

## **Policy on foster panel**

### **Policy statement**

Children's Services will ensure the Local Authority complies with Regulations in relation to the approval and review of foster carers.

### **Policy status**

The Children Act 1989

Children Act Guidance & Regulation Vol. 3

Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003

### **Key points**

1. Decision making about the approval or otherwise of foster carers is delegated within the council's constitution to the Assistant Director, Children's Services. The foster panel is not a decision making body, it makes recommendations to the Assistant Director, Children's Services in respect of foster care applicants and any other matters referred by the fostering services.
2. The membership, role and function of the foster panel is defined in statute under Regulation 24 and 26 of the fostering services (Wales) Regulations 2003.
3. The foster panel does not make recommendations on the proposed or actual placement of children.
4. Membership requirements prescribed under Regulation 24 are as follows:
  - a. Members can be appointed for up to 3 years and be re-appointed for a second term.
  - b. Membership is limited to 10 in total and must include:
  - c. A chair &ndash; a senior manager who is independent from the line management of the fostering service or an independent person with expertise in fostering services.
  - d. Two social workers employed by the authority; one with child care expertise and one with expertise in fostering services.
  - e. At least one elected member
  - f. 4 independent members &ndash; at least one to be a foster parent for another agency,
  - g. A Vice chair to act in the chair's absence

### **Standards**

1. The panel has a primary responsibility to act in the best interests of children and young people looked after in foster care by the Local Authority.
2. Each panel member is subject to relevant statutory checks.
3. Induction and ongoing training for panel members is mandatory.
4. For the panel to be quorate the chair or a vice-chair plus four other members must be present, including two who are not from Children's Services and at least one of the social workers.
5. The panel will call on specialist advice to clarify any aspect of the assessment or approval review report when required.
6. Panel members will observe the confidential nature of panel proceedings. All panel members must have signed a confidentiality agreement before sitting on the panel.
7. Full and accurate written minutes of the discussion, decision and/or recommendations are taken at each meeting of the panel.
8. All applicants are given the opportunity to attend panel in person. Refusal to attend will not prejudice any recommendation or decision made.
9. Each applicant is informed verbally of the panel recommendation on the day of panel and receives written confirmation once the decision is made.
10. Applicants may appeal against the decision of the fostering panel to the Assistant Director, Children's Services.
11. The foster panel convenes every fortnight.
12. The panel must consider and recommend terms and conditions under which applicants are approved and recommend whether applicants are suitable to foster.
13. The panel must consider submissions by prospective foster carers who have been refused approval.
14. The panel must consider and recommend at first review whether foster carers are suitable to continue
15. The panel must consider and recommend the suitability of foster carers following any subsequent review.
16. The panel must consider submissions by foster carers when approval has been withdrawn.
17. The panel must oversee the conduct of foster carer assessments.
18. The panel must monitor the range and type of foster carers available in relation to needs of children locally.

19. The panel must advise on the overall management of the services and other matters referred by it by the fostering service.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsible officer</b>	<b>Record</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>1</b>	Supervising social worker is given the date of the panel and informed that all documents must be received by the panel admin in the fostering team within 10 working days of the panel meeting.	Panel administrator	Form F/Review Document/ competency assessment.	Informed immediately
<b>2</b>	There are different reasons for the panel to meet; approval of foster carers, annual review, update, variation of approval, resignation, deregistration, consideration of Regulation 38 carers, consideration following an allegation.	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>3</b>	Approval: Form F or Fostering Network competency assessment, carers' file, photographs and medicals. The file to be taken to Panel on the day. Applicants attend Panel if they wish to.	Supervising social worker	Form F/ competency assessment on carer's case file, portfolio returned to carers	Papers available 2 weeks before Panel meeting.
<b>4</b>	Review: Foster carer review form, previous review recommendations to be submitted.	Supervising social worker and panel administrator	Review form and previous recommendations on carer's case file	Papers delivered 5 working days before Panel meeting.
<b>5</b>	Update: Report, usually an addendum to earlier paperwork, no set format.	Supervising social worker/ support worker	Report on carer's case file	Papers delivered 5 working before Panel meeting.

<b>6</b>	Variation: Individual report, no set format.	Supervising social worker	Report on carer's case file	Papers delivered 5 working days before Panel meeting.
<b>7</b>	Resignation: Exit interview form, letter of resignation.	Supervising social worker	Exit form and letter on carer's case file	Papers delivered 5 working days before Panel meeting.
<b>8</b>	Deregistration: Foster carer deregistration form and previous review forms unless deregistration is within a year of approval in which case the original assessment would replace the review form.	Supervising social worker	Registration form on carer's case file	Papers delivered 5 working days before Panel meeting.
<b>9</b>	Distribute papers to panel member.	Panel administrator	N/A	Papers delivered 5 working days before Panel meeting.
<b>10</b>	Time is given to presenting workers re: attendance at panel.	Panel administrator	N/A	5 working days before Panel meeting
<b>11</b>	Send minutes of panel meeting to panel members, Chair, operational manager and Head of Children's Services.	Panel administrator	SWIFT	Within 1 week
<b>12</b>	Notify carers of panel recommendation	Supervising social worker	SWIFT	Same day as Panel
<b>13</b>	Notify carers of panel decision	Supervising social worker	SWIFT	Within 48 hours of approval being granted.
<b>14</b>	Letter, 2 copies of new foster carer agreement sent to carers	Panel administrator	Foster carer's case file	Within 21 days

