



Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Procedures

The Fostering Network is a membership organisation and as such it is vitally important that we listen to what our members are saying to us. We are an organisation that promotes quality foster care and aims to achieve a high standard in all that we do. As a learning organisation, one of our basic principles is that we continuously seek to make improvements to our service. We also want you to tell us what we do well so that we can build on our strengths to maintain our high levels of standards.

You may wish to raise a complaint, give us a compliment or make suggestions about a service you have received from an individual providing that service or your perception of the organisation as a whole. We positively welcome your views.

The principles of our Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints procedures

Our Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints procedures are based on the following principles in that we will:

- Ensure open access to all procedures
- Adhere to the Fostering Network equal opportunities policy
- Carry out an impartial review of all complaints
- Engender positive action on the part of the Fostering Network's senior management team and Board of Trustees in response to justified complaints
- Aim to satisfactorily resolve all complaints where possible
- Keep an open mind with regard to all suggestions
- Welcome compliments as a way to continuously improve our services

This document outlines the procedures for how to give us *feedback* on how we have met your needs, how best to make a *suggestion* for improvement or change and how to make a *complaint* about the Fostering Network.

The Fostering Network's services

The Fostering Network provides a number of different services:

- Advice and Mediation
- Fosterline
- Information Service, incorporating our library and web site
- Media and Communications
- Publications
- Training
- Policy and Campaigns
- Foster Care Fortnight
- Young People's Project
- Foster Care Association development
- Foster Care magazine
- Consultancy

All of our services are supported by an infrastructure, that incorporates IT, finance, and administrative resources .

1 Procedure for giving us compliments

It is of enormous value for us to hear of any positive experiences whilst involved with the Fostering Network. It is important for us to know how well the organisation performs at both a strategic and local level. Our people thrive on 'making a difference' and therefore we learn and build our infrastructure on valuable and constructive feedback.

If you would like to pay us a compliment, it can be done in several ways:

- Write a letter to the person you wish to recognise, and copy it to their manager
- Send a card to that person, their manager, or the Chief Executive
- Send an e-mail to that person, and copy it to the Chief Executive
- Write a letter to Foster Care magazine to share your positive experience with the Fostering Network

2 Procedure for sharing your suggestions with us

Suggestions for how we might improve any aspect of our service are a welcome source of feedback. If there are any suggestions you want to share with us please contact the country manager (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) or write to the Deputy Chief Executive (based in the London office), clearly stating your suggestion, which part of the service it relates to, and the benefits you believe the suggestion would offer its membership or the organisation. All suggestions will be acknowledged and seriously considered.

3 Complaints Procedure

A complaint is defined as 'the expression of dissatisfaction concerning the service provided by the Fostering Network, or of the actions of an individual providing that service'.

The Complaints Procedure has three stages – an informal stage (stage 1), a formal stage (stage 2) and an Independent Review stage (stage 3). Whilst it is open to you to begin the complaints procedure at Stage 2, we hope that, unless you consider the situation to be of a very serious nature, every effort will be made to resolve your complaint at Stage 1.

3.1 Stage 1: The Informal Process

Many complaints may be dealt with by simply talking to the person who you believe has treated you unfairly, rudely or been abusive. This could include someone who you feel has not answered your calls over a reasonable period of time. We recognise that it is not always easy for people to raise a complaint and therefore suggest the following steps may help:

- 1 Write down your concerns and use this to guide the discussion with the person concerned.
- 2 If step 1 does not lead to a positive outcome, you should contact the person's line manager. An organisational chart is available on request.
- 3 The manager will either meet with you in person, or if this is not possible e.g because of geographical considerations, s/he will have a telephone conversation with you in a confidential setting.
- 4 Written records of the conversation will be kept and you will see a copy of these. Should the situation be resolved at this stage, then there will be no further escalation in the process.

Timescale: A mutually satisfied resolution should be completed **within one month** of the complaint being received.

3.2 Stage 2: The Formal Process

If you are not satisfied that a suitable resolution has been reached through the Informal Process, you should put your case, in writing, to the Deputy Chief Executive at the Fostering Network, detailing your complaint.

Timescale: The Deputy Chief Executive will acknowledge your complaint **within seven working days**.

A senior member of the organisation will aim to investigate the complaint and prepare a written report **within 15 working days**. The investigation will include the opportunity for you to explain the circumstances of your complaint. This

may be done in person, or over the phone. You will be able to have someone with you if you do not feel happy about doing this alone.

After careful consideration of the facts of the case, the Deputy Chief Executive will write to you with his/her conclusions and a proposed course of action. If appropriate, the report will be shared with the Fostering Network's Chief Executive.

3.3 Stage 3: Independent Review

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome and wish to take the case further then you must formally raise your case, in writing, **within 15 working days** of receiving the Deputy Chief Executive's response. The complaint will be investigated further by an independent person appointed by the Vice Chair¹ of the Fostering Network's Board of Trustees.

The independent investigator will contact you in the process of investigating the complaint. Again, you may wish to have someone with you when any meetings or telephone conversations take place. The investigator will aim to report back to the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees **within 15 working days** of receiving the complaint.

The Vice Chair's decision will be reached **within a further 15 working days**. If necessary the Vice Chair may consult with the Board's Honorary Officers but the Vice Chair's decision will be final.

Our promise

If for any reason you believe that the complaints procedure disadvantages you in any way the Deputy Chief Executive will make every effort to make appropriate arrangements. The Fostering Network is an Equal Opportunities organisation and the Complaints Procedure should serve in a way that challenges any sort of discrimination.

The timescales above will be adhered to wherever possible. However, if there are good reasons, eg the need for further investigation or the lack of availability of witnesses or companions, each party can request that the other agrees to an extension of the permitted timescale.

Reporting to the Board

A report of all complaints received to the Fostering Network will go to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis.

¹ The Vice Chair has lead responsibility on the Board for dealing with complaints.

