



## One minute guide



# Foster Carer Reviews and Fostering Independent Reviewing Officers

Date: March 2026  
Version: 2

## What are foster carer reviews?

- Foster carer reviews explore whether foster carers are getting the right support and supervision to foster well, and if they should continue fostering. Reviews will also celebrate what has gone well for carers – and what they have achieved with children and young people they care for!
- We need to hold these reviews by law (Fostering Service Regulations 2011 Regulation 28 [2]), meaning the process should be prioritised and respected by everyone involved.
- Reviews need to take place every year, but an early review can also be held when a carer's circumstances change, there are worries about how they are caring for children, or whether children are safe in their care – including if allegations have been made about the carer.
- All Nottinghamshire carers will have a review, including Payment for Skills (recruited and approved foster carers for full time foster placements), short breaks carers, and kinship carers. Foster carers who work for Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) will also have annual reviews, but these are carried out by their own agency.

## Who carries out the reviews?

Nottinghamshire County Council has a team of fostering independent reviewing officers (FIROs) who are experienced social workers with lots of knowledge of fostering. They are in the same team as independent reviewing officers (IROs) and child protection co-ordinators (CPCs).

The fostering independent reviewing officer's main job is to ensure that foster carers are reviewed independently. They do this by hearing from the carer(s) and others about how the carer(s) are helping children to live safe, happy and stable lives. They will lead the review meeting.

## What are the aims of reviews?

- Celebrate what has gone well for the foster carer and children or young people they have cared for.
- Make sure the carer has fostered safely, and in line with policies and guidance.
- Hear from the children fostered by them, their social workers, independent reviewing officers, parents and other professionals, about how the support provided by the foster carer has made a difference.
- Ensure that the race, cultural and identity needs of children or young people are understood and supported by the carer.
- Support open and respectful discussion if people disagree.
- Identify and agree any areas for development for carers, and any extra support or training they might need.

## What happens during and after a fostering review?

- A few weeks before the review, consultation forms are sent to foster carers, children and young people, social workers, supervising social workers (SSWs), and independent reviewing officers. The fostering independent reviewing officer uses the answers on these forms to plan what will be spoken about in the meeting. Some things are spoken about at every review meeting, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, health and safety, attendance at mandatory training, and recording.
- Most review meetings will be held at the carer's home. The foster carer(s), their supervising social worker, and the fostering independent reviewing officer all come to the meeting.
- When an early review is held, the carer could also bring an independent person to support them.
- Everyone at the meeting should aim to use 'plain English' – avoiding professional terms, jargon or acronyms, so the meeting can be easily understood by everyone.
- After the review, the fostering independent reviewing officer writes a report which includes any actions which were agreed in the review, such as around training and support. The report also recommends whether the carer should continue to be approved to foster, or whether there needs to be changes.
- Nottinghamshire Fostering Panel will also consider the report in some circumstances – including when a foster carer has their first review, has an early review, or a review recommends significant changes to what was previously agreed. Carers will be given information about Fostering Panel if this is needed.

## Key contacts

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