

Fosterline Wales Factsheet: Panel, reviews and termination of approval

Introduction

The fostering panel plays a significant and recurring part in your fostering career. This factsheet covers its role in the approval process.

The fostering panel

Every fostering service must have a fostering panel. Its role is to consider whether or not people applying to become foster carers can be approved and, if so, under what criteria, such as age, gender and the number of children, plus the type of placement, such as short-term, permanent, short breaks and child and parent.

Panel also considers continued approval in the form of annual carer reviews, including a request that approval be terminated. Panel is a multi-disciplinary body including:

- social workers from your organisation who do not have direct responsibility for you and your family
- child care professionals from health and education backgrounds
- a foster carer from another fostering service
- someone who themselves has been in foster care.

The chair is an experienced child care professional, either a manager in your organisation or someone independent. They ensure the meeting runs smoothly, procedures are followed and decisions taken. Panels can be daunting, so the chair makes sure everyone can contribute, including carers.

You can attend panel and we would recommend that you do. You and your social worker will contribute to the discussion and respond to questions before members decide on their recommendation.

Panels and decision taking

In Wales the panel makes a recommendation regarding your approval. This goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) together with all the reports and panel minutes for a final decision. The ADM is usually an experienced senior manager within the fostering service who has had no prior involvement with the assessment or review process.

You will be informed of the decision in writing as soon as possible. Approval includes specific criteria as above. If you are not approved, the reasons plus a copy of panel's recommendation must be included. You then have 28 days to respond in writing, either to the fostering service provider or to the Independent Review Mechanism Cymru, for a review of the provider's qualifying determination. This should be done within 28 days of receiving a qualifying determination:

- no response - the decision is final
- challenge the decision, including a request to change the approval criteria – the case is referred back to panel. The ADM then takes a final decision taking into account the panel's further deliberations.

Foster carer reviews

Reviews take place within 12 months of the date you were first approved and subsequently every 12 months after that. The first review must come to panel. This is not required for second and subsequent reviews but many fostering services do present them at various intervals, for example three or five years.

The review examines your performance over the past year in terms of meeting the standards expected of all foster carers. It covers all aspects of your role:

- meeting the needs of children and young people who are looked after
- communication with children
- keeping children safe
- culture and diversity
- health
- education
- leisure and social events
- preparing young people for independence
- your training and development
- record-keeping
- working with other professionals
- working with the birth family.

The review report is compiled by your supervising social worker, or sometimes an independent person will complete the review, and they will discuss it with you and give you a copy in advance – we recommend two weeks. It's about what *you* have done, using examples and other evidence. Views must be sought from:

- carers
- any looked after child you care for
- any local authority responsible for a child in your care during the preceding year.

Good practice suggests feedback should also be obtained from birth children, the IRO, schools and any other professional able to comment on your fostering.

You may want to ask for a change to your terms of approval – for example, to be allowed to foster older or younger children. The annual review is a good time to discuss this – the supervising social worker can then recommend any changes in their report.

Note that the fostering service can choose to consider your approval and present a review to panel at any time. An allegation or serious practice concerns might trigger a review, as could any major changes in your household, such as a serious health issue or separation or divorce. Decision making is as above, including your right to challenge.

Termination of approval

If the fostering service wishes to terminate your approval, they must write a report setting out the reasons why, supported by evidence. This may take the form of a review or a separate report, which comes to panel and then goes to the ADM.

You will be informed in writing. You then have 28 days from the date of the letter to challenge this, again in writing (see Foster Care magazine 168 for advice). The matter is then referred back to panel and the ADM considers their recommendation.

The ADM's decision is final. If you have grounds to disagree, you can either make a complaint via your service's complaints procedure or take your case to the Independent Review Mechanism. You cannot do both.

Resignation

You can tender your resignation at any time, giving 28 days' notice.

How The Fostering Network can help

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up to date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

Advice

Fosterline Wales

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday. If you call outside this time please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us or write to us at:

Fosterlinewales@fostering.net

The Fostering Network Wales

1 Caspian Point, Pierhead Street

Cardiff Bay CF10 4DQ

Support and resources

Our website is an essential source of information, while our online community brings together foster carers for peer support and advice. You can login to share your experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss foster care matters. thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Training and consultancy

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs. For more information, contact our learning and development manager, Sarah Mobedji at sarah.mobedji@fostering.net.

About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children to make foster care the very best it can be.

Contact us

To find out more about our work in Wales, please contact:

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