



Northumberland County Council

Fostering Panel: Job Description and Person Specification for Panel Chair

1. To chair panel meetings, ensuring that all items of business are covered and that the panel operates in accordance with the regulations and guidance and the policies and procedures of the agency.
2. To prepare for panel meetings, reading panel papers, identifying key issues and altering the agency adviser if necessary to ensure, as far as possible, that the case is adequate for submission to panel.
3. To facilitate the active participation of all panel members in contributing to the panel's consideration of cases and to the making of clear and well-evidenced recommendations with the reasons for these.
4. To ensure that all those attending panel are treated with respect and courtesy.
5. To address diversity issues and to promote anti-discriminatory practice at all times.
6. To ensure that clear and accurate minutes are written, which record any serious reservations which panel members may have, and to be involved in checking and agreeing minutes with other panel members before they are sent to the agency decision-maker.
7. To liaise with the agency decision maker and other senior managers as required.
8. To ensure, with the agency adviser, that officers within the agency are aware of issues of concern, in relation to individual cases and to more general matters.
9. To be involved as appropriate in the recruitment and appointment of central list and panel members and in any consideration about terminating the appointment of a member.
10. To review, with the agency adviser, the performance of central list and panel members as the need arises, and at least annually.
11. To assist in developing, promoting and monitoring policies and procedures and high standards of work in relation to the fostering and permanence services in the agency
12. To assist in planning training for members and to participate in this at least one day per annum.
13. To safeguard the confidentiality of all panel papers and panel discussions.



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14. To be involved in:

- Deciding whether a case is adequate for submission to panel
- Deciding on the participation of a panel member who declares an interest in a case

15. Prepare a 6 monthly and annual report on the panel's work.

Person Specification

Experience and Qualifications

- Experience, either professionally or personally or both, of the placement of children in foster families and of children being cared for away from their birth family.
- Experience of chairing complex meetings.

Knowledge

- An appreciation of the effect of separation and loss on children.
- An awareness of the richness of different kinds of families and their potential for meeting children's needs.
- An understanding of the purpose and function of the panel and of the agency which the panel is serving.
- An understanding of the fostering process and practice and of the legislative framework for the work of the panel, or the capacity to develop this knowledge quickly

Abilities

- The authority and competence to chair a panel, ensuring that the business is covered and that the panel operates in accordance with regulations and the policies and procedures of the agency.
- Excellent interpersonal and listening skills.
- The ability to communicate well and clearly both verbally and in writing.
- The ability to identify key issues and possible solutions and to communicate these clearly.
- The ability to facilitate the active participation of all panel members in contributing to the panel's consideration of cases and recommendations.
- The ability to manage the expression of strongly held but possibly conflicting views by panel members and to help the panel to reach a recommendation which takes account of all these views.
- The ability to take up issues as required with the agency, liaising with the decision-maker and other senior managers.



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- The ability to work with the professional adviser, to review each panel member's performance when required, and at least annually, ensuring that this is a helpful and constructive process for both the panel member and the panel as a whole.

Attitudes

- A commitment to keeping children within their own family or community where this is possible and to maintain contact between children living in foster families and their birth families where this appears to be in the child's best interests.
- A commitment to fostering as a way of meeting a child's needs, where this appears to be in the child's best interests.
- A commitment to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare in foster care.
- A valuing of diversity in relation to issues of ethnicity, religion, gender, disability and sexuality.
- An understanding of, and a commitment to the need for confidentiality.
- A willingness to increase knowledge and understanding of issues through reading, discussion and training.
- A willingness to contribute constructively to the annual review of their role as panel chair, if this is an agency requirement.