# Conflict of Interest

Foster Carer Policies and Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/conflict-of-interest/

## Introduction

Potential conflicts of interest can arise in any service. It is important to recognise conflicts of interest so we can handle them effectively and protect everyone involved. Conflicts of interest, or perceived conflicts, can happen when people hold more than one role and, as a result, cannot meet all of their responsibilities to each role.

## Employees

All Agency staff must identify and disclose any activities or relationships that might create a real or perceived conflict of interest, and make sure these conflicts are properly managed, avoided, or reported to Senior Management.

## Foster Carers

Foster carers are key to the Agency’s goal of providing safe, secure, and nurturing homes for children in our care. Because they hold positions of great responsibility and trust, foster carers can sometimes be vulnerable to allegations. These roles may also put them in situations where they need to declare an interest because of possible conflicts.

Foster carers often face conflicts of interest when trying to balance the different needs of their own children and the children they foster. Sometimes there is a conflict between keeping information about foster children confidential and protecting the interests of family and friends. Less common conflicts may happen, for example, if a foster carer works for the local authority requesting the placement, or if the Agency asks a carer to foster a child who is actually their relative.

Potential conflicts are less likely through a foster carer’s community activities, organisational memberships, or other affiliations, but carers should still stay alert to any possible conflict. If a conflict exists, or there are concerns one might exist, the foster carer should talk with their supervising social worker. Foster carers often attend professional meetings such as reviews and placement-planning meetings. These meetings could present a conflict of interest, and this should be disclosed to the supervising social worker or the meeting chair if it is not already known.

If in doubt, foster carers and staff must tell their supervisor about any possible conflict of interest they have identified and follow any Agency requirements to manage the issue.

Fostering Panel/Independents

The Agency's fostering panel includes an independent chair, a panel adviser, staff members, and other panel members drawn from a central list. All panel members should consider any possible conflicts of interest in relation to the panel's agenda items. A potential conflict exists if an interest could be seen to affect a panel member's ability to act impartially on a matter being considered by the panel. If a panel member believes there is a conflict, they should immediately inform the Panel Adviser and/or the panel chair.

Likewise, all Independent Social Workers working for the Agency must consider potential conflicts and raise any concerns with the Registered Manager.

Gifts, Hospitality, etc.

- Employees

  To prevent any suspicion of dishonesty or personal gain, the Agency keeps a gifts and hospitality register that records all offers, whether accepted or declined. In general, employees should not accept favours or high-value gifts—such as tickets for entertainment events, sports travel, or hotels—to avoid feeling indebted or appearing influenced in their work. If an unsolicited gift is of small value, the employee should ask their manager for approval before accepting it. The manager should record any gift. If the manager advises against accepting it, the gift should be returned with a polite explanation of the Agency's policy.
- Foster Carers

  Although it does not happen often, some parents may want to thank foster carers with tangible gifts for caring for their children. Carers should try to avoid accepting gifts or gratuities from the parents of a child in their care. Small gifts (such as chocolates) can be accepted when refusing would feel awkward, but the carer must tell their supervising social worker, who will record the gift on file. Parents should be discouraged from giving such items, as accepting gifts can send the wrong message about the relationship. If unsure, the foster carer should discuss the matter with their supervising social worker.

Conclusion

This policy outlines guidance on declaring conflicts of interest for staff, carers, and independent social

workers or panel members. Anyone acting on behalf of the Agency must declare any personal or professional interest that is relevant to the Agency’s work and could affect decisions or actions if not disclosed.