



## **Bristol City Council Fostering Policy for Foster Carers “On Hold” or “Suspended”**

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/581/made>

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/192705/NMS\\_Fostering\\_Services.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf)

### **1. Suspension of a Foster Carer’s Approval**

Suspension of a foster carer’s approval should be used where there is an allegation, complaint or a serious concern about the standards of care being provided by a registered foster carer. Where there are concerns about a carers’ practice, this should be presented in a report with either the last Annual Review or Fostering Assessment (depending on when the carers were approved) to the fostering panel. The report must include a recommendation regarding the carer’s approval status. The report should evidence the social work decision making in relation to the allegations, concerns or complaint with consideration given to the suspension of a carer’s approval for a set timescale, reasons for the recommendation and a clear

plan of the investigation. A chronology of the carer's history including recent events should be included for panel. (use *report of allegations/concerns in relation to foster carers form*) The process for investigation should follow the procedure as set out in the Allegations and Complaints against Foster Carers document. (refer to the *foster care handbook*) The decision making regarding any changes in the carers approval must give consideration to the impact upon any children living within the household; this includes the foster carers own children and those who are in placement under Staying Put Policy. A child who is in the care of Bristol City Council cannot remain living with a foster carer whilst their approval is suspended.

Foster carers whose approval is suspended should be provided with appropriate support and supervision, as set out within the Allegations and Complaints against Foster Carers document (refer to the *foster care handbook*). The outcome of the investigation must be presented to panel, with a clear recommendation for whether approval should continue or whether there is sufficient evidence for a recommendation of change or termination of approval. Any police investigation does not have to be completed for a foster carer's approval to be terminated. The decision making and recommendation is based on any likelihood of harm a looked after child may experience even if there is insufficient evidence for police to progress to a conviction or take the matter further.

## **2. Foster Carers "On Hold"**

For carers that are taking a short break from the fostering role, this will be termed as "On Hold" meaning they are unavailable to care for children at the current time. If a foster carer meets the criteria to be on hold it will not be required for this to be taken to panel and their approval should not be suspended. The decision for a foster carer to be "on hold" can be made by the Service Manager.

There are a number of reasons where a foster carer can be put "on hold" including:

- Serious illness or a bereavement within the family
- A change in family circumstances such as a relationship breakdown
- An extended break from the fostering role following the ending of a child's placement
- Following an adoption or child birth.
- At the carers request, e.g. where they ask for an extended holiday or where they are moving house

A report should be completed by the fostering social worker, signed by the foster carer that sets out the reason for the foster carer being "on hold" and the timescale for this. (see *appendix A*) This should be signed and agreed by the Service Manager, recorded as a Case Note and uploaded onto LCS under documents.

"On hold" foster carers must be recorded on LCS, within the availability section and in the case summary to reflect that they are unavailable. They will then be excluded from the vacancy list and from reporting. "On hold" foster carers should continue to be visited at a minimum of every 3 months, to ensure it is still appropriate for them to be "on hold" and to recognise that they are still approved foster carers.

A foster carer should not be “on hold for more than a period of 12 months, at which point there would need to be a review of their approval. If after 12 months they are unable to return to the fostering role, the review should be presented to panel, with a recommendation to terminate approval, with agreement that a carer would re-apply at a future date if there was a change in their circumstances and they became available to return to the fostering role.

Where an annual review is due within the period of a carer being “On Hold” this should still be completed, as delaying this will impact upon their ongoing approval and the timescale for them returning to the fostering role. There is limited discretion by the Team Manager regarding the delay in an annual review. Any decision to delay a review must be clearly recorded with reasons. Under no circumstances should “On Hold” be used where there are practice concerns with the standard of care provided within a fostering household.

## **Template for Report for Service Manager– Foster Carers “On Hold”**

Foster Carer(s) Name	
Date of last Annual Review	
Current Approval	
Attached	Annual Review (or Fostering Assessment for carers in their first year of fostering)

### **Chronology of events**

### **Details of reasons for request for “On Hold”**

### **Dates for “On Hold” period**

**Does the Foster Carers Annual Review fall in the period of “On Hold”?  
(if yes, date for completion or reasons for non-completion)**

**Recommendation:**

**Signed and Date:**

Fostering Social Worker.....

Team Manager.....

Foster Carer.....

Foster Carer.....

**Service Managers Comments**

**Agreed dates for period “On Hold”.....**

**Signed and Date:**

**Service Manager .....**

Signed report to be uploaded onto LCS