

## **Police Investigations Following an Allegation of Child Abuse by a Foster Carer.**

When an allegation of suspected Child Abuse is received by Children's Services Department (CSD) from any person or agency, involving a Foster Child, a Strategy Discussion / Meeting will be held with the Police (normally the Child Abuse Investigation Unit) in which they will discuss the nature of the allegation, levels of concern and the safety of the child / children and who will investigate.

If the allegation is one of Child Abuse (Sect 47) then it will normally be a Joint Investigation involving both Police and CSD.

If the allegation is one of a Standard of Care, then it would be investigated by CSD.

Depending on the age of the child / children involved, they will be Jointly Interviewed by trained Police Officers and Social Workers. These interviews will be recorded on DVD and are treated as their statements / evidence in chief.

After the children have been interviewed a review of the allegation will then be carried out regarding the nature of the allegation and whether in fact a crime has been committed.

If a crime is suspected of having been committed by a Foster Carer, that person will be interviewed. Normally this would be carried out at a Police Station and the suspect would be arrested.

Sometimes a suspect might be invited to attend the Police Station for a voluntary interview.

On occasions a suspect might be interviewed at home.

**On all occasions it is the suspects RIGHT to have a solicitor present during the interview. This is not an admission of guilt. IT IS YOUR RIGHT!**

Even if you feel you have done nothing wrong, it is still in your best interest to have a solicitor present to protect your rights and to give you advice as the police officers are not allowed to advise you.

After the police have concluded their investigations they will send a file of evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for their decision / advice on whether to Charge / Caution or take No Further Action.

All of this takes time and it is not unusual for investigations to take between 3 – 6 months and sometimes longer. During this time the suspect will be released on Bail, but will be suspended from Fostering.

If a decision is made to Charge or Caution, then the Foster Carer will **NOT** be allowed to continue Fostering and will have to attend Panel to be de-registered.

If a decision is made to take No Further Action, then CSD will normally carry out their own investigation regarding any breach of Fostering guidelines. It would be normal for CSD to submit their report to Panel for Re-registration or De-registration.