



## FSL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Introduction

Fostering Support Ltd (FSL) encourages feedback from recipients of services through the completion of an evaluation form. Since 1999 evaluation forms received about the service have been overwhelmingly positive. However, if an evaluation form is received which has areas of discontent expressed, a copy of this policy document will be dispatched and the carer encouraged to make a complaint to the relevant Local Authority designated Complaints Manager.

The relevant Local Authority for the complainant would be (in the case of a Local Authority Foster Carer) the Local Authority responsible for their employment or for placing children and commissioning FSL. In the case of Independent Fostering Agency Foster Carers the relevant Local Authority for the complainant would be the Local Authority where they live.

### Defining complaints and representations

A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet which requires an immediate response. Complaints may be made against FSL quality or appropriateness of a service or advice provided; delay or missing deadlines, attitude, behaviour or language of FSL staff. Representations may not always be complaints; enquiries or comments about the availability, delivery or nature of a service which are not criticisms are likely to constitute representations. FSL will respond swiftly to all representations and complaints, setting out any actions proposed to remedy issues raised.

### Key Principles

Fostering Support Ltd (FSL) believe that

- Foster Carers (complainants) should have their complaint or representation dealt with and wherever possible resolved, at the point of local service delivery;
- Complainants should be treated with dignity and respect and unnecessary delay should be avoided;
- Developing a listening and learning culture can and should be fed back into driving service improvement;
- Independence must be established and maintained so to ensure an even-handed investigation through working with the relevant Local Authority designated Complaints Manager;
- If resolution cannot be reached, any party has the right to access other means of redress, such as the Local Government Ombudsman;
- Monitoring performance and the handling of complaints including equality of opportunity to complain or make representations must be closely monitored.

## **Handling and consideration by Local Authorities on behalf of FSL**

FSL will cooperate fully with the timescales and actions required by the Local Authority designated Complaints Manager. DfES guidance suggests that once a complaint is received it should take no longer than

- 10 days for a local resolution to be reached (Stage 1)
- 25 days for an investigation to be undertaken (Stage 2)
- 20 days for the complainant to request a Panel Review
- 30 days to convene and hold a review (Stage 3)
- 5 days for the Panel to issue its findings
- 15 days for FSL (in this case) to respond to the findings

FSL will always try to resolve complaints at Stage 1 by meeting face to face with complainants and/or where appropriate a mediator. Agreement will be reached with all parties about pursuing resolution through escalating the stages e.g. If agreement cannot be reached by a face to face discussion it would be agreed to go to Stage 2 and commission an Independent Person to conduct an investigation; if the result of this investigation was disputed by either party it will be resolved at stage 3; Review Panel. Complaints will be considered up to 12 months from the period about which the complaint is made unless there are exceptional genuine circumstances which caused delay in bringing the complaint.

## **Recording**

From September 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, in line with updated guidance, FSL will monitor complaints received and record;

- The number of evaluation forms dispatched compared to the number of support packages provided
- The number of evaluation forms returned compared to the number dispatched
- The number of complaints and the number of representations received
- What action was taken, by whom (within the confines of confidentiality)
- The outcome and impact on service planning and delivery and;
- Whether time-limits were adhered to;
- Statistics relating to equality of opportunity to complain and/or make representations.

This data may be requested by any foster carer and will be discussed with commissioners of services periodically. This policy will be kept up to date, particularly as the organisation changes in nature and size, and statistics will be entered annually. The policy compared to the scope of the organisation will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Debra Gibbs: Director Fostering Support Ltd  
Last Reviewed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2007

*Getting the best from complaints; social care Complaints and representations for children, young people and others: Department for Education and Skills (September 2006)*