



Foster Care Service Allegations & Complaints

2010

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Introduction

This booklet for foster carers and social workers describes the procedures to be followed when concerns about standards of care result in complaints or child protection allegations against Kent County Council's foster carers. It also explains the support available to foster carers who are the subject of complaints or allegations.

1. Background Information

Kent County Council's foster carers are expected to provide a high standard of care for the children they look after. They are not allowed to use physical punishment or any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. Physical restraint is only permitted where necessary to prevent injury or serious damage to property. Foster carers are also expected to promote a child's emotional and psychological wellbeing and to avoid the use of demeaning verbal reprimands or personal criticism that undermines self-esteem.

Kent County Council has a statutory duty to refer concerns that a person has caused harm, or poses a future risk of harm to children to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) fostering is specified as a "regulated activity". This means that if the Independent Safeguarding Authority concludes that someone is a threat to children they will be included on the barred list.¹

Before a referral is made to the ISA Kent's internal procedures will be followed. The 'Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures' (**under review**) referred to as 'KMSC Procedures' throughout this booklet describes the internal and external processes and thresholds for action in cases where allegations are made against Kent County Council's foster carers. (Section 11 – Allegations against those who work with children.)

These procedures and guidance apply whenever it is alleged that a person who works with children has, in any connection with her/his employment or voluntary 'activity with a child':

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child in a way which indicates (s)he is unsuitable to work with children.

Support available to Kent County Council Foster Carers is summarised in Section 9.

2. Complaints or Child Protection Allegations against Kent County Council's Foster Carers

Any person or worker who is aware of, or receives information, which indicates that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering significant harm in a foster placement, must immediately refer their concerns to the County Duty Service out of hours service on **08458 247100** (this includes allegations of historical abuse where it becomes evident that a disclosure by an adult relates to a foster carer).

The duty officer/child's social worker/supervisory social worker receiving the referral will inform their line manager. It is the responsibility of the duty senior to determine whether the allegation/

¹ The Independent Safeguarding Authority considers cases and maintains lists of individuals barred from engaging in regulated activity with children, and with vulnerable adults. For further information see www.isa.gov.org.uk

complaint/concern is:

- A referral of child protection concern, which requires an Initial Strategy Discussion (see below).

Or

- A complaint against the carer(s), which will be dealt with by the fostering service.

Complaint or Child Protection Allegation?

In all cases, deciding whether to deal with an allegation or incident as a child protection concern or as a complaint requires the following three considerations:

1. The nature and severity of any actual harm to the child.
2. The context in which the harm occurred.
3. Whether the alleged behaviour of the foster carer was (i) intentional and (ii) has, or is likely to, result in significant harm to the child in question or any other child in the household.

If there is disagreement about the status of the concern.

When there are disagreements about whether or not the concern is one of child protection, this is resolved through line managers and the LADO. However where there is any doubt child protection procedures need to be initiated in the first instance.

3. What is a Complaint against a Foster Carer?

A complaint against foster carers might include:

- An incident of minor physical chastisement resulting in no injury or a very minor injury.
- Inappropriate verbal chastisement.
- A child being restrained or inappropriately handled, resulting in no injury or a very minor injury.
- Incidents indicating inadequate supervision such as inadvertently allowing a child access to alcohol, prescribed medication, or unsuitable viewing of “adult” sexual material.
- Incidents indicating a lack of due care such as inadvertently wrongly administering prescribed medication.

Complaints against foster carers are investigated, in accordance with fostering complaints procedures, by an experienced social worker from the fostering team who is independent of the foster carer. The report should be presented to the next available fostering panel. The report and recommendations should include:

- Matters relevant to the placement of all children currently in the foster carer’s household.
- The placement of other children in the future.
- Implications for the registration of the foster carers.
- Identified training needs and additional support requirements.

It will be the responsibility of the fostering team leader to ensure that appropriate support/advocacy is made available to the foster carers which is independent of any complaint investigation.

Section 8 of this guide ‘The role of the Fostering Panel’ explains what happens when a

complaint is serious and may result in de-registration.

If the decision is that the concerns/allegation will proceed as a complaint or as no further action, the written record should outline:

- details of nature and source of allegation/concern
- any other relevant information
- decision reached and reasons for this
- parties to the decision
- if not already aware, how the persons with parental responsibility for the child(ren) are to be informed.

The record should be completed by the duty team manager and authorised by the District Manager of the area where the carer is resident.

The record must be copied to:

- the LADO
- OfSTED
- the manager of the County Fostering Service.

4. What is a Child Protection Allegation against a Foster Carer?

A referral of child protection concern will involve allegations which go **BEYOND** what would be considered to be a complaint regarding the care or management of a child in placement and may constitute a criminal offence in relation to the child.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (DCSF 2010) sets out key definitions of what constitutes abuse or neglect. These are also examples of relevant conduct (harm) for children which may be considered in making a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority:

- **Physical abuse:** this may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, supplying drugs to children, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill-health to a child whom they are looking after. Inappropriate/unauthorised methods of restraint are included.
- **Emotional abuse:** this is persistent emotional ill-treatment which has a severe and long-lasting effect on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are unloved or worthless, inadequate, or valued only when they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. It may involve causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. It may involve children witnessing aggressive, violent or harmful behaviour such as domestic violence. Some level of emotional harm is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Grooming, harassment, and inappropriate emotional involvement is also included.
- **Sexual abuse:** this involves forcing or enticing a child or a young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The abuse may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. It may not include

physical contact, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Downloading child pornography, taking indecent photographs of children and sexualised texting are all examples of relevant conduct.

- **Neglect:** this is the failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs and is likely to result in the significant impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical danger or harm, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs.

5. Child Protection Allegations - what happens?

If the matter is to be considered under the child protection process Children's Social Services/ Children's Social Care must discuss the case with the police at the first opportunity and inform them if a criminal offence may have been committed against a child. This includes allegations of historical abuse where an adult makes a disclosure relating to a foster carer. The police should be informed, if the service user wishes, and if the perpetrator is currently caring for children then a child protection enquiry should be instigated (KMSC Section 10).

The duty manager of the District where the carers are resident should make an immediate assessment of the level of risk to the child(ren) in placement (and any need to move them prior to the strategy discussion) in consultation with the LADO, investigating social worker, supervising fostering social worker, and child(ren)'s social worker(s) and managers.

The close inter-relationship between local authority registered carers and Children's Social Services/Children's Social Care and the need to ensure the investigating social worker's independence should be taken into consideration in the allocation and management of any enquiries/investigation.

It is important to ensure that roles and relationships are sufficiently objective to ensure and be seen to ensure a thorough and fair process e.g. the person undertaking the enquiries must not be the child's social worker, or be managed by the person with line responsibility for the child(ren).

Accusations of child abuse are a serious matter, and foster carers who are the subject of such allegations are advised to seek immediate legal advice. The Kent Fostering Service has commissioned FosterTalk, an independent support service for carers. Memberships entitles foster carers to:

- emotional support, guidance and advice from the FosterTalk Counselling Helpline
- arrest and interview assistance. Where carers are to be interviewed by the police, they are strongly advised to have a solicitor present.
- insurance against legal costs due to involvement in a prosecution, civil action etc. ²

Procedures to be followed in the event of allegations against Foster Carers

There are three separate but related aspects to the procedures. These are:

2 FosterTalk insurance policy is set out in the FosterTalk leaflet for carers.

- The Child Protection investigation, including consideration of whether a referral should be made to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.
- Any criminal investigation which may take place.
- The consideration of the foster carer's registration with Kent County Council by the fostering panel and any other relevant registration or work undertaken. This will take place whenever there is an allegation or a serious concern regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

No new foster children will be placed with a family until each of these three processes of the investigation have been completed. It is recognised that an investigation into allegations of abuse against a foster carer are traumatic and have serious implications for the health and livelihood of a foster family and therefore a conclusion should be reached at the earliest opportunity. It is essential that the District Manager responsible for the investigation monitors the case and addresses any delay. The District Manager should liaise with their equivalent (i.e. in area child originates from or host district). Carers are to be kept informed of the process of the enquiry by their Fostering Social Worker and they should be given an estimated timescale.

6. The Initial Strategy Discussion Meeting – who attends and what is discussed?

Where allegations of deliberate harm are made against a Kent County Council's foster carer, the children and families duty manager of the area where the carers are normally resident should ensure that an Initial Strategy Discussion takes place within 24 hours (this may be by telephone). If emergency action is required immediately, the strategy discussion should be convened as soon as possible. The purpose of the Strategy Discussion is to consider the concern or allegation and plan any subsequent enquiries and/or protective action. The Initial Strategy Discussion should involve the following:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or nominee.
- The duty team manager will chair (unless there is a complex situation/conflict of interests, when the District Manager should chair).
- The allocated duty social worker.
- The supervising social worker for the foster carer.
- The child's social worker and the team leader.
- The social worker of any other child placed in the household.
- A representative from the Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) in the area where the foster carer is normally resident.

And, as appropriate:

- Area Performance & Standards Officer, Child Protection in complex cases.
- The fostering team leader in complex cases.
- The local consultant community paediatrician (where a medical examination may be considered).
- Any other involved professional, (such as a school representative, community paediatrician etc.) who has relevant information to contribute.
- OfSTED Representation.

The chair should decide whether to seek legal consultation, including any need to refer to the council's insurers.

In addition to planning enquiries in accordance with strategy discussion procedures the meeting should consider the following:

- The allegation and its context.
- The background, including any other previous allegations made against the carer(s) or their family.
- The background of the alleged victim, including any previous allegations.
- Any proposed new placements with the carer will not be made pending the outcome of the enquiry.
- Whether the child(ren) remain in placement (removal of child(ren) should not be an automatic course of action - the decision making should be in the context of the best interests of the child and the information available).
- Other children currently living in the carer's household, and those previously placed with the carers (including the need for strategy discussions with regard to any of these children) and what information to be given.
- Any other children the carer may have contact with in other roles e.g. as a child minder or youth worker.
- The status of the carers, as co-workers and individuals who have a right to be heard
- Who will inform the parents/carers of the allegation and provide information and the timing of such actions.
- The support and information to be provided to the child(ren) in the placement, including the carer's children e.g. use of advocates.
- The role of the supervising social worker and the fostering team and alternative sources of support. All parties need to understand that the focus for the supervising social worker is the child and that (s)he will be unable to provide unconditional support to the carer (see Section 9 for further information on support to carers, and Section 10 regarding the role of the supervising social worker).
- How, and when, will the parents be informed of the allegations.
- Whether to initiate Organised and Complex abuse procedures. See page 270 of Kent & Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures.
- Whether payments to carers should continue.

The Strategy Discussion will consider all children being cared for or having significant contact with the person the allegation has been made against and will agree one of the following:

- That further enquiries need to be made in order to determine what further action is required; who will undertake the enquiries and when they should be completed.
- That the allegation/concern is not substantiated and no further action will be taken in relation to the referral.
- No further child protection action will be undertaken, but that concerns are sufficient to undertake a review of the care provided by the foster carers under the Fostering Regulations.
- That a Child Protection Investigation should be undertaken. This will be managed in accordance with the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures (KMSC Procedures as stated on page 2). A police officer and a social worker (independent of the child) will investigate the allegation and report back to the Strategy Discussion meeting. The investigating social worker, together with a fostering social worker or senior practitioner, will carry out an assessment of the foster family paying attention to the risks to and needs of the family including children who have significant contact with the carers. Enquiries must be conducted in the strictest confidence so that information can be given freely without fear of intimidation, and in a way that protects the rights of carers and their families.

Depending on the nature of the allegation foster carers will submit a written account of the concern/incident.

Regardless of the outcome, they may be invited to the Strategy Discussion meeting will give consideration to what support should be provided for the foster carers during this process.

During the course of the investigation carers have the right to:

- details concerning the nature of the allegations (timing will be dependent upon CAIU and Children's Social Services investigation)
- contact details for the relevant managers
- a copy of the procedures being followed
- a written statement about existing placements
- a written statement about financial arrangements
- make a written statement to the fostering team
- an indication of the time scale for the investigation
- details of independent support and how this may be accessed
- details in writing of all decisions made and actions taken.

The strategy meeting must identify those responsible for these actions and the relevant timescales. If evidence has been gathered at this point that relevant conduct has taken place then the LADO should ensure referral to the ISA.

Final strategy discussion

A strategy discussion must be held at the conclusion of an enquiry to:

- ensure all information is shared
- confirm all actions agreed in previous strategy discussion(s) have been completed
- Agree the conclusion of the enquiry i.e. alleged abuse has taken place (papers may or may not be forwarded to the CPS); alleged abuse has not been proven but concerns remain (may be standards of care issues that need to be addressed); abuse was not founded
- ascertain whether Looked After Child(ren) will remain, or return to the placement
- identify whether and how to protect any children in the home, including whether an initial child protection conference is required
- consider counselling/therapeutic needs of those affected.

The concluding record of the strategy discussion must be authorised by the District Manager, placed on both the child(ren)'s and carers' files, and within 2 weeks of the meeting sent to the:

- LADO
- OfSTED
- Manager of the County Fostering Service.

The manager responsible for the enquiry must ensure that a letter is sent to parents and carers outlining conclusions made and actions to be taken. A copy of this should be placed on the carers' file.

7. Child Protection Conference

Where the final strategy meeting decides there is a need for a child protection conference this should be held in accordance with KMSC's procedures. This must take place within 15 working days.

Reasons for diverging from these timescales must be fully recorded together with a plan of action detailing alternative arrangements.

Normally foster carers will be invited to attend the conference. Reasons for exclusions (which are exceptional) are detailed under paragraph 8.6 of the KMSC Procedures.

The social worker must facilitate carer(s) constructive involvement by ensuring in advance of the conference that they are given sufficient information and practical support to make a meaningful contribution including the sharing of their report at least 48 hours beforehand.

The social worker must explain to carers the purpose of the meeting, who will attend, the way in which it will operate, the purpose and meaning of a child protection plan and the complaints process.

Preparation should include consideration of childcare arrangements to enable the attendance of carer(s).

Written information should be left with the family regarding conferences, the right to bring a friend, supporter (including an advocate) or solicitor (in role of supporter), details of any local advice and advocacy services (appendix 1) and the conference complaints procedure. Kent has leaflets to support this.

The role of the supporter is to enable the carer to put her/his point of view, not to take an adversarial position or cross-examine participants. The family needs to be aware that the supporter will hear personal information about child(ren), carers and partners.

Matters that will be considered are set out in 8.8.6 sequence of KMSC Procedures.

A copy of the written record of the conference should be sent within 10 working days of the conference to all those who attended or were invited to attend, including family members (except for any part of the conference from which they were excluded).

When a friend, supporter or solicitor has been involved, the chair should clarify with the carer whether the record should be provided for those individuals.

This conference record and recommendations should include:

- Matters relevant to the placement of all children currently in the foster carer's household.
- The placement of other children in the future.
- Implications for the registration of the foster carers.
- Whether referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) is necessary, and agree who will make the referral.
- Identified training needs and additional support requirements.

The manager responsible for the enquiry must ensure that a letter is sent to parents and carers outlining conclusions made and actions to be taken. A copy of this should be placed on the

carer's file.

The child's social worker will ensure that the child understands that the allegation has been looked at thoroughly, and share appropriate information about the outcome.

Complaint Procedure - Eligibility and process complaints about specified aspects of the Child Protection Conference is set out in section 8.12 of KMSC Procedures.

8. Role of the Fostering Panel

The fostering services will re-assess the status of the carers within 28 working days of the conclusion of the enquiry. The supervising social worker must present a report to the panel for a review of the foster carer's approval following any child protection allegation or serious complaint. Their manager should also attend. The report will address:

- findings of the enquiry
- whether a report has been forwarded to the CPS
- what, if any, concerns remain
- feelings and experience of the carer
- opinion of the supervising social worker
- any implications for the safer caring agreement
- training issues
- any other issues relevant to an annual review
- other information relevant to the child in placement
- consideration of suitability and possible referral to vetting/barring scheme.

The report must include an account of the allegations, the investigation and the subsequent recommendations and decisions of the final strategy discussion. It will also include information about prior placements, the way these were managed and the circumstances of placement endings, and information about the foster carer's supervision/support and training. The report should include the views of the foster carers regarding the allegation and the ensuing investigation. The report should conclude with the recommendation of the fostering social worker regarding the continued approval of the carer and the terms of approval. Carers can submit their own written comments to be included with the report.

The panel must consider the following information prior to drawing its conclusions:

- The review report and recommendation by the supervising social worker.
- Any written submission by the carer(s).
- Minutes from any relevant child protection conference.
- The record of the concluding strategy discussion.

This process provides the carer with the opportunity to reflect on their experience and consider what action they might wish to take. They must be informed of the panel date and information on the complaints and access to files procedures.

Being the subject of allegations or serious complaints can be a very stressful experience for foster carers and their families. The Kent Fostering Panels therefore give foster carers the choice of whether to attend or not, and will respect carers' wishes and feelings about attendance. If there are concerns about the carer's continuing registration following any child protection or complaint investigations, the carer will be notified. The foster carer will then write

to the team leader with their decision about whether they wish to attend the Fostering Panel. The carer may decide to bring a family member or colleague carer along for support on the day. Their fostering social worker and his/her supervisor will always attend, regardless of whether the carer wishes to be there or not.

The panel's recommendations are forwarded, without delay, to the Agency Decision Maker. If the Decision Maker considers that the Foster Carers' Terms of Approval should remain the same, then the carers will be notified. However if the proposal is to change the carers terms, or to de-register them then the Decision Maker will make a "qualifying determination". The Carer will be sent a letter and a copy of the information leaflet about the Independent Review Mechanism. Within 28 working days of receiving the letter, the carers must either:

- confirm to the Decision Maker that they have accepted the determination, or
- request that their case is reconsidered by the Fostering Panel, or
- apply to the Independent Review Mechanism for a review of the case ³.

If the carers choose to have their case reconsidered at the Fostering Panel, they may attend the panel with the worker if they wish.

The Panel will make appropriate recommendations as follows:

- Immediate re-instatement of carer(s), if approval and use for placements has been suspended.
- Re-assessment of the carer(s) in relation to the identified concerns.
- Carer(s) remaining on hold pending the decision of the CPS.
- Carer(s) choosing to withdraw.
- Concerns are sufficiently serious to warrant termination of approval.

Recommendations may include changes to the approval of carers, review and/or training recommendations, implications for the Safe Care Plan, or address specific matters within the foster home.

A final recommendation about the carer's registration will be made to the Decision maker by the Panel.

If the carers choose to request a review by the Independent Reviewing Mechanism once the recommendation has been made, this will be reconsidered by the Agency Decision Maker.

If concerns were sufficiently serious to warrant termination of approval, or the carer chooses to withdraw because termination of approval is likely, then a referral has to be made to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The ISA will consider inclusion of the individual on the relevant barred list(s).

A copy of the final outcome will be put on the carer's file.

³ The Independent Review Mechanism leaflet and information will be provided to the foster carer when de-registration is being considered www.irm-adoption.org.uk/fostering

9. Support for Foster Carers who have had allegations or serious complaints made against them

Allegations and serious complaints against foster carers will impact differently on foster families according to the:

- nature of the allegation or complaint
- potential consequences for the foster carer
- previous experiences of the foster carer
- level of stress or discord within the family
- individual resilience of the family members.

For these reasons a range of support services are provided and it should be for the foster family concerned to decide which levels of support they need. This may change during the process of an investigation into allegations or serious complaints.

The support to foster carers is divided into internal (peer) support or external support, which can be accessed through the fostering team leader.

Peer support

Provided by:

Skill level 2 or 3 foster carers who have been trained in supporting carers subject to allegations and understand their role in terms of peer-mentoring and 'buddy' support.

A list of these mentor carers would be given to carers subject to allegations for them to contact a person of their choice on the list. Choices may be based on a previous knowledge of the mentor or may be based on knowing that the mentor is not part of the carer's own network. Mentor carers who are approached in this way are required to discuss this with their fostering social worker before agreeing to undertake the task.

They will be able to provide the following confidential support within the context of child protection responsibilities:

- Be available for telephone contact including evenings and weekends.
- Be willing to meet/visit carers by prior agreement as requested for a time limited period as agreed by the team leader.

The trained foster carers who provide peer support will be facilitated/co-ordinated by the Fostering Team Leader or Principal Social Worker.

Independent Support - counselling support via FosterTalk

Provided by experienced, professionally qualified, independent social workers with children and families experience and good knowledge of foster care.

The provision of a 24 hour counselling helpline, social work support helpline, legal advice line, and legal expenses insurance cover for foster carers including when they are subject to allegations or serious complaints. The counselling may take place during or after an investigation.

Task

The counsellor's task is to provide a safe, sensitive, confidential and time-limited environment to facilitate foster carers or their families in coming to terms with the implications (both emotional and practical) of being subjected to investigations into allegations or serious complaints.

Carers must be informed that, if the allegations culminate in court proceedings, witnesses including support workers or friends may be required to give evidence.

Independent Counselling

In exceptional circumstances it may be agreed by the County Fostering Manager to offer face to face counselling from an independent, qualified counsellor.

10. Role of the supervising social worker

The role of the supervising social worker should be to:

- be informed of the allegation from the outset
- attend the strategy discussions
- link with investigating social workers about when to make contact with the carer(s)
- contact the carer as determined at the strategy discussion
- ensure the carer received appropriate information and advice
- attend any follow up interview with the carer and her/his family, unless this is judged inappropriate.

The Senior Social Worker investigating the complaint/allegation will, after the agency decision maker has communicated her/his decisions to the carer(s), complete a report including:

- Name of foster carer(s).
- D.o.b. and ethnicity of foster carer(s).
- Address of foster carer(s).
- Name, d.o.b. and ethnicity of child(ren) concerned.
- Nature of child protection enquiry, including date of allegation.
- Outcome(s) of Panel's recommendation i.e:
 - immediate reinstatement of the carer
 - re-assessment of the carer in relation to the concerns that have been identified
 - the carer(s) remaining on hold depending on the decision of the CPS
 - the carer(s) choosing to withdraw
 - the concerns are sufficiently serious to warrant termination of approval regardless of whether there is a CPS decision to prosecute.
- Agency decision and date arrived at.

This report will be countersigned by the County fostering manager and copies sent within seven working days of receipt of the agency decision maker's decision to the:

- District manager in the child's originating and host area (if relevant)
- Carer
- LADO.

A copy of the report must be placed in key information at the front of the carer's file.

11. Payment of fostering fees

In recognition of the financial hardship that may be encountered by carers while an allegation or complaint is being investigated, the following protocols apply:

- When a child is removed from a Kent County Council foster placement, pending the outcome of an investigation, the fee element will continue to be paid to the carer, with 20% uplift until the case is presented to the fostering panel, or for a 12 week period if the case has not yet been resolved. If other placements are put on hold then the fee plus 20% will be paid for one of the other vacancies.
- When an allegation is made against a carer where there are currently no children in placement, and placements are put on hold, the fee plus 20% uplift will be paid for up to two vacancies until the case is presented to the fostering panel, or for a 12 week period, if the case has not yet been resolved.

The same principles apply to Respite Carers, who will be paid pro-rata.

Responsibility for the payment remains with the relevant District(s) connected with the foster carer at the time the allegation or complaint is made.

Fostering teams will prioritise presentation of cases where an allegation has been made, and the case will be heard no later than 28 days from the conclusion of the child protection enquiry.

12. Further sources of information

The Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures (KMSC referred to on page 2) describe the processes and thresholds for action in cases where allegations or complaints are made against Kent County Council's foster carers. Carers who are subject to serious complaints or allegations will be given a copy of this guidance at the time and additional copies are available from the local fostering team (see contact details below).

- 'Managing Conflict and promoting positive behaviour, Guidance for Foster Carers' KCC 2009, explains KCC policy regarding restraint.
- A Fostering Network (formally known as NFCA) booklet 'Safe Care' is available from fostering teams and should be read by all foster carers. Kent County Council also provides 'Safe Care' training to foster carers.
- 'Who Do We Trust?: The Abuse of Children Living Away from Home in the United Kingdom', Andrew Kendrick - Paper presented to the 12th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect.
- "Protecting Children, Supporting Foster Carers" Department for Education and Skills April 2006.
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', Department of Children, Schools and Families 2010, HMSO.
- Fostering Network has produced a booklet 'Allegations against Foster Carers' containing comprehensive advice which can be obtained at Central Books price £3.00.

13. Glossary of terms

CAIU Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit
CPS Crown Prosecution Service

IRM	Independent Review Mechanism for Fostering & Adoption
ISA	Independent Safeguarding Authority
KMSC	Kent & Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education & Children's Services. Contact details:

14. Contact details

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This document is available in alternative formats and can be explained in a range of languages. Please call the Area Fostering Team Leader for details – see above.

Mid Kent Fostering Team Leader

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