Adoption and Fostering: tackling delay

Consultation Response Form

- The Fostering Network

The closing date is: 7 December 2012
Your comments must reach us by that date.
Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.  
Reason for confidentiality:

Name  Robert Tapsfield  
       Chief Executive

Organisation (if applicable)  the Fostering Network

Address:  87 Blackfriars Road  
          London  
          SE1 8HA

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation, you can contact the Department's national enquiry line on 0370 000 2288 or email AdoptionandFostering.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the CYPFD Team by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's 'Contact Us' page.
Please mark the category which best describes you as a respondent

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<tr>
<th>Birth parent</th>
<th>Prospective adopter/adopter</th>
<th>Prospective foster carer/foster carer</th>
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<td>Local authority adoption/fostering team</td>
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<td>Sector organisation (e.g. ADCS, Adoption Support Agency)</td>
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Please Specify:
The Fostering Network is a charity representing the voice of foster care in the UK, with membership drawn from foster carers, local authorities and fostering agencies.
Adoption

Approval process for prospective adopters - Chapter 1 paragraphs 7.1 - 7.12.3

1 Are there any circumstances in which more than 10 working days would be needed for an initial approach by him/her to an agency or the National Gateway for Adoption for general information? If yes, please explain what those circumstances would be.

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Not Sure

Comments:

2 Are there any circumstances in which an agency may need more than five working days to decide whether to accept a registration of interest from a potential prospective adopter? If yes, please explain what those circumstances would be.

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Not Sure

Comments:
3. Should adoption agencies be required to visit or have a meeting or pre-planned telephone call with prospective adopters during Stage One of the process to ensure that they have the opportunity to ask for more information or training based on their particular needs?

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- Visit
- Meeting
- Pre-planned telephone call
- All of the above
- None of the above
- Not sure

Comments:

4. Should adoption agencies be required to agree with prospective adopters an `agreement' to set out the responsibilities of the prospective adopter and the agency during Stage One of the process? If no, please explain why not.

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- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

Comments:
5 How might we make Stage One of the process even more adopter-led?

Comments:

6 Should a prospective adopter who wants to take a break during Stage One of the process be required to restart this stage when he/she is ready to pursue his/her interest in becoming an adoptive parent? If no, please explain why not.

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Not Sure

Comments:
7 a) Should prospective adopters be able to request an extension of longer than two months to Stage Two of the process?

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Comments:

7 b) If yes, in what circumstances and by how much should they be able to extend Stage Two before having to restart the approval process from scratch?

Comments:
8 In order to facilitate completion of Stage Two of the process within the required four month timescale, should the time prospective adopters have to consider their papers before submission to the adoption panel (currently 10 working days) be reduced? If yes, to how many working days should it be reduced?

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Comments:

**Fast track procedure for approved foster carers and previous adopters - Chapter 1 paragraphs 7.13.1 - 7.13.2**

9 a) Should the fast-track procedure for previous adopters and approved foster carers be extended to include adopters who were approved in England or Wales prior to the coming into force of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 *(this would mean that those who have been approved for more than seven years ago would be included?)*

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Comments:
9 b) If yes, what should the criteria for inclusion be?

Comments:

9 c) Which, if any, other groups should be included?

Comments:
10 What would be a reasonable timescale for completion of the fast track process? How could this process be made to work well and efficiently for all involved?

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Comments:

Matching/Adoption Register - Chapter 1 paragraphs 7.14.1

11 Should adoption agencies be required to refer children and prospective adopters to the Adoption Register immediately providing the referral does not ‘go live’ for three months, where they are actively seeking a local match?

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Comments:
"Fostering for Adoption" – Chapter 2

12 Do you agree that the "Fostering for Adoption" practice will enable children to be placed with their likely adoptive families more easily, and has potential to secure better adoption outcomes for more children than at present? If no, please explain why not.

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Comments:
We feel that fostering for adoption will be helpful in better meeting the needs of a relatively small number of young looked after children with an adoption plan, by enabling them to settle into permanent families at an earlier stage. There are however many complexities of court proceedings before a placement order is granted, care proceedings can take extended periods of time, and outcomes are by their nature uncertain. Anyone entering into a fostering for adoption arrangement will have to be prepared to support the child having regular contact with their birth parents, and accept that there may be a change of care plan resulting in an alternative placement or a return home rather than an adoption placement.

Paragraph 8.6 of the consultation document sets out the intention to make it easier for a child to move in with a new family once an adoption decision has been made. Clarification is needed as to what is meant in this context by an adoption decision, when a placement order has not yet been made. In the early stages of a child having become looked after their needs may not be fully understood, and their medical and family history may be unclear. In these circumstances it would be difficult to identify a suitable match ‘as soon as the child comes into care’ with foster carers who intend to adopt the child (as proposed in paragraph 8.4). Our concern is that the child’s needs may not have been sufficiently assessed and therefore be clear to the foster carers / proposed adopters so that an appropriate support plan can be drawn up, and that other possible matches such as with connected people may not have been given sufficient scrutiny.

Foster carers can play a crucial role in helping to prepare children for a move to their ‘forever family’ and it will be very difficult for those who are fostering for adoption to support a child to feel secure within their family when it is not certain that they will be able to remain there. This may inhibit children’s ability to form secure attachments.

Fostering is by nature very different to adoption, and adopters who are given fast track approval as foster carers would need to understand their role and responsibilities and everything that goes with these. This includes the role of the supervising social worker, the foster carer agreement, learning and development requirements, and the need to evidence the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers. These will present significant challenges to those who are fostering for adoption, especially given that their approval process will have been very different to that of other foster carers. The carers will need to be emotionally able to accept a foster placement, with its considerable involvement from the fostering service and the responsible authority and the different level of autonomy to prospective
13 Do you consider that there are any barriers to "Fostering for Adoption" working successfully, and if so what are they?

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Comments:

See answer to question 12

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**Adoption and Fostering**

Sharing of case records between fostering services and adoption agencies - Chapter 4

Allowing a foster carer's case records to be shared with a new fostering service before the carer's approval with their old service is terminated - Chapter 4 paragraphs 10.1.1 – 10.2.1

Allowing fostering and adoption services to share case records for assessment purposes - Chapter 4 paragraphs 10.3.1 – 10.3.6

To facilitate a streamlined assessment process for applicants who have fostered or adopted before, it is proposed that legislation should be amended to remove barriers to fostering services and adoption agencies giving access to a foster carer's/adopter's case records for the purpose of another service/agency assessing their suitability to foster or adopt. The proposed amendments will (a) allow a fostering service to whom a foster carer is moving to have access to the carer's records before the carer's approval with their current service is terminated (though, as now, the foster carer's approval with their first fostering service must have been terminated before they can be approved by the second fostering service - a person cannot be approved as a
foster carer by two fostering services at the same time); and (b) allow fostering services and adoption agencies to provide each other with access to an approved foster carer's/prospective foster carer's or adopter's/prospective adopter's records for the purpose of assessing suitability to foster/adopt.

Where case records include information about a fostered child or a person mentioned in the records who has not given consent to their information being shared, the case records would need to be redacted in line with data protection requirements prior to them being seen by another fostering service/adoPTION agency.

It is proposed that the fostering service or adoption agency holding the records should be required to provide access to these within:

- 10 working days if the information is being provided to a fostering service;
- five working days if the information is being provided to an adoption agency.

The shorter timeframe for providing access to an adoption agency is to accommodate the proposed fast track assessment process for previous adopters or approved foster carers.

14 Do you agree with the revised point (i.e. prior to termination of approval) at which fostering services would be required to comply with a request for access to a foster carer's case records by a service the carer is moving to? If no, please explain why.

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Comments:
We regard it as vital that information is shared between fostering services when foster carers are seeking to move to a new provider as this will inform the new assessment and may save the new provider from collecting information again where they are satisfied as to the quality and relevance of information already obtained. NMS 26.9 currently confuses the situation as it is not clear that it complies with FSR 32, and many fostering services do already share their records relating to currently approved foster carers.

We welcome clarification of the methods by which records can be shared. There should be a requirement for the foster carer to grant permission for their records to be made available to the new service provider.

Our members would find it helpful for the statutory guidance to clarify what
rights foster carers have under the Data Protection Act to obtain a copy of their records and to share these with others, since there is confusion regarding intellectual property rights of assessment documentation. We would wish to revise our protocol for foster carers transferring between fostering services to take account of this.

15 Do you agree with the revised timeframe of 10 working days for providing the access? If no, please explain why.

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Comments:
We support the principle that records should be shared without delay, but the current requirement of one month under FSR 32 is more achievable in practice and should be retained in relation to the new proposals. From consultation with our members there is consensus that in many cases it would not be possible to make records available within ten working days since there may be considerable work to redact third party information and, particularly in a small fostering agency, such a deadline may unreasonably divert staff resources from other work with foster carers.

The statutory guidance should make clear which records can or must be shared between fostering service providers. Currently the FSR refer to those records specified in regulations 30 and 31, which may not include all of the records kept by the service. Clear guidance is needed regarding access to information held regarding allegations against foster carers, since the current statutory guidance specifies that unsubstantiated, unfounded and malicious allegations should not be referred to in references, although these may be referred to in other documents compiled under FSR 30.

Transitional arrangements - record sharing - Chapter 4 paragraph 10.2.1

It is proposed that the amendments to record sharing should be implemented immediately upon the coming into force of the amending Regulations.

16 Do you foresee any problems with the proposed implementation? If yes, please explain why.

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17 Do you agree that provision should be made for a fostering service to have access to an adopter's/prospective adopter's records, and for an adoption agency to have access to a foster carer's/prospective foster carer's/adopter's/prospective adopter's case records in order to inform an assessment of their suitability to adopt or foster? If no, please explain why.

X Yes   □ No   □ Not Sure

Comments:

Fostering

Approval process for foster carers - Chapter 5 paragraphs 11.1 - 11.4.3

It is proposed that a fostering service should be able to collect certain information specified in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (including CRB checks, health check and references), before deciding whether to proceed to a formal assessment of an applicant's suitability to foster.
Do you agree with the proposed start point of the assessment?

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Comments:
It is very helpful to be clear which tasks may be undertaken prior to the assessment as considerable confusion exists at present which impacts on the requirement or otherwise to complete the assessment if the application is not withdrawn. The process should be transparent, and we believe that currently applicants are sometimes informed that the fostering service is unwilling to complete their assessment and are not aware of the requirement to present the completed assessment to panel.

Fostering services must be given the option, if they so wish, to undertake their formal assessment in parallel with completing the statutory checks. If the checks **must** all be completed and considered prior to commencing the assessment then this may well cause delay rather than reduce delay. Some checks may take time to complete or need following up for clarification – for example when applicants have lived abroad, or if there are concerns arising from the medical report required by the FSR Schedule 3 (which we assume is the matter referred to in the consultation paper as the health check).

In our consultation with members we considered whether a two stage approach, such as that proposed in adoption, would be a more appropriate approach but we feel that this would not be helpful as it could add to delay by requiring stage one to always be completed prior to starting stage two, whilst we believe as set out above that there will be circumstances in which the two can be run concurrently.

The guidance will need to be clear about activity other than statutory checks (such as initial visits and information giving sessions) which may be undertaken but not regarded as part of the formal assessment.

Fostering services generally try to complete assessments as quickly as possible and should be encouraged to do so, and the biggest factor influencing this is the competitive nature of the foster carer market.
19 Do you think that applicants deemed unsuitable to foster before the start of the assessment who are unhappy with this decision should have the option of:

19 a) making representations to the fostering service (which would be considered by the service’s fostering panel, whose recommendation would be taken into account by the decision maker in coming to a final decision about whether to start an assessment)

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Comments:
The statutory guidance is clear that nobody has a right to be a foster carer, and if the fostering service determines from the pre-assessment checks that the applicant is unlikely to be suitable to meet the needs of children referred to the service for placements then it is not appropriate to use the resources of the fostering panel to consider representations.

19 b) complaining via the fostering service's complaints procedure which would consider whether there had been maladministration in coming to the decision not to proceed to assessment

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Comments:
The complaints procedure is the appropriate mechanism for dealing with any such complaints and should provide appropriate independence.
19 c) neither of the above (please provide comments).

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Comments:

Introducing brief reports for prospective foster carers - Chapter 5, paragraphs 11.5.1 - 11.5.3

Once an assessment has been started, it is proposed that the fostering service should be able to terminate it via a brief report if their decision maker considers there is sufficient evidence that the prospective foster carer is unsuitable to foster. A prospective foster carer who disagrees can make representations to either the fostering service or seek an independent review from the Independent Review Mechanism.

20 Do you agree with the proposal to introduce brief reports for prospective foster carers?

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Comments:
This would provide appropriate independent review of any proposal for early termination of an assessment, whilst giving the applicants the opportunity to attend the fostering panel or independent review panel and for their views to be heard before the decision maker reaches a final determination.

Some of our members have identified the need for guidance about the content and purpose of short reports and we feel that this should be addressed by revised statutory guidance, but would not expect this to be prescriptive.

Removing the requirement to interview two personal referees if there is a reference from a service the applicant has fostered for in the last year - Chapter 5, paragraphs 11.6.1 - 11.6.3

21 Do you agree that the requirement to interview two personal referees should be removed where (a) the applicant has been an approved foster carer in the last year (whether or not a child was placed); and (b) there is a written reference from their current or previous fostering service?

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Comments:
We feel that the requirement to routinely interview two personal referees in the case when someone is already approved as a foster carer (or has been in the last year) is disproportionate and out of step with other regulatory requirements. It is unlikely to significantly inform any re-assessment process, and could still be undertaken when specifically indicated by circumstances. We note that fostering services are being encouraged to share information, and we support proposals which reduce the requirement to undertake again tasks which have been previously undertaken successfully by another fostering service. Fostering services are accountable for the quality of the work they undertake, and would always be free to interview personal referees if they deemed this appropriate.

We are happy to retain the requirement to interview two referees if the current or previous fostering service does not provide a reference themselves. However, we feel that there should be a requirement for a fostering service to provide a reference when one of their existing or previous foster carers seeks to move to a new service, and given that their records will be open to sharing we find it unacceptable that they might decline to provide a reference for fear of being challenged about its content. In consultation with our members, strong support was expressed for a requirement upon fostering services to provide a reference, which is already considered to be routine good practice.
There is currently a requirement to wait 28 calendar days before implementing a change to a foster carer's terms of approval, regardless of whether the change has the foster carer's agreement or was requested by the foster carer. It is proposed to remove this requirement where the carer agrees to the change and there is a statement of how any additional support needs will be met.

22 Do you agree that the requirement to wait 28 calendar days to change a foster carer's terms of approval should be removed if the foster carer has given written agreement to the change and there is a written statement on whether the foster family has any additional support needs as a result of the change and if so how these will be met?

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Comments:
We agree with this proposal, which has strong support from our members who are concerned that the current requirements cause delay in making good placements. However we would wish to guard against hasty and ill considered decisions purely driven by immediate pressures, and very much welcome clarification that a review recommendation must be presented to the decision maker before a change is made to terms of approval, and the requirement to set out how additional support needs arising will be met.

Transitional arrangements - fostering assessment - Chapter 5 paragraph 11.8.1
It is proposed that the amendments proposed above to the fostering assessment process should be implemented immediately upon the coming into force of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (England) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

23 Do you foresee any problems with the proposed implementation? If yes, please explain why.

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Comments:
This assumes an appropriate interval between publishing the regulations and their coming into force.

Alignment of the fostering and adoption approval process - Chapter 5 paragraph 11.9.1

Changes being consulted on in this document align the fostering and adoption approval processes in a number of respects, e.g. aligning the start of the fostering assessment stage with the start of Stage Two of the adoption process and introducing a brief report for fostering. However, there remain elements of the two processes which are not aligned.

24 Are there any elements of the adoption approval process described in Chapter 1 (paragraphs 7.1 - 7.12.3) that we should consider applying to the fostering assessment and approval process? If yes, please state which elements we should consider applying to the fostering assessment and approval process.

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Delegated authority – Chapter 6

Requiring the placement plan to cover specified areas of decision making

It is proposed that legislation should require a placement plan to specify who has authority to take decisions in the following areas of decision making:

- medical or dental treatment
- education
- leisure and home life
- faith and religious observance,
- use of social media,
- any other matters considered relevant.

25 Do you agree that these are the right areas of decision making to specify in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (England) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013? If no, please explain why not.

| X Yes | No | Not Sure |
It is clear from our work with fostering services across England that current practice in relation to delegation of authority to foster carers generally falls far short of the expectations set by government. Anything which can be done to help to make the culture shift required will be welcomed, and specifying these areas to be covered will be a step in the right direction.

26 Do you agree that statutory guidance should be amended to provide additional detail about what is covered by these areas of decision making, who might be expected to make particular decisions and what factors might lead to a decision to depart from that expectation?

| X Yes | No | Not Sure |

Comments:
Yes, the statutory guidance will need to spell out in more detail what is required to meet regulatory requirements. This should include guidance about the legislative framework in the context of the child’s care plan, and the principles which should be followed in reaching decisions about delegated authority in individual cases. We would expect the default position to be that foster carers will be authorised to make everyday decisions as they would for their own children, unless the care plan legitimately requires the placement plan to make alternative arrangements.

In relation to medical and dental treatment, foster carers should normally have authorisation to consent to routine examinations, immunisations and treatments as well as emergency treatment, although we understand that in the latter circumstances doctors may if urgent act without consent. Discussion should be held with the DH to consider how best to ensure that health services can act appropriately upon delegated consents.

Foster carers should normally be in a position to agree to children taking part in school activities and trips, where the school will be acting in loco parentis.

Foster carers should normally be able to agree to children taking part in leisure activities, visiting friends and having sleepovers, making judgements as would any parent based on their assessment of the risks. They should be supported to adopt a risk sensible approach rather than to be risk averse.

Matters of faith and religious observance should be delegated to foster carers in accordance with the views of those with parental responsibility and of the child.

Foster carers should also be in a position to make decisions about children’s
use of social media, but often need support in understanding the issues involved to inform their assessments of risk. The Fostering Network is currently undertaking work in this area.

The guidance should stress the importance of involving parents and others with parental responsibility in the planning of delegated authority, since the more they understand the nature of foster care and the role of foster carers the more able they will be to make positive decisions which are in the best interests of children. The guidance should also address the need for delegated authority to be kept under review, particularly when children move into long term (permanent) placements.

We believe that delegated authority is best addressed through placement planning meetings. Sometimes these are held at a time of crisis and have a great many matters to consider, but the key arrangements for delegated authority should always be addressed at this stage and if necessary can be followed up in a further placement planning meeting within ten working days so as to avoid drift.

Given the extensive work we have already undertaken in relation to delegated authority, the Fostering Network would welcome the opportunity to advise further in relation to drafting revised statutory guidance in this respect.

Transitional arrangements - specified areas of decision making - Chapter 6, paragraph 12.6.1

We propose that the amendments relating to requiring the placement plan to cover specified areas of decision making should be implemented at the next review of the child's care plan following the amending Regulations coming into force.

27 Do you foresee any problems with the proposed implementation? If yes, please explain why.

| Yes | X No | Not Sure |

Comments:
Under existing regulations the placement plan should include arrangements for delegating authority and should be kept under review as part of the child's care plan, and so there should be no difficulties in addressing these proposed changes from the first such review following the regulations coming into force.
Requiring each local authority to publish a policy on delegation of authority - Chapter 6, paragraph 12.7.1

28 Do you agree that there should be a requirement in statutory guidance for local authorities to publish a policy on delegation of authority to foster carers and residential workers?

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Comments:
From our work with fostering services and local authorities, and consultation with our members, we know that implementation of the existing expectations regarding delegation of authority to foster carers and residential workers is very patchy. A massive culture change is required, and the requirement for local authorities to have and to publish a policy would make a start on this. By publishing these policies, foster carers, fostering services staff and children’s social workers will be clear about the approach being adopted and how decisions will be made.

Statutory guidance should set out the principles upon which policies should be based, and identify the matters to be covered by the policy. It should be made clear that authorities should not adopt blanket policies which establish a rigid approach to delegation of authority, but should set expectations upon which to agree the specifics in relation to individual placements dependent upon the child’s care plan etc.

Policies should recognise that arrangements for delegated authority must be kept under review as part of the care plan, and that for agreed long term placements it will usually be appropriate for the majority of decisions to be vested in the foster carers.

Adoption and Fostering Panels – Chapter 3

29 We are concerned that some adoption agencies have large adoption panels and that this may be leading to delay and be intimidating to prospective adopters. We consider that these issues may also apply to fostering panels. We are therefore minded to restrict the size of adoption and fostering panels to a maximum of five members with a quorum of three (or four for joint panels). We are also minded to limit participating non-panel members to two. We would appreciate your views on this.
Comments:
The Fostering Network strongly opposes the changes suggested in relation to fostering panels, which will do nothing to tackle delay. The rationale for the proposals is unclear, and we note that this is not addressed in the impact assessment.

Whilst we accept that very large fostering panels may prove counter-productive, our evidence is not that the size of panels is seen by applicants, foster carers or others as a problem. Indeed, the limit on panel size was lifted as recently as 2011 and the guidance is that panels should be constituted to ensure that they are suitably equipped to fulfil their role appropriately. The panel chair has an important role in ensuring that those attending panel are suitably prepared and made to feel comfortable, so that they may make a positive contribution. This is not directly related to the size of the panel, but to the way in which it operates. Our members generally report that panels work well and are not regarded as too large.

As reported by one of our members who is both a foster carer and an adopter, “... any foster carer who feels intimidated by the fostering panel will not make a great foster carer. There are frequently occasions when foster carers are involved in large meetings and may have to advocate on the child’s behalf against the views of other professionals. They therefore need to be confident and robust in these situations.”

We are particularly concerned that the new proposals would be counter-productive in ensuring that fostering panels are sufficiently independent of the fostering service to provide appropriate objective quality assurance. Limiting panels to five members would make it much harder to ensure that members possess a suitable range of skills, qualities and experiences, which are factors which in themselves help those attending to feel comfortable, valued and listened to. Reducing the quorum to three would increase the likelihood of collusion between the fostering service and the panel, and could place the panel chair under increased pressure to go along with the agency view. In a quorum of three it could be that only one member were independent and the other two were employees of the fostering service, which would completely devalue the role of panel.

We have no evidence that the requirement for a quorum of five contributes to difficulties in arranging panels or in any way adds to delay in decision making.

The restriction on more than two non panel members being present will on occasions prevent the panel from receiving at first hand specialist advice it requests, such as legal or medical advice. Good practice is for a minute taker to be present, and often also a panel adviser who can interpret matters of policy and practice, and so these roles would very often take up the two places permitted. Such an exclusion will inhibit the ability to make recommendations based on sound information and advice, and will not best serve the interests of children or foster carers.

General - any other comments
30 There may be other areas for revision that you think should be considered; we would be interested in hearing your views on what these might be and how these might reduce delay and bureaucracy whilst continuing to help ensure the welfare and safety of looked after children. Please use the box below to make your comments.

Comments:

FSR 23 requires a fostering service provider to constitute one or more fostering panels, which may be joint panels with one or more other providers. This suggests that panels are in effect standing bodies which meet as required to conduct business, and this is usually how they operate in practice. However, we understand that each time a panel is set up to deal with an agenda of business it is in legal terms a new panel in its own right, even though it may adjourn to complete its business. This seems at odds with the requirement to constitute one or more panels, since in reality new panels will be constituted on a regular basis.

Regulation 23(4)(i) also causes confusion in that some fostering services regard the panel chair as an ongoing position and therefore having been appointed prior to the requirement for an independent chair, which cannot be the case if each panel is a separate legal entity.

31 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.).

Comments:
Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an ‘X’ in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

XYes  No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office Principles on Consultation

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before

- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected

- consultation should be ‘digital by default’, but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and

- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE
consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 7 December 2012

Send by post to: CYPFD Team, Department for Education, Area 1C, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ.

Send by e-mail to: adoptionandfostering.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk