

Compliance in fostering including renewal if checks topic based forum 25/7/25

Quick recap

The team discussed various personal updates and shared feedback from an Ofsted inspection, including concerns about inspection processes. The meeting primarily focused on compliance issues in fostering, particularly regarding checks and documentation, with extensive discussion about medical assessments, financial reviews, and employment verification procedures. The group explored challenges around health condition reporting, medication compliance, and the balance between necessary compliance checks and fostering recruitment, emphasizing the importance of thorough monitoring and transparency in fostering assessments.

Next steps

- Medical advisors: Provide clear assessment of foster carers' fitness to foster in medical reports, rather than just "fit to foster" status
- Agencies: Establish clear policies on frequency of medical checks
- Agencies: Implement regular financial checks on foster carers post-approval
- Agencies: Develop protocols for handling cases where carers are minimizing health conditions
- Agencies: Establish procedures for addressing situations where carers are claiming benefits they may not be eligible for
- Agencies: Review compliance monitoring processes to ensure regular unannounced visits and supervision
- Agencies: Develop clear guidelines for handling cases where carers refuse or are reluctant for medical checks
- Agencies: Establish protocols for addressing situations where carers are not attending required training sessions
- Agencies: Establish clear criteria for conducting additional medical checks outside the 3-year period, particularly following major health changes or developments
- Agencies: Implement regular financial assessments for foster carers, with specific triggers for more detailed checks if concerns arise
- Agencies: Review and potentially update their approach to financial checks, considering the use of tools like the Income and Expenditure Hub for ongoing monitoring

- Agencies: Consider implementing checks on foster carers' employment history, particularly if they leave or change jobs frequently
- Agencies: Explore ways to better monitor and support foster carers who have health conditions, taking into account their individual attitudes and management of their health
- Agencies: Establish a process for following up on any safeguarding concerns related to foster carers' employment history
- Agencies: Clarify and communicate the legitimacy and necessity of intrusive checks to foster carers, balancing compliance with fostering flexibility
- Agencies: Consider checking professional registers for prospective foster carers who hold professional roles that require registration
- Agencies: Ensure that any changes in employment or personal circumstances by foster carers are communicated and reviewed as part of regular supervision processes
- Social workers: Periodically compare MAR sheets with actual medication inventory to verify accuracy of medication administration records
- Implement revised medication policy with additional requirements for foster carers
- Agencies: Review and consider implementing routine employment checks for foster carers beyond initial approval
- Agencies: Evaluate legitimacy and necessity of employment checks for household members who are professional workers
- Agencies: Review and potentially revise their approach to checking historical DBS information
- Social workers: Maintain transparency and regular communication with carers regarding any concerns or findings from background checks

Summary

Compliance in Foster Care Checks

The meeting focused on compliance issues in fostering, particularly regarding checks and documentation. Catherine led a discussion about various compliance areas, including medical checks and DBS checks, noting that while some carers may excel in child care, non-compliance in administrative tasks could be grounds for concern. The group discussed best practices for conducting checks, with some agencies performing medical checks every two years and others every three years, though all agreed to renewal rather than selective checks.

Foster Carer Health Assessment Challenges

The group discussed challenges with foster carers minimizing health conditions during medical assessments. A member shared that some carers have been discovered to underreport health issues, such as diabetes, which could impact their ability to care for children. Catherine emphasized the need for medical advisors to clearly state whether carers are "fit to foster" and relate findings to the approval terms. The team also considered how to handle situations where carers' health conditions, such as weight loss after surgery, may conflict with their disability benefits.

Challenges in Carer Medical Assessments

The group discussed challenges with medical assessments for fostering, particularly when carers are reluctant or ambivalent about them. It was highlighted that ambiguous medical results can lead to delays and the need to investigate underlying issues, while Catherine emphasized the importance of monitoring carers' supervision, training, and activities with children. A member mentioned exploring carers' eligibility for disability benefits by requesting award letters, raising questions about professional integrity if benefits are claimed inappropriately. The discussion touched on the complexities of assessing carers' fitness and the ethical dilemmas involved in addressing discrepancies between self-reported health and actual eligibility for benefits.

Foster Care Financial Assessment Review

The group discussed compliance and assessment challenges in fostering roles, with Catherine highlighting issues around equitable standards and management oversight. A member raised questions about ongoing financial assessments for foster carers, noting that while initial assessments are thorough, there's uncertainty about the frequency and depth of subsequent checks. A member clarified that their agency only conducts financial assessments when specific issues arise, leading to a discussion about whether annual reviews should include comprehensive financial checks.

Foster Carer Financial and Health Assessments

The group discussed financial assessments for foster carers, with a member explaining they currently use an income and expenditure hub for assessments and

are considering annual reviews. They agreed that health assessments should be conducted every three years, with additional checks only when significant health changes occur, as outlined by one team with their medical advisor. The discussion highlighted the importance of considering both objective health information and how individuals manage their health conditions, as emphasized by a member.

Foster Carer Employment Check Changes

The group discussed employment checks for foster carers, with a member explaining that checks are now conducted when carers leave or change jobs frequently, following a serious case review. The discussion raised concerns about balancing necessary checks with fostering recruitment challenges, with others warning against over-intrusive monitoring that could deter potential carers. The conversation also touched on the need to check professional registers for carers with relevant qualifications, as a member shared an example of discovering concerns through a nursing register check.

Fostering Assessment Transparency and Trust

The group discussed the legitimacy and transparency of fostering assessments, focusing on the importance of continuous monitoring and trust between carers and agencies. A member shared a case where a former nurse with a history of alcoholism was successfully assessed for fostering, highlighting the value of thorough background checks. The discussion also touched on the challenges of addressing historical DBS checks and allegations, with Catherine emphasizing the need for context and relevance in ongoing reviews. It was stressed re the importance of carer transparency and the potential implications of undisclosed information, while Catherine noted the complexity of balancing compliance with the well-being of children in fostering households.

Medication Compliance and Reporting

A member raised concerns about medication compliance and administration, highlighting that carers are required to submit medication records and evidence of prescriptions, as per Ofsted's recommendations. A member shared a recent incident where a carer was found to be incorrectly recording medication administration, leading to a police investigation, and emphasized the need for more vigilant checks by social workers. It was agreed on the importance of periodic verification of



medication records and proposed changes to their medication policies to enhance compliance and ensure accurate reporting.

Foster Care Compliance and Monitoring

Reminder of the importance of ensuring compliance while balancing the needs of children. The group also discussed the need for appropriate scrutiny of foster carers, with the group agreeing that it's better to err on the side of too much scrutiny rather than too little. It was highlighted a serious case where a foster carer failed to administer medication, which led to a criminal investigation. Catherine encouraged participants to continue sharing vulnerabilities and challenges in their organizations.