

## Fosterline Wales Factsheet

### Allegations – how we can help foster carers.

#### 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 2019](#) report showed that a third of the carers surveyed were the subject of 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, may have 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 standards of care complaints and will be investigated differently from standards of care complaints.

An allegation made against you, or a member of your family, is a safeguarding matter, referred to the Safeguarding Team at your social services department and investigated under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Nov.2019  
<https://safeguarding.wales/>.

Note should be taken of the following:

- In Part 3, a description of the 'Section 47' investigation  
<https://safeguarding.wales/chi/c3pt1/c3pt1.p10.html>
- In Part 5, description of allegations/concerns about practitioners,  
<https://safeguarding.wales/chi/index.c5.html>  
Page 3 also states:  
*"Ensure that allegations and safeguarding concerns are dealt with in a fair, consistent and timely manner..... Ensure there is appropriate support, information and advice for all those affected during the process"*  
<https://safeguarding.wales/chi/c5/c5.p3.html>
- The glossary: sets out the safeguarding terms commonly used:

<https://safeguarding.wales/glossary.html>

Also ask for copy of any local additional procedures that are used in the investigation.

## **What happens next**

The safeguarding investigation will:

- Ensure the immediate safety of all children in the household, both foster and birth children. This could mean removing the foster children from your placement, pending the results of the investigation.
- Inform the police and other agencies.
- Convene a strategy meeting. A strategy meeting is a multi-disciplinary meeting chaired by a senior Social Services manager and follows on from the initial strategy discussion. The police will be present at the meeting and will decide if the police need to conduct their own separate investigation. A representative of your fostering service will be invited, plus any professional who has relevant information to contribute about the incident, the child, or your family.

The meeting considers the information available, plans the investigation, who will support the foster carer, and what information can be shared with the foster carers. The chair of the strategy meeting will confirm this in writing to the foster carers. Following the final strategy meeting, the Safeguarding Manager and your fostering service will inform you of the outcome of the safeguarding investigation. Ensure that this information is confirmed in writing and retained for safekeeping.

You could be interviewed as part of the safeguarding investigation. You may also be asked by the police to provide an interview under caution. 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 the 24/7 The Fostering Network legal helpline 01384 88 57 34 for legal advice and confirm a solicitor attendance at the interview.

Until the interview by the police, 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 of the investigation, keep them informed of the progress of the safeguarding investigation and of the timescales.

Foster carers often say they receive no support just at the time when they need it most. This is because, however difficult 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 patient. You should consider drawing on support from others, such as family members or another foster carer who has had similar experiences.

Foster carers should also be prepared for the possibility of additional investigations:

1. If the foster carer is a registered childminder, [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) (CIW) will have to be informed and the childminding service suspended.
2. If the foster carer has birth children under 18, these children may also be the subject of separate investigations. If this does occur, you should take legal advice as a parent.
3. If the foster carer is a grandparent or cares for other children, the foster carer may be asked to give their voluntary consent not to have unsupervised contact with these children during the investigation.
4. If members of the fostering family are involved in any employment or voluntary activity involving children, they will need to inform the person responsible for the service.

Once members of the strategy meeting obtain all the relevant information, they will meet again to decide the outcome of the safeguarding investigation and share the outcome with you. The outcome of any police investigation will be shared separately with you, by the police officer.

It is in everybody's interests to complete this process as promptly as possible, within the agreed timescale. Experience suggests it is typically months, rather than weeks. This is a very difficult period for carers and members of the foster family, who tell us that they have limited information and that their whole lives are on hold. While the safeguarding investigation is ongoing, no new placement will be made with you.

## **Next Steps**

Once informed about the safeguarding outcome, the following could take place:

1. A decision about whether any child or young person remains in (or returns to) your care.
2. The police investigation report is submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service.
3. Your fostering service will reassess your approval as a foster carer and submit a report with recommendations to the Fostering Panel.
4. If the safeguarding investigation confirms 'standards of care' concerns, the fostering service will need to undertake an investigation as to whether the carer maintained high enough standards of care, and whether their approval to continue as a foster carer needs to be reassessed.

## **Support**

Your fostering service has a duty to make sure you are kept fully informed, for you to know your 'rights' during the investigation and to offer independent support

[Fosterline Wales](#) is available daily 9.30am -12.30pm on 0800 316 7664 (or email [fosterlinewales@fostering.net](mailto:fosterlinewales@fostering.net)), to provide immediate telephone information, advice and support.

The Fostering Network provides a 24/7 legal advice service to members (see [The Fostering Network](#) Legal Advice Line above).

In addition, for the Fostering Network members, they can access the confidential Stress Support Service on weekdays between 9 to 5 on 01384 889 549.

Independent Support Service is contracted and paid for by your agency, independent of your fostering service and in addition to other support they offer. You decide how the on-to-one support is arranged for your benefit and the service is confidential.

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

## **Allowances**

If the foster child(ren) leave the placement then the weekly allowance will stop. Best practice states that you should be paid a proportion – a retainer – of the fostering allowance. Confirmation of your agency policy will be found in your agency's Fostering Handbook.

If it is decided that the placement will not resume, the retainer will end too. Consult your independent support service or Fosterline Wales (0800 316 7664) 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 and discuss at the Looked After Children's Review.
- Continue to attend training and any other fostering support sessions.
- Keep your records up to date. Record incidents objectively.
- Inform your fostering service of any incidents and record them as soon as you can.
- Discuss with your supervising social worker the details of support services.
- Understand the behaviour behind 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 at:

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

#### Legal helpline

For The Fostering Network members, a 24/7 [The Fostering Network legal helpline](#) 01384 88 57 34 for legal advice and solicitor attendance at an interview.

#### 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 contracted by their fostering agency. Please note that if you are a foster carer you cannot get independent support from us directly. You must contact your fostering agency to request that they contract on your behalf for an Independent Support Service.

#### Stress Support Service

For the Fostering Network members, they can access this confidential service on weekdays between 9 to 5, on 01384 88 95 49.

#### 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 - Allegations](#), 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. (It is also 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, 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)

Information about allegations can be found [here](#).

## 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 former 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

If you would like more information please contact:

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