

Escalation Policy for Foster Carers

General Principles of Resolutions

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the care of the children and young people to 'problem solve'. Communication is extremely important and is the key to resolving misunderstandings or disagreements.

Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of carers and Croydon Fostering Service, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children. The focus of this protocol is to ensure resolution and the continuation of good partnership working. Everyone should work to the principle of restoring relationships and disagreements at the lowest possible level, ensuring that concerns have been listened to and addressed.

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard children. Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion. Due to the nature of the work undertaken it is inevitable that there will be disagreements from time to time. Multi-agency/multi-professional debate, difference of opinion and respectful challenge should be encouraged to impact positive outcomes for children and young people.

How to escalate

Step One

Foster carers should make every attempt to resolve the problem via their Supervising Social Worker. It might be necessary for the supervising social worker to seek support from or consult with their manager or other colleagues within Children's Social Care to address the issue and seek a resolution.

The Supervising Social Worker must ensure that a record of the issue raised is recorded on the Foster Carer file (on CRS). The Supervising Social Worker must also record on the Foster Carer file if the issue was resolved and how, or whether the issue will be escalated.

This step should be resolved within 5 working days of matter being raised by Foster Carers (some exceptions might apply and carers and SSW might agree a different timescale).

Step Two

If the issue raised remains unresolved it should be referred/escalated to the Supervising Social Worker's own Team Manager. The Team Manager will want to know what efforts were made to resolve the issue within step one.

It might be necessary for the Team Manager to seek support from or consult with their manager or other colleagues within Children's Social Care to address the issue and seek a resolution. The Team Manager will talk to the Foster carer as part of this resolution process as necessary.

The Team Manager must ensure that a record of the issue raised is recorded on the foster carer file (on CRS). The Team Manager must also record on the foster carer file if the issue was resolved and how, or whether the issue will be escalated.

This step should be resolved within 5 working days.

Step Three

If the issue raised remains unresolved it should be referred/escalated to the Fostering Service Manager. The Fostering Service Manager will want to know what efforts were made to resolve the issue within steps one and 2.

It might be necessary for the Fostering Service Manager to seek support from or consult with their Head of Service or other colleagues within children's social care to address the issue and seek a resolution. As necessary the Fostering Service Manager will talk to the Foster carers and communicate any decisions to the carers either verbally or in writing.

The Fostering Service Manager must ensure that a record of the issue raised is recorded on the foster carer file (on CRS); they must also record on the foster carer file if the issue was resolved and how, or whether the issue will be escalated.

This step should be resolved within 5 working days.

Step Four

If the issue raised remains unresolved it should be referred/escalated to the Head of Service with responsibility for Fostering. The Head of Service will want to know what efforts were made to resolve the issue within the previous 3 steps.

It might be necessary for the Head of Service to seek support from or consult with the Director of Children's Social Care or other colleagues within children's social care to address the issue and seek a resolution.

The Head of Service must ensure that a record of the issue raised is recorded on the foster carer file (on CRS); they must also record on the foster carer file if the issue was resolved and how, or whether the issue will be escalated. The decision made will be communicate to the Foster carer verbally or in writing.

This step should be resolved within 5 working days.

Step Five

In the rare circumstances that the issue raised remains unresolved it should be referred/escalated to the Director of Children's Social Care.

NOTE:

The Foster carers can also use Croydon Council Complaints Procedures at any step of this process.

If matters raised are concerning the care of the child or safeguarding issues the care can also raise the concerns with the child Independent Reviewing Officer.

Effective Escalation

It has been proven to be helpful when trying to resolve disagreements/dispute to remember to:

- Clearly identify your concerns;
- Describe the impact on the child(ren)/young people;
- Set out what the bottom line is to resolve the issue(s) raised;
- Put all of the above in writing and present it in raising the issue;
- Record details of conversations;
- Be responsive to obtaining/providing any additional information requested.

Appropriate escalation

There are time when it might be necessary to present the initial issue directly to the Service Manager, Head of Service, or Director or children's social care. Circumstances where this might be relevant are:

- Where there are immediate safeguarding concerns regarding a child in (your) care;
- If the subject of concern is the Supervising Social Worker or Team Manager then the issue should be presented to Service Manager, and so on.
- Where the concerns are of such a magnitude that the reputation of Croydon Council would be adversely affected.

Flowchart

For ease of reference you will find a flowchart on the next page:

CROYDON FOSTERING ESCALATION PROTOCOL (CFEP) FLOWCHART

Clearly identify your concerns, highlighting impact on the child (ren)

Ensure that your concerns are recorded and that there is a record of any related conversations had

Respond to requests for more information

All concerned should ACT PROMPTLY

It is part of the process by which Children's Social Care learn from concerns and will enable services to respond strategically to issues identified.

Step 1

First speak to you Supervising Social Worker to resolve the issue. The supervising social worker should seek support if necessary.

Issue should be resolve within **5 working days** of first being raised.

Step 2

If the matter remains unresolved after 5 working days the matter should be escalated to the Supervising Social Worker's Manager.

Issue should be resolved within **5 working days** from the date it was escalated.

Step 3

If the matter remains unresolved after 5 working days have expired the matter can be escalated to the Fostering Service Manager.

Issue should be resolved within **5 working days** from the date it was escalated.

Step 4

In the unlikely event that the matter remains unresolved after 5 working days have expired the matter can be escalated to the fostering Head of Service.

Issue should be resolved within **5 working days** from the date it was escalated.

Step 5

In the unlikely event that the matter remains unresolved after 5 working days have expired the matter can be escalated to the Director of Children's Social Care