

# PANEL GUIDE



## Introduction

**This booklet is to assist foster carers and fostering applicants through the process of attending the fostering panel at FosterCare UK.**

We hope it will give you an insight into the purpose and role of the panel. It will explain those members of the panel and how they make recommendations about foster carer's approval and/or de-registration and listen to and respond to any young persons comments and/or complaints.

The panel also gives recommendations on foster carers annual review status and any other matters appertaining to statutory requirements.

You will undoubtedly be apprehensive and excited, but we hope that by helping to familiarise you with panel, their role and the process you will at least know what to expect. Your Assessing Social Worker will present your assessment and support you in representing yourself.

By the time you receive this document you will already have been informed about FosterCare UK but to ensure you are clear on our role and function we have listed below some essential information.

FosterCare UK is an independent Fostering provider (IFP) a limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company Number 6139705).

In accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and 1989, FosterCare UK Ltd has produced a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association.

FosterCare UK Ltd is registered with Ofsted, Registration Number: SC363485.

The Managing Director/Responsible Individual is Jonathan Toomey.

The Registered Manager is Karen Evans.

## What is the Fostering Panel?

**Fostering panels are set up in line with statutory requirements to ensure safe and effective care for children and young people who need to live away from home and in foster care.**

Their role is to ensure the highest standards of practice. All fostering agencies are required to appoint a range of people to be panel members.

The Panel consists of up to 10 voting members:

- A Chair (an independent professional who is not employed by FosterCare UK and who has a comprehensive understanding and experience of the fostering process).
- A Vice Chair
- A health professional/medical advisor
- An education professional
- A person who has been in foster care
- A foster carer from another Fostering Agency / Local Authority
- Two independent people with first hand knowledge of fostering matters
- Two social workers employed by FosterCare UK.

In addition there is one non-voting member – Panel Advisor, who informs the members of local and national developments and advises on specific cases. There is also a Panel Administrator who takes minutes, circulates papers and is responsible for following up actions agreed.

Regulations require that the fostering panel shall consist of no more than ten members. FosterCare UK Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policies will ensure that membership is gender balanced and from different cultural backgrounds, where possible.

The fostering panel may only hold formal meetings if at least five members are present, forming a quorum. Of these five one must include the Chair or Vice Chair; one social worker employed by FosterCare UK, and at least two independent members.

## Legal Remit of the Panel

### FosterCare UK must consult the Fostering Panel in drawing up and reviewing fostering arrangements.

The Panel must consider:

- Each application for approval as a foster carer and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to act as a foster carer.
- Where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend the terms of approval to be given.
- Whether or not to recommend a person is suitable to remain acting as a foster carer and whether or not the terms of approval remain appropriate;
  - (i) on the first review within 12 months of initial approval
  - (ii) on the occasion of any other review when requested to do so by FosterCare UK.

In addition the panel also advises on the reviewing procedures and monitors their effectiveness.

They also oversee the conduct of assessments and make recommendations on such matters or cases as the fostering service may refer to it. They will also act independently with regards comments and complaints about the service.

The FosterCare UK panel can only make recommendations as it is the Agency Decision Maker/Registered Individual who makes a formal and final decision. This process takes seven working days.

The Agency Decision Maker/Registered Individual is a FosterCare UK Director.

It is FosterCare UK policy:

- That all foster carers' annual reviews are presented to panel.
- That all foster carers attend panel for their first annual review.
- That all subsequent foster carer annual reviews are presented to panel.

## Preparing for the Panel

**For every presentation to the Panel a comprehensive, detailed report needs to be prepared by the Assessing Social Worker.**

For prospective foster carers a BAAF Form F Report and accompanying documents are prepared.

Your assessing social worker should have discussed timescales with you early on in the process. Once a panel date has been agreed you should receive this information booklet. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions so that you can become fully conversant and fully involved in the process.

Your social worker will also have discussed the draft Form F report with you. At this point factual inaccuracies may be corrected. You will be asked to sign the final report and if you wish, submit any written comments.

## Attending Panel

**You will be sent an invitation approximately two weeks prior to the panel date. It will confirm the venue; date and time you need to arrive.**

On arrival you will be shown to a waiting area and your assessing social worker or agency representative will meet you.

There may be other people waiting as well. Every effort is made to keep to the agenda and timings, but given the nature of the discussions and recommendations that need to be made, they sometimes run late.

The panel chair will meet you and the panel will introduce themselves when it is time for you to attend. In some cases panel members may need to ask the social worker questions on their own. They will do this prior to you joining the meeting.

An hour is usually allowed for the approval of prospective foster carers.

## The Panel Meeting

**Panel meetings are held at least once a month at a FosterCare UK office.**

Panel members will have had your assessment report circulated to them ten working days before the panel meeting. The Panel Chair will ask members for comments on the reports and draw up a list of issues for discussion. The Chair will decide at this point whether the social worker needs to be invited in first to clarify any issues.

The Panel Chair will see you and the social worker who has been assessing you, outside of the meeting and briefly explain the areas that will be discussed by the panel. The Chair will then bring you into the meeting.

The Panel Chair will then ask the panel members to introduce themselves. Panel members will have name cards for easy identification.

The Chair and other panel members will then ask you and the social worker to clarify issues that they may have highlighted whilst reading your reports.

In most cases you will be informed of the panel's recommendation that day, but the organisation will notify you of the panel recommendation within 24 hours, if not.

The recommendation of the panel is notified to the FosterCare UK Responsible Individual for a decision. You will be informed of the Responsible Individual's decision within seven days of the panel meeting.

## FosterCare UK Fostering Panel Evaluation Sheet

**As an organisation we constantly review our practice and processes to ensure compliance with statutory regulations and to ensure that all parties receive a positive experience and have an opportunity to feedback.**

Therefore we would be grateful if you could take some time to complete the evaluation sheet at the end of this guide.

Your comments will be fed-back to the panel and changes made, as felt appropriate.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide and if you are still unsure of the process or would like to visit one of our offices prior to the panel meeting, please do not hesitate to contact us.

For and on behalf of FosterCare UK Ltd

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# Evaluation Sheet

Name:

Date:

1. Why were you attending the FosterCare UK panel?

2. How did you find the experience of attending the panel?

3. What did you find to be most useful?

4. What did you find to be least useful?

5. Please tell us what you think would help make the process better.

6. Did you notice anything in our panel guide that didn't happen? What were they?

7. What was the best part about coming to panel?

Please use a separate sheet of paper and attach, if needed. **Thank you for completing this questionnaire.**

## Contact us

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[mosaicappeals.com](http://mosaicappeals.com)



FosterCare UK's Mosaic Appeal is an exciting fundraising venture for Make-a-Wish Foundation. We have created a digital mosaic complete with 600 tiles, and we are now inviting you to help grant magical wishes to children and young people fighting life-threatening illnesses by buying a virtual tile. **Please visit:** [www.makeawish.mosaicappeal.com](http://www.makeawish.mosaicappeal.com).

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