

Essex Fostering Service Policy for managing allegations, standards of care concerns and complaints.

What to do and what will happen when a concern has been raised about a Foster Carer, Supported Lodgings Carer or anyone in their household.

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About This Document

Title	Essex Fostering Service - Guidance for managing allegations, standards of care concerns and complaints.
Purpose	This policy explains what to do and what will happen when a concern has been raised about a Foster Carer, Supported Lodgings Carer or anyone in their household.
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Contents

About This Document.....	i
Version Control	ii
1. Forward	3
2. Introduction.....	3-4
3. Support for Carers	4
4. Independent support for Carers.....	5
5. Legal Framework.....	5
6. Role of the Local Designated Officer (LADO).....	5-6
7. Definitions.....	6-7
8. Interlinked Processes	8
9. When a Concern is Raised.....	8-9
10. Referral to LADO.....	9
11. Allegations Process.....	10-11
12. Allegations Investigation Process:.....	11-13
13. Standards of Care (SoC) Process.....	13-16
14. Complaints – Investigation:	16
15. Financial Support	16
16. Disclosure and Barring?	17-17
Appendix A. Process Flow Chart.....	17
Appendix B. Glossary of terms.....	19
Appendix C. Safe uncertainty.....	20

1. Forward

1.1 This policy is for registered Foster carers, Supported Lodgings carers and temporarily approved Foster Carers under Sec 24 of the Planning Regulations. It is also for all staff working with carers including the Fostering Service, Special Guardianship Service, Household Reviewing Officers, Childcare Social Workers etc.

1.2 All reference to 'carer' throughout the document includes Foster Carers, Supported Lodgings Carers and temporarily approved Foster Carers.

1.3 Concerns about carers are managed within each Quadrant Fostering team, with management oversight of the Quadrant Service Manager responsible for Fostering and the Quadrant Director for Local Delivery.

1.4 The 'Registered Fostering Manager', who is the Central Fostering Service Manager must also be informed of concerns raised in each Quadrant to maintain an oversight of all concerns raised across the Fostering Service.

1.5 It may be difficult to ascertain from the outset whether a concern raised is an 'allegation', a question about a 'standard of care' or a 'complaint'. These terms tend to be used interchangeably creating confusion for staff and carers about the process to be followed to manage the concern.

1.6 This guidance aims to clarify the difference between an 'allegation', 'standard of care' and a 'complaint'. It describes the process to be followed in response to each and how a matter might move between the closely linked processes.

2. Introduction & Guiding Principles

2.1 When faced with a concern about a carer it is important that we manage it proportionately applying the principles of 'safe uncertainty'. (see appendix C). Most concerns raised can be resolved in supervision with the carer and this should be the first consideration of the fostering team involved.

2.2 The role of a carer is challenging. They look after vulnerable, traumatised children 24 hours a day and manage complex behaviours under the scrutiny of a wide network of people. It is, therefore, not unusual for carers to experience concerns being raised about them or about others in their household.

2.3 We know that children in care are vulnerable to abuse by people in a position of trust, including their carers.

2.4 We know that all concerns raised significantly impact carers and their families. It is therefore vital that we provide carers with high quality support, that we are as transparent as possible, that we deal with the concerns as quickly as possible and that we recognise the impact of the concern on the carer and their family.

2.5 We know that even when the outcome of a concern fully exonerates the carer the issue remains recorded on their case file. It is therefore vital that all recording is accurate and that carers receive clear notification of the outcome.

2.6 It is essential that our processes for dealing with concerns keep the wellbeing of all children in the household as our primary focus. If children need to be spoken to about a concern, this should happen as quickly as possible, ideally by someone they know and trust.

2.7 When an allegation is made against a carer the removal of children from their care will only take place when social workers, team managers and the LADO involved believe it to be a necessary, proportionate response to safeguard the child applying 'safe uncertainty' principles. The decision to remove a child must also be agreed by the Director of Local Delivery (DLD).

2.8 Following an allegation consideration should be given to returning any child removed from a foster carer if both the carer and child and social workers agree that this is the appropriate plan for the child.

2.9 We would like to encourage carers to inform their SSW as soon as possible of all issues arising that may require a safeguarding response and to ensure they keep clear records of set out in this policy.

2.10 It is important to note that concerns raised about a carer whilst they are working in another role, for example, if a carer is also a teacher, may impact on their suitability to care for children and therefore the concern will be managed using this guidance. Also, any concern raised in the course of being a carer could have implications for other roles the carer holds involving children and young people, for example, if they are also a youth club worker or a governor at a school. Appropriate people from any relevant organisation could therefore be contacted and involved as part of this Safeguarding process.

3. Support for Carers

3.1 Carers must be informed of any concern raised as soon as possible after the management planning or strategy discussion. This will usually be within 3 working days. They will usually be informed through a meeting with their SSW and the fostering Manager. At this meeting, foster carers should be reminded where to find a copy of this policy on the foster carer Resource Hub and should be given the option of receiving a paper copy of this policy.

3.2 The allocated Supervising Social Worker (SSW) will remain the link between the service and the carer throughout any allegation investigation, standard of care assessment or complaint process. They are responsible for keeping the carer informed, through a minimum of weekly contact, of the progress of the investigation or assessment. They will also continue to provide support through usual planned supervision visits. The SSW will provide additional welfare visits or calls if requested and will actively promote access to the Independent Support Service provided by The Fostering Network.

3.3 If it is felt, by the carer or others, that the allocated SSW cannot fulfil this role appropriately, the fostering Team Manager will consider whether the household is reallocated to an alternative SSW. The Team Manager will record their rationale for their decision on Mosaic.

4. Independent Support for Carers

4.1 When carers face a concern, they may require support that is independent from their SSW or fostering team. All Essex carers are members of The Fostering Network (TFN) which is a national fostering charity. Essex commissions TFN to provide an Independent Support Service to Essex carers who are subject to concerns, whether these are being managed as an allegation, a standard of care or a complaint. A referral is made to the Independent Support Service by the SSW or fostering team. Referrals can only be made at the request of the carer and with the carer's agreement. Self-referrals cannot be made by the carer.

4.2 Carers should be offered a referral to the Independent Support Service at the outset of a concern being raised, even when the concern is not thought to be significant by the social workers involved. Carers can request a referral to the Independent Support Service at any stage in the process. The SSW or fostering team must make a referral if this is requested by the carer.

4.3 Essex carers also have access to other support from TFN:

- for general information and advice call: **020 7401 9582 from 10.00am - 3.00pm Monday to Friday.**
- for legal support TFN have a 24-hour helpline service that can be accessed directly by carers if, for example, a carer needs a solicitor present during a police interview **01384 885734**
- carers also have access to a Stress Counselling support line: **01384 889549**

5. Legal Framework

5.1 When a concern is raised about a carer, Essex County Council have a duty, under Regulation 12 of the Fostering Regulations 2011 and Section 22 of the National Minimum Standards 2011, to investigate and do all that they can to ensure that children and young people are protected and kept safe.

5.2 Under the Children Act 1989 section 47, Essex County Council must carry out an investigation when they have 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/47>

5.3 This document should be read alongside the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures (SET procedures) chapter 7. The full document is available here:

6. Role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

6.1 Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused them or could cause them harm. The LADO works within Children's Services and gives advice and guidance to employers, organisations and other individuals who have concerns about the behaviour of an adult who works with children and young people. Included in this group are social workers, teachers, carers as well as people who are in a position of authority and have regular contact with children, such as religious leaders, political figures, or school governors.

7. Definitions

7.1 Allegation of Abuse. A current or past concern raised about a carer or anyone in their household will be managed as an allegation investigation if there is a possibility that an adult may have:

- 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 they 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.

These all require investigation which will be undertaken by one of the following:

- a criminal investigation by the Police of a possible criminal offence,
- a social worker investigation into whether a child needs protection or services. This will include section 47 enquiries where significant harm thresholds are met, (Children Act 1989)
- consideration by an employer as an internal investigation or complaint.

7.2 Allegations are made for a range of reasons but are usually when:

- a child has been abused or harmed by a carer intentionally or by accident,
- there is conflict or a confrontation has occurred between a carer and child,
- a child makes links between past abuse and their current care giver or they misinterpret the actions of a carer.
- a child or their family wishes to control a change in their placement or precipitate a return home.

7.3 Standard of Care concern (SoC). A current or past concern raised about a carer or anyone in their household will be managed as a 'standard of care' assessment when the matter is about; childcare practice, personal actions attitudes, conduct or incidents which have or could potentially impact on a carer's ability to provide appropriate care.

7.4 Standard of care concerns are raised for a range of reasons, but are usually when:

- it is thought that a carer / household has not provided the child with the standard of care expected of a registered carer under fostering regulations or Supported Lodgings policies, either due to a specific incident or as a result of ongoing, persistent issues.
- It is thought that a carer is not meeting the expectation set out in the foster carer's agreement.
- when there are different standards and expectations of care between households e.g. when a child moves placements or transitions to adoption.
- when others in the child's network do not agree with aspects of the parenting provided by the carer or have different standards and expectations of the care that they believe should be provided by the carer.
- when a child does not agree with aspects of parenting provided by their carer.
- when something has happened in a carers private life that may have an impact on their care of children.

7.5 Complaint. A concern raised about a carer or anyone in their household will be managed as a 'complaint' when it has been received directly via Essex County Council 'Compliance and Complaints team and therefore requires involvement of the Compliance and Complaints team to respond appropriately.

7.6 When an allegation of abuse or standards of care concern has been raised directly by a child about their carer or another adult in their household, the child should be asked by their allocated social worker or the child care team if they wish the matter to be managed as a formal complaint and a referral made to the Compliance and Complaints team. This will be managed by them alongside the allegation or standard of care process and will ensure the child receives clear notification that the matter is being or has been explored.

7.7 Independent support for children who have raised concerns about their carer can be provided by an advocate. The advocacy service is young person led and therefore children and young people can self-refer. Requests for a service can also be made by others, including social care staff, parents and carers. Children should be advised by their social worker of their entitlement to independent advocacy. Any take up of the service is subject to agreement by the child or young person. This agreement is set out in a contract in a format that is accessible and meets the needs of the child or young person.

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8. Interlinked Processes

8.1 It is important to note that the allegation, standard of care and complaints processes are interlinked. Concerns raised may, for example, move from being managed as a Standard of Care concern to being managed as an allegation as evidence is found.

8.2 Concerns could also follow dual processes. For example, a complaint made by a 3rd party to Essex Compliance and Complaints team, will be managed as a 'complaint'. If, when exploring the complaint, a worker believes that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, this will could then be managed as an allegation in parallel with the Essex County Council complaints and safeguarding process.

8.3 If the concern is being managed as an allegation, when the police are involved it will be referred to as an 'criminal investigation'. If the matter is being managed as an allegation with social workers and without Police involvement it will be referred to as an 'investigation'. If the matter is to be managed as a Standard of Care, it will be referred to as an 'assessment'.

8.4 An 'allegation' is not necessarily more serious than a 'standard of care' concern. Indeed, both can be matters that are serious and could potentially result in the carer being de-registered.

9. When a Concern is Raised

9.1 When a concern about a carer or someone in their household comes to the attention of the fostering team it should be discussed with a line manager as soon as possible, and within 1 working day. The line manager will usually be the Fostering Team Manager, but if they are unavailable it could be a Senior Practitioner in the Fostering Team. An Incident category A or B form should be initiated by the SSW at this stage.

9.2 The SSW and line manager and child's SW, when relevant, will decide whether the matter requires referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or whether it should be resolved with no referral to LADO. If the SSW and line manager are uncertain, they could escalate to their quadrant Service Manager or the central Fostering Service Manager. If there is uncertainty about the need for LADO involvement, they should discuss the matter with the LADO to confirm if it meets the threshold for LADO involvement.

9.3 If the matter is not referred to LADO:

- a recording on Mosaic needs to be made by the SSW or the line manager, confirming the decision, the rationale for it and detailing any

action needed by the SSW and any support needs for the foster carer or child and a case note alert added for the Household Reviewing Officer,

- the category A or B form should be completed. Concerns that can be closed at this stage are likely to be category B incidents
- the SSW should inform the carer of the concern, and what decision has been made about further action, if any.
- the SSW should advise the carer that independent support provided by The Fostering Network is available if they require it,
- the carer can continue to look after child/ren placed and can take new placements

10. Referral to LADO

10.1 If the SSW and the line manager or senior practitioner believe that the matter needs escalating the LADO should be contacted within 1 working day of the information becoming known to discuss the referral. All relevant children's social workers should also be consulted at this stage if possible. The discussions with the LADO should jointly decide:

- how the concern should be managed:
 - 1) an allegation which may include enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act, and may involve the Police,
 - 2) a standard of care assessment under Regulation 12 (fostering regulations 2011) and NMS 22 (national minimum standards 2011)
 - 3) or if no further assessment is needed.
- if any children in the household are at risk of harm, immediate removal should be considered by the child's social work team. The decision to remove the child should be made by the quadrant Director of Local Delivery.
- It is usual practice that carers who are the subject of concerns are placed 'on hold' and do not take new placements, including planned respite. However, exceptions can be agreed. The Quadrant Service Manager should be consulted to confirm their agreement to a carer being placed 'on hold' or being able to continue with planned new placements.

10.2 A clear record of the discussion with the LADO and the decisions made should be recorded on MOSAIC by the SSW or their line manager and should include the name of LADO and all others who were involved in the discussions.

10.4 If the discussion with the LADO concludes that there is no further investigation or assessment required:

- a recording on Mosaic needs to be made confirming the decision the rationale for it and detailing any action needed by the SSW and any support needs for the carer or child and a case note alert added for the Household reviewing officer,
- the category A or B form should be completed,
- the SSW and fostering Team Manager should meet with the carer to inform them of the concern raised, and what decision has been made

about further action, if any, and inform them that independent support provided by The Fostering Network is available if they require it.

- the carer can continue to look after any child/ren placed and can take new placements, a case note alert should be sent to the HHRO for their attention.

11. Allegations Process:

11.1 If it is decided that a concern should be managed as an Allegation a plan will be agreed by phone or through a Strategy or Management Planning meeting as to how this should be progressed.

11.2 If there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, this meeting/discussion will be a Strategy Meeting/Discussion to agree if a s.47 investigation needs to be initiated. The police must be consulted as part of this to consider if a criminal offence may have been committed.

11.3 Where significant harm thresholds are not met, but there are concerns about harm a Management Planning Meeting or discussion will be arranged to agree a plan of investigation. The Police may also be consulted as part of this to consider if there is any criminal offence.

11.4 An initial strategy or planning discussion will be held within 3-days to plan how the matter will be progressed. When a meeting is arranged it will be chaired by the LADO or the team manager for the child and should include the allocated SSW, or if they are not available someone else from the fostering team who knows the carer, the allocated childcare social worker/s and relevant line managers. It will also include the Police where there are concerns about a possible criminal offence.

The carer is not involved in this meeting.

11.5 The Management Planning / Strategy discussion will:

- decide whether there should be a s.47 enquiry and/or criminal investigation,
- plan any investigation needed, considering the family history and any previous concerns raised, deciding who will take responsibility for interviewing relevant parties including the child if required,
- confirm if any children in the household are at risk of harm and if removal should be considered by the child's social work team for a decision to be made by the quadrant Director of Local Delivery
- if a referral / Request for Support, should be made to the Children's Services Hub regarding any birth children living in the household, *(If a referral is being made to the Hub the carers should be advised of this, unless this places any child at further risk of harm)*
- decide what information will be shared with the carer and agree timescales for this to take place. Carers should be informed of concerns as soon as possible and ideally within 3 working days unless this places any child at further risk of harm.

11.6 When the carer is first informed of the allegation, they should be advised that there is independent support available to them provided by The Fostering Network should they require it. (see section 4)

11.7 Carers will always be given as much information as possible. Justification for withholding information can be made only if there is a clear risk to a child if the information is shared or if the police are to investigate a possible crime. In these circumstances there may be very limited information that can be shared with the carer. The reasons for withholding information must be clearly recorded.

11.8 These procedures also apply if the allegation is made after the child has left the placement and where historical allegations are made.

12. Allegation Investigation Process

12.1 Where the allegation indicates that a criminal offence may have been committed, the police must be consulted. If a joint investigation is agreed, the allocated SSW's role is to focus on keeping the carer informed of the process and progress of the investigation and providing them with support. There may be some circumstances where the SSW will not be able to discuss the details of an allegation with the carer. The SSW may be involved in discussions with the carer as part of an investigation, but if necessary, an alternative social worker can be allocated to undertake this work. Independent support from The Fostering Network may be especially beneficial in these situations

12.2 When supporting an investigation by the Police the Fostering Manager will decide who should undertake the fostering element of the assessment, alongside the allocated SSW who will remain responsible for providing the carer with ongoing support.

12.3 If the Police are not investigating the Fostering Manager will decide who should take the lead role in investigating usually alongside the Childcare Social Worker. This will normally be a SSW not previously involved with the carer and who will be able to provide an independent view. However, there may be circumstance where the Fostering Managers believes that the allocated SSW is best placed to undertake the work. In both circumstances the allocated SSW remains responsible for providing ongoing support.

12.4 The investigation should be completed within 28 working days from the planning / discussion meeting whenever possible. However, in exceptional circumstances this timescale may not be achieved especially if a Police investigation is required. If the timescale will not be achieved management oversight of this should be recorded and the carer should be informed by the SSW of the reasons for the delay.

12.5 The LADO will regularly monitor the progress of the case depending on its complexity and directly liaise with the Police, Social Care and fostering team as appropriate. Depending upon the complexity of the matter it may be appropriate to convene further meetings to review progress.

12.6 Concluding management planning / strategy meetings/ discussions

At the conclusion of all allegation investigations, a report will be shared with the LADO and at any meetings arranged to conclude the investigation. When a meeting is convened this will be coordinated and chaired by the LADO or the team manager for the child. The final meeting/discussion will:

- decide on the outcome of the investigation,
- decide whether the carer can resume fostering activity with immediate effect, or whether this decision should be made following a Household Review and Fostering Panel recommendation,
- consider if a referral to the DBS is required.

The carer is not involved in this meeting.

12.7 Allegation Outcome

The carer will receive a written record from the LADO of the outcome of any allegation investigation / assessment within 5 working days of the concluding management planning / strategy discussion. *In total, therefore carers should receive a clear outcome within 33-working days of the initial strategy/ planning discussion.* There are 5 possible outcomes:

- **Substantiated**- where there is enough identifiable evidence to prove the allegation,
- **Unsubstantiated**- where there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation,
- **Unfounded**- where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made,
- **Malicious**- where there is clear evidence to prove that there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false. This outcome will only be used where there is very clear evidence and with the understanding that this should not be used to label or negatively impact a vulnerable child.
- **False**- where there is enough evidence to disprove the allegation.

12.8 Following the concluding management planning / strategy discussion and within 5 working days, the carer should also be offered a meeting with the SSW and their line manager to discuss the outcome, next steps and support needs.

12.9 All investigations into allegations should be completed and an outcome recorded, regardless of whether the person involved resigns, even if the person concerned does not wish to take part in the process.

12.10 Following the concluding management planning / strategy discussion the SSW must complete the category A incident report, and a case note alert should be sent to the Household Reviewing Officer (HHRO) for their attention.

12.11 All concerns that have been managed as an 'allegation' require an Outcome Household review (OHHR). The review must take place as soon as possible, ideally within 28 working days, of the concluding management planning

discussion. The review will discuss the outcome of the SoC assessment or investigation report? and consider the support needs of the carer. The review will provide an opportunity for the carer and fostering worker to discuss and reflect on any learning from the experience. The review will make a recommendation regarding ongoing registration. The review must then be presented to the fostering Panel as soon as possible after the OHHR.

12.12 Fostering Panel will make a recommendation regarding ongoing registration, any changes in registration needed or potentially may recommend de-registration. The Fostering Panel are also interested in how the Fostering Service has managed the process and whether the carer has received appropriate support.

12.13 If the outcome is unfounded, malicious or false, caring activity can resume and children can be placed following the HHR, prior to Fostering Panel if this is the recommendation of the Household Reviewing Officer (HHRO).

12.14 The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will make a final decision within 10 working days of the Fostering Panel.

12.15 Upon receipt of the ADM decision, Foster carers have 28 days to appeal or to make a referral to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

12.16 Following the ADM decision or any appeal process the SSW must inform the LADO of the outcome of Fostering Panel. If a carer has been de-registered the LADO will advise whether a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service should be made by the Central Fostering Service Manager to consider if the former carer should work with children again.

13. Standards of Care (SoC) Process

13.1 Management Planning Discussion

If it is decided that a concern should be managed as a 'Standard of Care' (SoC) a management planning discussion will take place to determine the level of concern and confirm if a SoC assessment is required. This will be chaired by the LADO and conducted using the guidelines in the SET procedures. It will include the allocated SSW, or if they are not available someone else from the fostering team who knows the carer, the allocated childcare Social worker, and relevant Line Managers.

The foster carer is not involved in this meeting.

13.2 The management planning discussion will:

- plan any assessment needed into the concern, deciding who will take responsibility for speaking to relevant parties including the child/ren if required,
- confirm if any children in the household are at risk of harm where removal should be considered the child's social work team for a decision to be made by the quadrant Director of Local Delivery,

- decide if a referral should be made to the Hub regarding any birth children living in the household, *(If a referral is being made to the Hub the carers should be advised of this, unless this places any child at further risk of harm)*
- decide what information will be shared with the carer and agree timescales for this to take place.

13.3 Carers will always be given as much information as possible. Justification for withholding information can be made only if there is a risk to a child if the information is shared.

13.4 If the management planning discussion concludes that there is no further assessment required:

- a recording on Mosaic needs to be made by the line manager confirming the decision, rationale and detailing any action needed by the SSW and any support needs for the foster carer or child,
- the category A or B form should be completed, *(concerns that have required a management planning discussion are likely to be Category A)*
- the SSW should inform the carer of the concern, confirming that no further actions is required,
- The SSW should advise the carer that independent support provided by The Fostering Network is available if they require it.
- the carer can continue to look after any child/ren placed and can take new placements
- a case note alert should be sent to the HHRO for their attention.

13.5 Standard of Care Assessment – ideally to be completed within 28 working days.

The SoC assessment will usually be undertaken by the fostering team led by the allocated SSW alongside another worker in the team such as a Senior Practitioner. Consideration should be given to whether the assessment may be undertaken by workers who are not familiar with the carer if it is agreed that an independent view is necessary.

13.6 The allocated SSW is responsible for keeping the carer informed of the process and progress of the assessment and providing them with ongoing and regular (a minimum of weekly), support throughout the process.

13.7 The SoC assessment should be completed, using the standard template form, within 28 working days from the planning / discussion meeting whenever possible. In exceptional circumstances this timescale may not be achieved. If the timescale will not be achieved management oversight of this should be recorded.

13.8 Concluding Management Planning Discussion

The report will be shared with the LADO and presented to a concluding Management Planning Meeting/ discussion This will be coordinated by the LADO. The final discussion or meeting will decide:

- the outcome of the assessment,
- whether an early HHR followed by presentation to the Fostering Panel is required to consider ongoing registration, any recommended changes of registration and to review support plans for the carer and child,
- If a referral to the DBS is required,

The carer is not involved in this meeting.

13.9 Standard of Care assessment Outcome:

The social worker who has completed the SoC assessment must give the Foster carers a copy of the assessment including any recommended support plans for the carer or child within 5 working days of the concluding management discussion. The SoC assessment will include a clear outcome which will detail whether the SoC was:

- **Substantiated-** where there is enough identifiable evidence to validate the concern raised
- **Unsubstantiated-** where there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the concern.
- **Unfounded-** where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the concern made.
- **Malicious-** where there is clear evidence to prove that there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false. This outcome will only be used where there is very clear evidence and with the understanding that it should not be used to label or negatively impact a vulnerable child.
- **False-** where there is enough evidence to disprove the concern.

13.10 Following the concluding management planning / strategy discussion and within 5 working days the carer should also be offered a meeting with the SSW and their line manager to discuss the outcome, next steps and support needs.

13.11 An Outcome Household Review is not required if the assessment confirmed that the concerns were unfounded, malicious, or false and there are no recommended changes to the carer's terms of registration. In these circumstances:

- The SoC assessment and agreed support plans must be discussed in full at the next scheduled Household Review meeting,
- Cat A form must be completed,
- all caring activity can resume,
- a case note alert should be sent to the HHRO for their attention.

13.12 An Outcome Household Review is required if the assessment concluded that the concerns were substantiated or unsubstantiated and / or indicated that a change in registration is needed. The review must take place within 28 working days of the concluding management planning discussion. The review will discuss

the outcome of the SoC assessment and consider the support needs of the carer. The review will make a recommendation regarding ongoing registration.

13.13 Any SoC assessment that has required an Outcome Household Review must then be presented to the Fostering Panel. The Fostering panel will make a recommendation regarding re-registration including any changes in registration needed or de-registration. The Fostering Panel are also interested in how the Fostering Service has managed the process and whether the carer has received appropriate support.

13.14 The ADM will make a final decision within 10 working days of the Fostering panel.

13.15 Upon receipt of the ADM decision, Foster carers have 28 working days to appeal the ADM decision or to request referral to the Independent Review Mechanism.

14. Complaints

14.1 If carers are unhappy with the outcome of an allegation or standard of care assessment, or they do not feel that they have been treated in accordance with this policy they are able to make a complaint through Essex' complaints system. They are also able to access their records through a Subject Access Request.

Please see following link: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/complaints>

14.2 Carers who are not in agreement with the outcome of Fostering Panel following an allegation or SOC are able to appeal the panel decision through the Independent Review Mechanism.

15. Financial support for carers

15.1 If all fostered children in placement are removed from a foster carer as a direct result of an allegation or SoC concern, the foster carer will be paid a single fee which is payable for a maximum of 4 months from when the child/ren were removed. If there is more than one child in placement at this time, the highest fee will be paid.

15.2 In exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Quadrant Director for Local Delivery, this payment could be extended by a further 2 months. e.g if there has been a delay in social care's management of the concern. This will not apply if the delay has been caused by a Police investigation.

15.3 Carers may be entitled to benefits if their income from fostering has changed. The charity Turn2Us provides an [online benefits calculator](#). You can upload information about your household and finances and find out which benefits you might be entitled to claim. The Fostering Network can also provide support and information. See section 4 above for details of their [helplines](#).

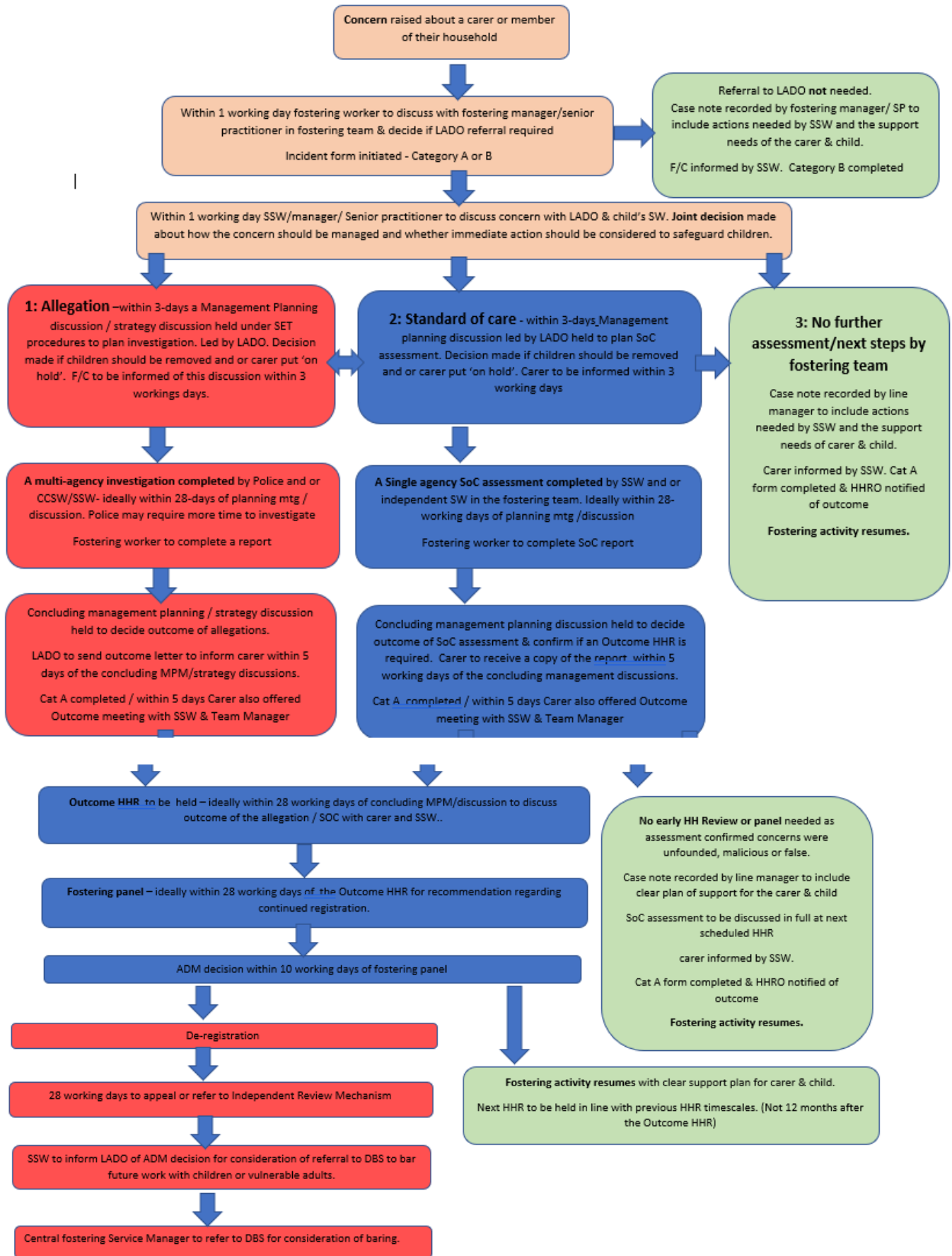
16. Disclosure and Barring?

16.1 The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is responsible for maintaining the adults' and children's barred lists. These lists include individuals that are barred from engaging in [regulated activity](#).

16.2 Local authorities are under a legal duty to refer where they are the regulated activity provider and they have withdrawn permission for a person to engage in regulated activity, because the person has either:

- harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, or
- satisfied the harm test, or
- received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence.
- this also applies if the local authority would or might have withdrawn permission for a person to engage in regulated activity if the person has not otherwise ceased to engage in regulated activity. This includes situations where the person was re-deployed to a non-regulated activity role or resigned or retired

17. APPENDIX A. Process flow chart:



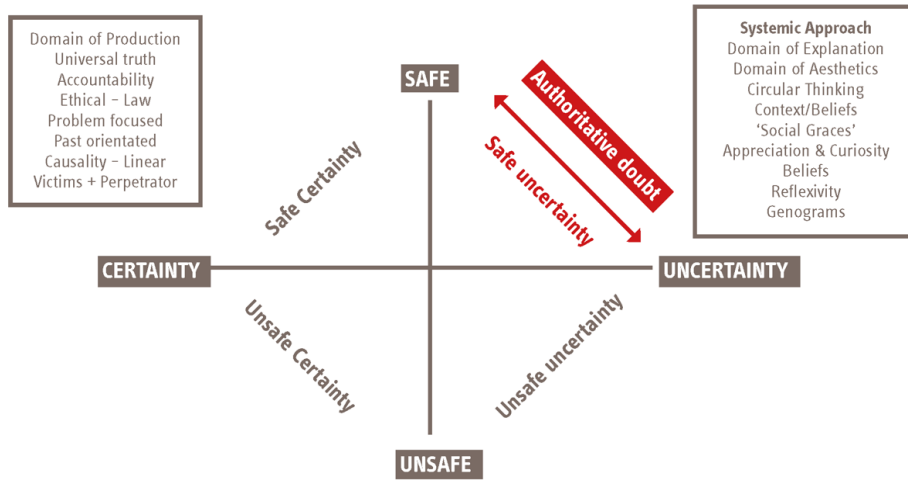
18. APPENDIX B. Glossary of terms:

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms Used:	
ECC	Essex County Council
Carer	Refers to registered Foster carers and Supported Lodgings carers.
SSW	Supervising Social Worker – the fostering social worker allocated to each fostering or Supported Lodging household.
SoC	Standard of Care concern.
TFN	The Fostering Network – a National charity that all Essex carers are members of. Essex also commissions them to provide an Independent Support Service.
SET procedures	Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child protection procedures.
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer – who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns if an adult who works with children may have caused or could cause harm to a child.
Category A Form	Forms used to record specific incidents regarding a carer or anyone in their household. Category A incidents include: (this is being reviewed and will be included in this document follow the review)
Category B Form	Forms used to record specific incidents regarding a carer or anyone in their household. Category B incidents include: (this is being reviewed and will be included in this document follow the review)
MOSAIC	The name of the electronic recording system currently used by Essex Children and Families service.
HHR	Household Review – Each registered fostering and Supported Lodging household must have their registration reviewed annually at their HHR.
Outcome HHR	Outcome Household Review – a review of the household following a concern being raised. This will focus primarily on the issues raised and is not a full household Review.
HHRO	Household Reviewing Officers oversee the Household Reviews. They are independent from the Fostering service and are managed within Essex Safeguarding Service
S.47 Investigation	This refers to the section of the Children Act 1989 under which child protection enquires are carried out.
ADM	Agency Decision Maker: The person in Essex County Council who makes decisions about carers on the basis of recommendations made by the Fostering Panel of Household review.

19. APPENDIX C. Safe uncertainty model:

research
in practice

Moving between expertise & uncertainty



(Mason,1993)