Conflicts of Interest

Foster Carer Handbook · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/conflicts-of-interest/

Conflicts of Interest

A *conflict of interest* happens whenever our different roles or loyalties pull us in opposite directions and make it hard to act impartially for every party involved. The agency's **Conflict of Interest Policy** explains the legal duties behind this principle and sets out a simple "declare → record → manage" pathway for carers and staff. (Ask your Supervising Social Worker if you would like the full policy.)

Why conflicts matter in fostering

Children need to know that decisions about their lives are made solely in their best interests. If a carer's other commitments—or even their wish to protect their own family—are allowed to influence those decisions, the child's rights can be compromised and professional trust eroded.

Common examples for foster carers

- **Balancing children's needs:** your birth child wants a late-night party; your foster child's care plan sets a strict bedtime routine.
- **Information sharing:** a friend asks *"Why is the new lad in care?"*—telling them breaches the foster child's privacy but refusing may strain the friendship.
- **Professional overlap:** you work for the local authority that is now asking Positive Aspirations to place a child with you.
- **Family connections:** a child referred for placement turns out to be a distant relative.

What you must do

1. **Declare early** – tell your Supervising Social Worker (SSW) or line-manager as soon as you spot a potential conflict; don't try to "fix" it privately.
2. **Record** – the SSW logs the declaration in the conflict-of-interest register (Compliance Policy requirement).
3. **Agree a plan** – options may include:
   • clear boundaries (e.g., another adult handles contact transport to avoid workplace crossover);
   • additional supervision visits;
   • deciding *not* to accept a placement if impartiality cannot be guaranteed.
4. **Review** – revisit the plan at each supervision or sooner if circumstances change.
5. **Escalate unresolved issues** – if a conflict cannot be managed locally, the SSW refers it to the Registered Manager, who may take the matter to Panel or, in rare cases, another agency.

Failure to declare a known conflict can lead to formal investigation under the **Standards of Care Foster-Carer Investigation Policy**.

Quick reference – need-to-declare checklist

- Does this situation pull my loyalties in two directions?
- Could my personal interest (family, job, friendship, financial gain) influence a decision about a child?
- Might a reasonable outsider question my impartiality if they knew the full facts?

If the answer is *yes* or *maybe*, declare it.

Bottom line: Conflicts of interest are not a sign you have done something wrong—they are inevitable in complex lives. What matters is that we notice them, talk about them openly, and put clear safeguards in place.