

Children's and Young People Services

Foster Carers

The Managing Allegations Process

Information about LADO



www.rotherham.gov.uk

Introduction

An allegation a Foster Carer may have harmed a child is distressing for everyone involved. This leaflet is intended to provide a basic understanding of the steps followed through any investigation, regardless of the seriousness of the allegation made.

The Managing Allegations Process is defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2022' and applies to everyone who fosters, works or volunteers with children. The process can, understandably, leave Foster Carers feeling anxious about what has been alleged and whether their voice will be heard. The process focuses on making sure children are safe and treating everyone involved fairly and with respect.

What is an allegation?

An allegation is a statement from any person that a Foster Carer, or another member of the fostering household has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The allegation may be in relation to the child(ren) you foster, your own child(ren) and / or child(ren) you work or volunteer with. Not all concerns raised will meet the threshold for formal investigation through the Managing Allegation Process. Your fostering service will still investigate those concerns but without the involvement of the LADO.

The role of the LADO

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is employed by the local authority to give independent advice and guidance to employers, organisations and other individuals who have concerns about the behaviour of an adult who works or volunteers with children and young people. The LADO does not conduct investigations, but oversees and manages them to ensure thoroughness, timeliness, and fairness. To remain impartial, the LADO will not usually have direct contact with the adult against whom the allegation has been made, or the family of the child/children involved. As part of their role, the LADO will ensure that information regarding outcomes is shared when the matter is concluded.

LADO Process

Initial Action

The allegation process is managed by the LADO from the area in which you live.

A meeting will take place between professionals linked to you and the child(ren) concerned. It will automatically involve your Fostering Service and the Social Work Team for the child(ren) in your care. It may also involve the Police and your local Safeguarding Children Social Work Team to consider all children you are connected to.

This includes the child(ren) you foster, your own child(ren) and any other child(ren) with whom you have contact, including through any other paid or voluntary work.

You will not be invited to attend these meetings, but your views will be gathered, and you will receive feedback. Relevant information is shared to determine whether an investigation needs to be undertaken and if so, by who (see below).

Investigation(s)

Where necessary, the investigation will be led by either the Police or your Fostering Service. So long as the Police or Children's Social Care are confident there are no criminal or child protection concerns, you will be informed that an allegation of harm is being investigated. That notification will come from your Fostering Service and should automatically include details of the support available to you through the Managing Allegation Process. As much information as possible will be shared with you, and you will be given an opportunity to respond to any allegations.

Where the Police believe a crime may have been committed, their investigation guides what information can be shared and when. Where there is no (further) involvement from the Police, they will inform the LADO as early as possible, and your Fostering Service will instead complete an internal investigation.

In some cases where the matter is complex because of Police or Children's Social Care involvement, the investigation may take a significant length of time. This will be reviewed regularly by the LADO service and your Fostering Service will keep you up to date with progress.

Independent Support

Once an investigation starts, your Fostering Service can arrange independent support for you. This will be offered via your Supervising/Fostering Social Worker. It is strongly recommended that the offer of independent support is taken up as it can help having someone not connected to your Fostering Service to guide you through the allegation investigation.

Being put 'On Hold'

A decision will be made by the professionals involved to confirm if you can continue caring during the investigation into the allegation. Conditions may be put in place to ensure everyone stays safe including any children in your care, and to avoid any

further potential allegation being made. If necessary, you may be put 'On Hold' as Foster Carers. Your fostering service will confirm details of allowances which may remain in place whilst you are 'On Hold'.

Outcome

Decisions include all the professionals involved in the investigation. All available evidence and views, including yours, are taken into consideration.

Judgements are based on the balance of probability with the following possible outcomes:

- Malicious
- Unfounded
- Unsubstantiated
- Substantiated

If more than one allegation has been made, a separate judgement will be made for each.

Your Fostering Service will inform the subject of the allegation of the outcome of the investigation at the earliest opportunity.

This will be provided verbally and in writing including:

- An outline of the allegation made
- Details of how the allegation was managed and the outcome agreed
- If there will be a referral to DBS and / or any other regulatory body

Useful Links

- Rotherham Council - <https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/child-protection/managing-allegations-adults-working-children-professionals>
- The Fostering Network - <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>