

The Role of the FISS Advisor - A Guide for Fostering Services

Introduction to FISS

FISS is delivered by Foster Talk to support foster carers during difficult situations such as allegations, complaints or have had some concerns raised over the standards of the care they provide. The FISS service meets the requirements of NMS 22.12 which states;

“During an investigation the fostering service makes support, which is independent of the fostering service, available to the person subject to the allegation and, where this is a foster carer, to their household, in order to provide:

- a. *Information and advice about the process*
- b. *Emotional support, and*
- c. *If needed, mediation between the foster carer and the fostering service and/or advocacy (including attendance at meetings and panel hearings)*

Referral process

A referral can be made via email or through FosterTalk’s secure website: <https://www.fostertalk.org/fiss-referral-form>. Referrals must be approved by the budget holder or approved manager in the fostering service. FosterTalk recommends that independent support is commissioned as early as possible in the process to avoid undue distress for the foster carer. The FISS Manager is happy to have an informal discussion with referrers prior to a formal referral being made – 01527 836 910.

Once a referral is received by FosterTalk;

1. FosterTalk confirms receipt of referral & FISS Manager contacts the foster carer to discuss their situation and explain the FISS service.
2. FISS Manager allocates a FISS Advisor and contacts the carers to let them know the name of their FISS Advisor and agree a convenient time to be contacted.
3. FISS Manager contacts the referrer to confirm the name of the FISS Advisor who has been allocated.
4. FosterTalk send written information to foster carer about the service confirming the name of their FISS Advisor.

What can foster carers expect from “FISS”?

- Face to face support – FISS advisors will meet with carers in their home and can support them over the phone, email and text according to their preferences.
- Attendance at relevant meetings - we can attend some meetings with carers if they and their fostering service wish; these might include meetings between the carer and fostering service to discuss the carers situation, reviews and panel meetings. We may not be able to attend meetings where these are unrelated to the concerns or allegations.
- Information and advice - we will give carers as much information and advice as we can about the process and what to expect at each stage.



Foster Carers Independent Support Service

- FISS Advisors are trained and have knowledge of the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards and will explain the relevance of these to the carers' situation.
- Emotional support as required.
- Confidentiality - all discussions between carers and their FISS Advisor will be confidential unless the Advisor has a safeguarding concern. In this situation we will always tell carers what we are doing and the reasons why.
- Independence – FISS Advisors are independent of the carers fostering service.
- Advocacy and Mediation – we will help to ensure carers wishes and feelings are heard; and we can mediate if required.
- Help with written submissions – FISS Advisors can provide advice on written representations carers wish to make. They can advise on relevance, content and offer feedback.
- FISS Advisors will give carers their contact numbers so that they can get in touch when they need to. Advisors are often available during evenings and weekends if required.
- Ongoing communication – FISS Advisors will keep in contact with carers throughout the process until the matter is concluded.

What is FISS unable to do?

- We won't take any action without carers consent (except where there are safeguarding concerns).
- FISS Advisors will not attend any meetings without the carers.
- We will not act as a go-between for carers and their fostering service – we will help carers to keep lines of communication with their fostering service open.
- FISS Advisors will not write carers reports or representations for them.
- We will not tell them what to do – we will advise and explore the options available to carers and encourage them to make their own decisions.
- We will not support carers in making formal complaints – this is outside of our remit, if carers wish to make a formal complaint about their fostering service; our advice will be limited to general advice on accessing the relevant policy.
- Legal support - we are not legal advisors. FosterTalk carer members are entitled to separate legal advice. If carers are not FosterTalk members, they will be encouraged to seek their own independent legal advice.

Quality assurance and use of hours

Regular consultation takes place between the FISS Manager and FISS Advisors to ensure that practice standards are met and that time is being used efficiently in accordance with service level agreements.

The initial number of hours authorised by you on referral will be monitored by the FISS Advisor and the FISS Manager. If the upper limit of the approved time is reached, then approval will be sought by the FISS Manager for further time, to enable support to continue if required. If less time is used; then only the time actually used will be invoiced.

Case closure

- Closure of the FISS referral usually take place once the matter has reached a conclusion, or if the fostering service requests this.
- The FISS Advisor and the foster carer may agree closure and the referrer will be informed.
- A feedback form will be sent out to the foster carer and to the referrer to enable continuous review and monitoring of the FISS Service.

FosterTalk complaints and representations

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the service you have received from FosterTalk, you should contact FosterTalk's FISS Manager in the first instance. A copy of FosterTalk's complaints procedure will be made available to you on request and is also available on our website www.fostertalk.org.

FosterTalk Safeguarding Policy & Procedure

If you would like a copy of FosterTalk's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure or the Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure please ask the FISS Manager.

For more information about FosterTalk or FISS please visit www.fostertalk.org or telephone 01527 836 910.