



## **When Foster Carers Separate**

### **Guidance for Supervising Social Workers when Foster Carers Separate**

When approved foster carers who are a couple and registered as such separate it must be considered a 'significant change' and as a consequence of this, a report on the foster carers' approval and circumstances needs to be presented to the Fostering Panel.

It will be a time of uncertainty and change. Couples themselves may be unclear about their future and what might happen.

As a Fostering Service it is important that, alongside offering support to the carers, there is a continued focus on the carers' ability to continue fostering, to meet fostering standards and the children's needs.

At the time of the separation the placing social workers should be notified by the supervising social worker, and their views sought. Consideration needs to be given to whether the foster placement/s is/are able to continue.

It may be useful to hold a professionals meeting or placement stability meeting to look at the support to the placement and children during this time.

Any professionals meeting needs to note whether or not a child/ren are in an approved long term fostering placement when a separation occurs and the impact of this on this approval.

When couples separate and one partner moves out of the home, the supervising social worker should **immediately** complete a brief interim report on the carers' circumstances. This should be sent to the Fostering Panel Adviser who will notify the next Fostering Panel under Any Other Business at the end of the panel agenda.

The report should contain the following information:

- Details of the couple – names and addresses, dates of birth
- Date and terms of approval
- Last review date
- Children in placement
- A brief summary outlining the split of the relationship and how the couple are managing
- A brief summary of the arrangements that have been put in place for the children and foster carers, ensuring that the children's wellbeing is given paramount importance

(It is not expected that this report will be more than a side of A4)

**Within 6 months from the date of the separation, an Annual Review** on the foster carer **must** be completed. The focus of this will include reference to the work done over the interim period since the last review but should also make reference to how the foster carer will meet the needs and expectations of the children in placement, and comply with fostering standards as a single carer.

This review, alongside a more detailed report giving a brief chronology of the relationship break up, arrangements for the children and how the couple are managing the break up, should be presented to the Fostering Panel at the earliest opportunity following the Annual Review. The purpose of this Review should be to approve the primary carer as a single carer, so all checks and references should be up to date and sufficient information should be included in the annual review to enable the Panel to make a recommendation in respect of a change of approval.

The carer who has moved out of the home should be encouraged to offer their resignation unless they wish to be assessed as a foster carer in their own right. If they wish to continue then the same arrangements as above should apply along with H and S checks for the new home.

In a situation where the couple re-unite following a period of separation which has been notified to the Panel, an Annual Review will need to take place. Alongside the Annual Review the supervising social worker will need to undertake an assessment of the couples' relationship, looking specifically at the stability and safety of the relationship. The assessment will need to look at the factors leading to the separation, how these arose and how they have been resolved, and what has changed to ensure stability of the relationship in future

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