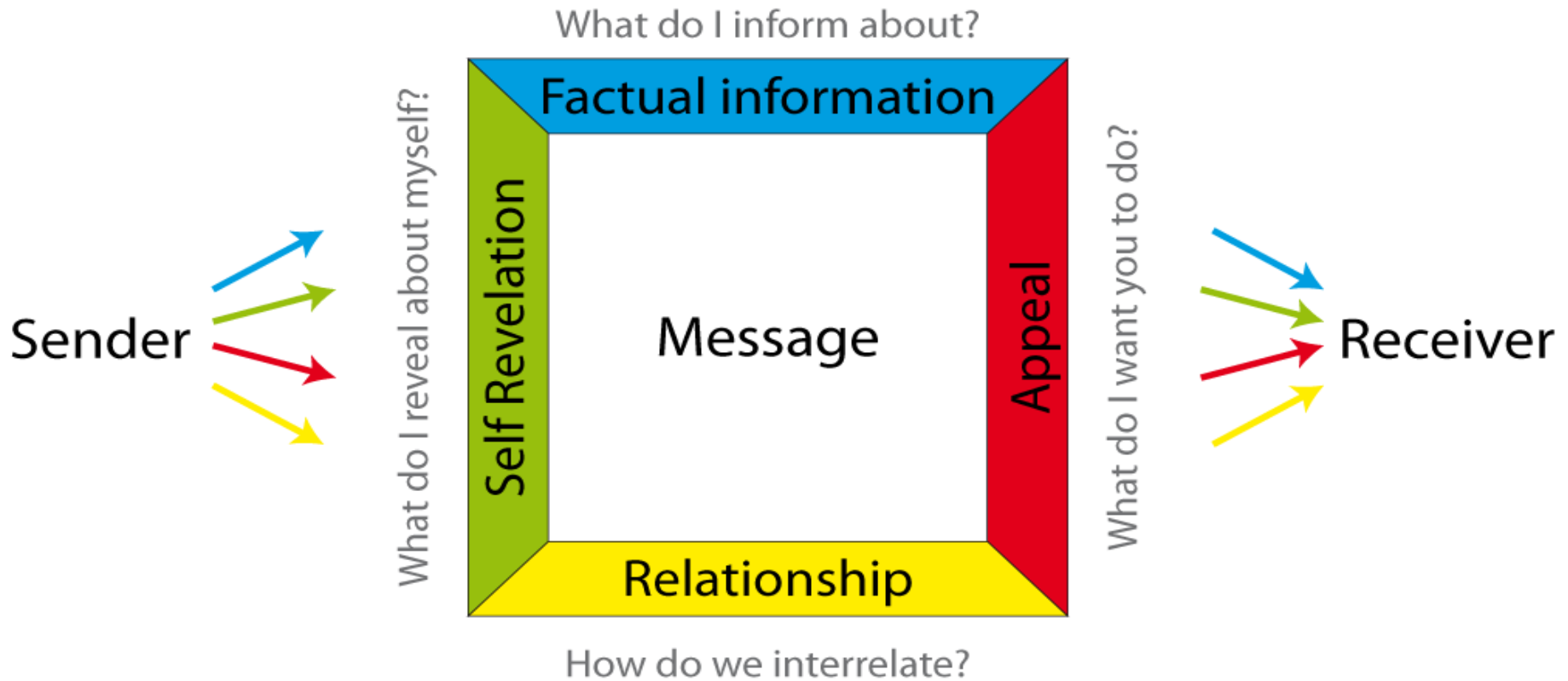
What support is expected

- Supervising social workers should still be supporting foster carers, he/she should be:
 - Keeping foster carers updated
 - Still offering to visit
- **Review process**
 - Foster carers should **ALWAYS** be given the opportunity to respond to any reports going to panel
 - Always give appropriate time to respond, this should be at least **14 DAYS**
 - If giving appropriate time means that paperwork cannot be sent out to panel members in time for the chosen panel date, it may need to be deferred.

General points

- **Always** provide a copy of the Allegations/complaints procedure to foster carers
- **Always** send out an initial letter to advise foster carers what they will get paid and for how long
- **Always** ensure independent support is available and offered to foster carers in a timely manner
- Send a copy of the allegations to foster carers in writing

Four-sides-model by F. Schulz von Thun



The feelings of fostering families

- Feelings of paranoia
- We are guilty until proven innocent
- It's like living in limbo
- We are isolated and feel unsupported
- We feel confused; helpless; angry; like we are being punished
- It's made me ill
- Fostering is not for us

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Thank you

Pat Woolley

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