

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 3 July 2017

Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers

Report of: Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing
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Purpose of this report

1. The report introduces the new procedure in relation to: Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers report for Members to consider and note.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive or Committee is asked to:

1. That Corporate Parenting panel considers and notes the new procedure in relation to: Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. The procedure does not need to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny.

Background

2. The National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Fostering Services, along with the Fostering Regulation 2011, relevant to the placement of children in foster care, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 (CSA) for the conduct of fostering services. The Standards and Regulation focus on securing positive welfare, health and

education outcomes for children and reducing risks to their welfare and safety.

Issues

- The Fostering Service have a range of policies/procedures/practice guidance in place to support staff and foster carers on what the expectations are of the service/CBC.
- The Fostering Service uses Children's Services Complaints Procedure for dealing with and monitoring complaints by foster carers, birth parents and relatives, staff and other partners with a relevant interest in the CBC Fostering Services as provided. This procedure, however does not address concerns and complaints that may be made against foster carers.
- In order to support staff and foster carers and provide clarity when concerns and complaints are raised, a procedure has been written in relation to investigating concerns and complaints against foster carers.

Council Priorities

- Improved educational attainment and progress
- Protecting vulnerable children and young people
- Early help and improving life chances
- Being healthy and positive

Corporate Implications

Risk Management:

3. Regulatory Risks: The provision of sufficient and suitable foster placement is a key activity monitored by Ofsted during inspection, forming part of their judgement about services for Looked after Children.
4. Child Protection Risks: Failure to recruit or retain sufficient foster carers would be a child protection risk.
5. Reputational Risk: Recruitment of foster carers is a competitive market activity and has a high media profile.

6. Financial Risk: Looked after Children placements is a demand led activity. Independent Agency Placements are high cost, and variations in the proportion of independent versus in-house placements can have significant and immediate impact on forecast spend.

Legal Implications

7. This report provides an updating policy to consolidate the investigation procedure in relation to foster carers. Safeguarding the welfare of Looked After Children and monitoring and assessing foster carers are key objectives of the Council which are set out in primary and secondary legislation. This policy brings together the investigation procedure into one consolidated document.

Financial and Risk Implications

8. This report does not include any financial implications or possible financial risks . This is a practice guidance to provide staff with a framework.

Equalities Implications

Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The procedure includes some important principles which support the promotion of equality:

- Any concerns about the quality of care in fostering households should be investigated in a thorough, but fair, timely and consistent manner,
- All parties should be treated with dignity and respect
- The carer should be given a full opportunity to answer the concern/complaint and make representations,
- The investigation should be proportionate to the seriousness of the concern or complaint. The level can be increased or decreased as information, assessment, analysis and conclusions allow,

Conclusion and next Steps

This procedure has already been presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT) for approval and to the foster carers Talktime. The next step will be to distribute to fostering staff and foster carers and place the new fostering procedure on Tri-X (our online procedures manual) and embed the procedure into practice.

Appendices

Appendix A: Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers

Background Papers

None

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