

## Fosterline Wales Factsheet: Allegations

### Introduction

Facing an allegation of abuse or neglect is something that some foster carers will, unfortunately, experience during their fostering career. Our [State of the Nation 2016](#) report showed that a third of the carers surveyed had received an allegation. This is inevitably a distressing time for everyone involved. This factsheet explains what an allegation is, what happens if you are subject to an allegation, and how to protect everyone in our household.

### What is an allegation?

An allegation is an assertion from any person that a foster carer, or other member of the fostering household, has or may have behaved in a way that has harmed a child, committed a criminal offence against a child, or behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable for work with children.

Allegations are more serious than general complaints against foster carers, because allegations have to be investigated under the local child protection procedure. Allegations should be treated differently from concerns about poor standards of care.

An allegation made against you or a member of your family is a safeguarding matter, referred to your local social services department and investigated under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. They will:

- Ensure the immediate safety of all children in the household. This could mean removing the children you look after, pending the results of the investigation.
- Inform the police.
- Convene a strategy meeting.

A strategy meeting is a multi-disciplinary meeting chaired by a senior manager in social services and follows on from the strategy discussion. The police will be present as they are part of the investigation. A representative of your fostering service will be there, plus any professional who has relevant information about the incident, the child, or your family.

The meeting considers the information available and plans the investigation. A decision is made at this meeting regarding who will support the foster carer, and what information can be shared with the foster carer about the allegation and Section 47 enquiries. The chair of the strategy meeting will confirm this in writing to the foster carers. The local authority and your fostering service will inform you of the outcome.

You could be interviewed by social services and the police. It is strongly advised that you seek legal advice and have a solicitor present at a police interview. Members of The Fostering Network should phone our legal helpline for advice.

Throughout this stage, your fostering service cannot share information about the allegation. The person supporting the foster carer should arrange for the carer to verify and comment on the factual information given, unless this compromises any criminal investigation, inform them of the child protection procedures that will be followed and of the timescales set for the process. Foster carers often say they receive no support just at the time when they need it most. This is because, however unpleasant this sounds, you are part of an investigation, so for your own protection they can't divulge information before you have been interviewed. This is also why you can't attend the strategy meeting. Be prepared – other support is available.

Once members of the strategy meeting obtain all the relevant information, they will meet again to decide what happens next. Their prime concern is always the safety of all the children in your household. The local authority and your fostering service will share this decision with you.

It is in everybody's interests to complete this process as promptly as possible, but there is no set timescale. Experience suggests it is typically weeks, rather than days, but it could be months. This is a very difficult period for carers, who tell us that they don't know what is going on and that their whole lives are on hold. While the allegation investigation is current, no new children will be placed with you.

You will be told the conclusion and what happens next. There are three aspects to this:

1. A decision about whether any child or young person remains in your care.
2. Any police action that may be taken against you.
3. Your fostering service considers your continued approval as a foster carer.

One possible decision is that it becomes a 'standards of care' concern, that is an investigation undertaken by the fostering service into whether the carer maintained high enough standards of care, and whether they should remain a foster carer.

## **Support**

Your fostering service has a duty to make sure you know the procedures for dealing with allegations and to provide independent support (National Minimum Standards 2003). This includes advocacy and legal advice. The Fostering Network is one of the organisations offering independent support.

This support is for you, independent of your fostering service and in addition to anything they offer. You control the arrangements and the support is confidential.

You remain an approved foster carer so your supervising social worker will continue to visit and you can take part in training and other events, as usual.

## **Allowances**

While the placement remains open, best practice states that you should be paid a proportion of the fostering allowance, even if the child is not living with you. The terms are in your Foster Care Agreement. If it is decided that the child will not come back to you, your allowance will end too. Consult your independent support service if you are not sure about any of this.

## **Be prepared and stay safe**

Be prepared. Follow good safer caring practice to protect your household.

- Prevention: follow the guidelines in your fostering service's policy and procedures.
- Keep your safer caring family policy up-to-date.
- Go to training.
- Keep your records up-to-date. Record incidents objectively.
- Inform your provider of any incidents as soon as you can.
- Understand how you can get support.
- Understand why children might make an allegation.

## **How The Fostering Network can help**

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up to date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

### **Advice**

Fosterline Wales

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday. If you call outside this time please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us or write to us at:

[Fosterlinewales@fostering.net](mailto:Fosterlinewales@fostering.net)

The Fostering Network Wales  
1 Caspian Point, Pierhead Street  
Cardiff Bay CF10 4DQ

### **Independent support**

Independent support can be vital for foster carers in times of allegations or other disputes they may be involved in. The Fostering Network can provide independent support to foster carers via their fostering. Please note that if you are a foster carer you cannot get independent support from us directly. You must contact your fostering service to see if they have an advice and mediation contract with us, to provide this support.

### **Publications**

You can purchase our publication [Safer Caring: A New Approach](#), which covers some wider issues and suggests ways of thinking about the principles for safeguarding children and young people, at the same time as protecting yourselves and your families from allegations and complaints.

The Fostering Network has produced a booklet 'Signposts in Fostering', designed to help foster carers understand what is likely to happen if an allegation is made against them or a member of their family. It contains:

- an explanation of what allegations are and why they are made
- suggestion of good practice to minimise the risk of allegation
- advice about what to do if an allegation is made
- advice on how to seek legal support in the event of an allegation
- information on what might happen once an allegation has been made.

Members of The Fostering Network can purchase our Allegations publication online for just £2.00. (The Signpost is available for £4.00 for those who are not members of The Fostering Network).

## Support and resources

Our website is an essential source of information, see:

[thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/looking-after-fostered-child/allegations](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/looking-after-fostered-child/allegations),

while our online community brings together foster carers for peer support. You can login to share your experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss allegations. [www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)

## Legal protection insurance

The Fostering Network provides our members with access to a legal protection insurance scheme. Our retired foster care membership extends this insurance to members who are no longer fostering.

## Training and consultancy

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs. For more information, contact our learning and development manager, Sarah Mobedji at [sarah.mobedji@fostering.net](mailto:sarah.mobedji@fostering.net).

## About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children to make foster care the very best it can be.

## Contact us

To find out more about our work in Wales, please contact:

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