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Fostering Panel: Job Description and Person Specification for Panel Vice-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 Panel adviser if necessary, to ensure, as far as possible, that the case is adequate for submission 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 draft minutes before they are sent to the Agency Decision Maker and to the next Panel meeting
* To liaise with the Agency Decision Maker and with other directors as required
* To ensure, with the Panel adviser, that directors 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 new Panel members and in any consideration about terminating the appointment of a Panel member
* To review the annual performance of Panel members or as the need arises
* 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 Panel 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 qualification

* 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
* Suitable qualifications to undertake the role of Chair (NB it is not a requirement to be a qualified social worker)

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 process and analyse large amounts of complex and sometimes distressing information
* 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 ensure that those attending Panel are communicated with respectfully while also ensuring that Panel members are able to explore any concerns that they may have openly and honestly
* 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
* When this is an agency requirement, the ability, working with the Panel 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 maintaining contact between children living in foster families and their birth families where this appears to be in the child's best interest.
* A commitment to fostering as a way of meeting a child's needs, where this appears to be in the child's best interest
* 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

**FEES**

* Fees are fixed at £550 per full panel day. It is expected that panels will take place every three weeks unless stated otherwise. Any additional days worked should be agreed in advance with the Head of Corporate Parenting or Director of Children’s Services.
* In addition to your fee, there will be an annual fee of £300 paid for completing all member appraisals, £200 paid for the completion of the annual panel report and £100 for attending each of the 90-minute quarterly meeting with the Head of Service and Agency Decision Maker.
* Any training attended must be approved in advance by the Head of Service. With the exception of £150 to attend one annual training session, any further training will be unpaid.