

Panel Chair

Job Description

- To chair panel meetings, ensuring that all items of business are covered and that the panel operates in accordance with regulations and the policies and procedures of the agency.
- To prepare for panel meetings, reading panel papers carefully, identifying key issues and alerting the agency advisor if necessary to ensure, as far as possible, that the case is adequate for submissions to panel.
- 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.
- To ensure that all those attending panel are treated with respect and courtesy.
- To address diversity issues and to promote anti-discriminatory practice at all times.
- 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 draft minutes with other panel members before they are sent to the decision-maker.
- To liaise with the decision-maker and with other senior managers as required.
- To ensure, along with the agency advisor that senior managers are aware of issues of concern, in relation both to individual cases and to more general matters.
- To be involved in the recruitment and appointment of central list panel members and in any consideration about terminating the appointment of a member.
- To review, possibly with the agency advisor, the performance of central list panel members as the need arises, and at least annually.
- To assist in developing, promoting and monitoring policies and procedures and high standards of work in fostering services in the agency.
- To assist in planning training for members and to participate in this at least one day per year.
- To safeguard the confidentiality of all panel papers and panel discussions.
- To be involved in:
 - Deciding whether a case is adequate for submission to panel
 - Deciding on the attendance of observers at panel.
 - Deciding on the participation of a panel member who declares an interest in a case.
 - Deciding when an extra panel may be necessary.
 - The preparation of an 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.
- The ability, working with the agency advisor 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 maintaining contact between children living in foster families 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.