Inactive (‘on hold’) Foster Carers Policy and Guidance

Foster Carer Policies and Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/inactive-on-hold-foster-carers-policy-and-guidance/

(Last reviewed 25/07/2023)

This policy sets out guidance for the different durations Foster Carers can be ‘on hold’ and the actions, which will be taken by Positive Aspirations Group.

Positive Aspirations Group acknowledges that there may be reasons and/or circumstances where a Foster Carer may request to be put ‘on hold’ or situations which would suggest that a Foster Carer should, for a time limited period, not be considered for further placements. This means that the Foster Carer is removed from the vacancy list and placed ‘on hold’ and is therefore ‘inactive’.

There can be several reasons why a Foster Carer may be placed ‘on hold’. This policy aims to elaborate on the two most common scenarios which are:

- A Foster Carer asks to be put ‘on hold’ due to personal circumstances;
- A Foster Carer is put ‘on hold’ due to concerns (e.g. standard of care issue, an allegation, a complaint).

A Foster Carer asks to be put ‘on hold’ due to personal circumstances

Positive Aspirations Group recognises that fostering is a demanding role and there will be occasions where Foster Carers may want a short break before they resume fostering again. When a Foster Carer wants a short break, this is defined as being ‘on hold’. There can be various reasons why a carer may choose to go ‘on hold’ such as the following:

- 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

- At the carer's request, e.g. where they ask for an extended holiday or where they are moving house
- Following an allegation

When a Foster Carer requests a break from fostering, the Supervising Social Worker must ascertain the reason for this and record clearly. They should try and ascertain how long the family is requesting to be put 'on hold' for. (see below procedures for different time periods).

The Supervising Social Worker must inform their Team Manager and the Placement Team.

Foster carers are expected to contact their Supervising Social Worker to inform when they would like to be put back on the vacancy list. It is however the responsibility of the Supervising Social Worker to keep in contact with the Foster Carers as they are nearing the end of the originally requested 'on hold' period. (see below procedures for different time periods).

When the Foster Carer requests to return to fostering, it is for the Supervising Social Worker to ascertain the present family situation. This needs to be clearly recorded with a recommendation whether the family is ready to return to fostering. Any significant change in circumstances must be discussed with their Team Manager and a decision must be made with regards to the next steps. This may be result in resuming fostering with careful matching consideration and monitoring or may result in an early review before fostering is resumed. The decision must be shared with the Foster Carer and Placement Team.

'On hold' less than 3 months:

Foster Carers are able to be 'on hold' for up to 3 months. During this time, Supervising Social Worker must keep in touch with the Foster Carers and will inform Placement Team when they are ready to foster again. During this period, Supervising Social Worker will also ensure that regulatory requirements are kept up to date so there is no delay to in Foster Carers resuming the fostering role. This requirement will include the following:

- Annual Review
- Any visits pertaining to a Foster Carer review if it falls in this period
- Health and Safety check
- Unannounced visits
- Allocation of training in line with a Foster Carers PDP

‘On hold’ from 3-6 months (starts at 3 months)

If a Foster Carer makes a request to be ‘on hold’ for up to 6 months then this request should be put in writing to the Supervising Social Worker stating the reasons why. We will need to ensure that there are no regulatory requirements (such as those stated above) which would expire and need to be updated in this time frame before the request is actioned.

As this is a longer duration, it is important to remember that a Foster Carer ‘on hold’ is still an approved Foster Carer as such it may be necessary that they also complete trainings which have been identified in their Personal Development Plan (PDP) during this period so there is no delay when they resume the fostering role.

Once a Foster Carers request to be ‘on hold’ for 6 months has been agreed, then their case will be allocated to Placement Team or within the Social Work Team. During this time the allocated member of the Placement Team or Social Work Team Member will touch base with Foster Carers every 8 weeks in case there is change in circumstance, for example the Foster Carer may be able to resume fostering sooner or may need to be ‘on hold’ for longer.

‘On hold’ for more than 6 months

Where a Foster Carer has been ‘on hold’ for 6 months or more, either from approval or from the last placement, the Team Manager will work with the Foster Carer to consider the reasons why. During this time the Team Manager will assess the situation and consideration will be given to the best option for the Foster Carer.

If a Foster Carer requests to be ‘on hold’ for a period of 12 months or more, then serious consideration will be given as to their fostering approval and a review will take place to assess the Foster Carers capacity and availability to foster.

‘On hold’ due to Concerns or Allegations

A Foster Carer is put ‘on hold’ due to concerns (e.g. standard of care issue, an allegation, a complaint).

When an allegation or serious complaint is made against a Foster Carer or a member of the fostering household, the Foster Carer would be put ‘on hold’ which means they will be removed from the vacancy list.

Please refer to: *Allegations and Complaints Policy and Procedures* for details on the process of investigations. For the purpose of this policy, it is important to recognise that Positive Aspirations Group will always endeavour to investigate and resolve complaints and allegations quickly, fairly and in line with our Allegations and Complaints Policy and Local Authority guidance.

Upon completion of the investigation and presentation of the case to the panel and pending reapproval, Foster Carers will return to the vacancy list.