

CHESHIRE EAST FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

1ST APRIL 2018 – 31ST MARCH 2019

INTRODUCTION

1. Although there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an annual report of the Fostering Panel to be produced, such a report has been produced since 2011 in respect of the work of the Cheshire East Fostering Panel. Included in the reports is the chair's quality assurance report to the agency.

THE PANEL

Panel role

2. In addition to the functions listed in Regulation 25 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Cheshire East fostering panel considers and makes recommendations concerning proposed permanent matches of cared for children with foster carers.

Meetings and venue

3. Meetings are held in Cledford House, Middlewich, which has good meeting room and waiting facilities. The proximity of the fostering and some children's social work services is helpful. Social workers and foster carers attending panel report favourably on the venue.
4. The panel usually meets every three weeks, with the calendar being produced well in advance. 17 meetings were scheduled for the review year, but it was necessary to convene three extra panel meetings towards the end of 2018, due to the high number of cases being referred to the panel.

Service Advisor to the panel

5. The role of the Service Advisor is essential to the effective running of the panel. Throughout the review year, panel has continued to have the benefit of the consistent support of Gary Pickles, who brings substantial experience of practice in other fostering and adoption panels. He provides the panel with advice on law, regulation and practice and gate keeps reports to be presented, referring deficits and queries back to the authors and/or responsible managers.

Panel administrator

6. The panel administrator is Marion Mordecai. Her responsibilities include planning the calendar of panel meetings; managing the agenda (in consultation with the Service Advisor); ensuring that meetings are quorate; distributing the panel papers to the panel members; preparing the meeting and waiting rooms; minuting the meetings and distributing the minutes for approval. The administrator also keeps the central list members' records and collects data relating to panel activity.

Receipt of panel papers

7. The receipt of Panel papers is timely, with members usually receiving them a full week before the meeting. They are circulated on encrypted SD cards; the agency provides central list members with electronic tablets on which the cards can be read. The wifi function of these tablets is disabled. This system was introduced in 2012 and the tablets provided are now outdated and not easy to use.

Central List Membership

8. The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 require the agency to maintain a “central list” of potential panel members with a range of relevant skills, knowledge and experience, from which the membership of any panel meeting can be drawn. The agency is also required to appoint an independent person to chair the panel.
9. The quorum for panel business is a minimum of 5 central list members, to include:
 - The chair or vice chair;
 - A social worker with at least 3 years relevant post-qualifying experience;
 - 3 other members, of which, in the absence of the independent chair, at least one must be independent of the agency.

Unlike adoption panels, there is no requirement for the Service Advisor to be present at the meeting.

10. It is recognised that the Cheshire East Fostering Panel central list lacks diversity and gender balance and every effort is made to address this in recruitment. The membership of the central list during 2017/18 was:

Shelley Lewis	Independent Chair
Helen Campbell	Independent (Education) & vice chair
Dr Pari Sreekumar	Independent (Medical Advisor)
Gill Merry	Elected Member & vice chair
Cheryl Boam	Social Worker Representative
Gill Gardner	Social Worker Representative
Dawn Ankers-Phillips	Social Worker Representative
Dianne Dunn	Independent (Foster Carer)
Dean Latham	Independent (Cared For leaver)
Julie Ollerhead	Independent
Linda Smith	Independent
Pauline Barber	Independent
Dianne Grant	Social Worker Representative

11. However, of those listed, several resigned during the year, due to changes in their personal or professional lives. These were Helen Campbell, Dianne Dunn, Gill Gardner and Julie Ollerhead. Linda Smith, Pauline Barber and Dianne Grant were recruited during the year.
12. The panel vice chairs were Helen Campbell and Gill Merry, but as stated above, Helen Campbell resigned during the review year. In the absence of the appointed chair, two meetings during the year were chaired by one of the vice chairs.
13. Since the resignation of Dianne Dunn, the panel has lacked a foster carer representative. Despite best and continuing efforts to recruit one. The Service Advisor is currently exploring the possibility of recruiting a representative from Cheshire West.
14. Securing social work representation for panel meetings is a continuing challenge. For several meetings, it was necessary for the Service Advisor to act as the social worker representative. Due to their workload, some social worker representatives are able to commit to only a few meetings each year.
15. The recruitment of new social work representatives has been a continuing priority and is increasingly pressing. Conflict of interest has meant that it has often been necessary to have

changes of social worker representation for different agenda items, which is disruptive to the panel meeting. In addition, there are fundamental issues about the propriety of members of the fostering or children's social work service being panel members and scrutinising the work of their colleagues. For this reason, the recruitment of Dianne Grant was particularly welcome and it is hoped that other social worker representatives can be recruited who are independent practitioners or employed by other agencies,

16. The medical advisor, Pari Sreekumar, is very helpful to the work of the panel and contributes fully. Her workload is such that she is not able to participate in every meeting but when she is not able to attend, she does discuss any relevant medical issues with the social workers and/or Service Advisor.
17. The participation of Gill Merry, a committed and knowledgeable elected member, continues to be helpful both for her contribution to panel's deliberations and for providing a link with the local authority's wider corporate parenting agenda.
18. Occasionally, an observer will attend a panel meeting. The observer is usually a new practitioner or prospective central list member. At least one observer was present at 14 of the meetings held during the year.

Central list members' appraisals

19. Although there is no requirement for both officers to be involved in central list members' appraisals, previously, these were conducted jointly by the chair and agency/Service Advisor. To address practical difficulties with this model, the chair completed the last round of appraisals single handed. Central list members appraisals were completed in June. In addition to making it more straightforward to organise the appraisals, this approach enabled to Service Advisor to focus on recruitment of new central list members.

Central list members' training and development

20. An annual training plan is developed from central list members' annual reviews. There were two formal development events during the review year. In May, panel was formally briefed on the newly introduced long term matching process; in October, the agenda for a training day included a session on Family and Friends care, led by an experienced external practitioner; a presentation of the "Signs of Safety" model and a review of panel processes.
21. All central list members can apply for any of the training offered to foster carers, including the e-learning programme.

Panel development

22. The panel chair, vice chairs, Service Manager, other relevant managers and the IRO responsible for foster carers' reviews meet twice a year with the Agency Decision Maker. That meeting makes proposals for the development of the panel and agency practice. For example, the most recent meeting discussed the need for a consistent approach to the assessment of "support carers", improvements in Liquid Logic and the outdated nature of the digital devices provided to panel members.

PANEL ACTIVITY

23. The tables below provide data on panel activity for the review year. Where available, data on activity in the previous year is included to allow some comparison.

Assessments of prospective foster carers

	April 2018 – March 2019	April 2017 – March 2018
Total number of assessments recommended for approval	29	43
Of the total, number of same sex couples	0	1
Of the total, number of single applicants	14	11
Of the total, number of Family & Friends assessments	20	25
Number of negative assessments	4	4

Notes:

1. Of the single applicants, 10 were female and 4 male
2. In three of the Family and Friends cases, the assessment was completed prior to the placement of the child/ren concerned.
3. The negative assessments were all Family and Friends applications.
4. All but two of the applicants were White British.

24. Panel did not support the Fostering Service's positive conclusion in one Family and Friends case and did not recommend the prospective carers as suitable to foster. The Agency Decision Maker subsequently decided to approve the carer.

25. The assessment data indicates a significant decrease in assessment activity during the review year, both mainstream and Family and Friends, with 14 fewer cases being approved than in the previous year. It should be noted that the figures only reflect those cases presented to the panel; there will be many more assessments that do not proceed to that stage. That stated, the same applied to previous years' figures.

Terminations of registration

	2018-2019		2017-2018	
	M	F&F	M	F&F
Retired	0	0	0	0
Other personal circumstances	9	8	12	0
Carer's unavailability/restrictive matching considerations	0	0	1	0
Safeguarding concerns	0	0	1	0
Child returned to birth parent	0	3	0	3
Placement breakdown	0	2	1	0
Special guardianship order made	1	5	1	6
Carer moved out of area	2	0	0	0
Child turned 18/moved to independent living	0	0	0	0
Issues with agency support	1	1	3	0
TOTALS	13	19	19	9

26. The terminations of approval shown in the table were initiated by the foster carers' resignation. In another four cases, panel recommended that foster carers' approval be terminated following negative reports from the Fostering Service. Three of these were mainstream foster carers and one a Family and Friends foster carer. In addition, the Agency Decision Maker terminated the approval of a Family and Friends foster carer, whom panel had recommended as suitable against the recommendation of the service. These five cases are included in the review data given below.
27. From the panel data of assessments and terminations of approval, it appears that only 9 new mainstream fostering households were recruited during the review year and a total of 16 lost, obviously resulting in an overall loss of 7 fostering households. This compares to a loss of one household in the previous year.

Reviews

28. It is a regulatory requirement that all first annual reviews of foster carer/s reviews be presented to panel and that panel should also consider any other review when requested to do so by the fostering service. The latter will include any review held following concerns or complaint about a carer's conduct (whether or not the concern or complaint was substantiated) or change in the carers' circumstances with the potential to affect their role as foster carers.
29. Practice in Cheshire East is that all foster carers' terms of approval are general, i.e. foster carers are
- Approved to provide placements within the usual fostering limits, or
 - Approved as Family and Friends foster carers for a specific child/ren, or
 - Approved as short break foster carers.
30. Detail of the children for whom they may be considered, e.g. number, gender and age, are given in the matching considerations. Every review considers whether the foster carer/s continues to be suitable to be registered and whether the matching considerations continue to be appropriate.
31. A total of 24 reviews were presented to panel in the year, 18 of mainstream foster carers and 6 of Family and Friends foster carers. Of the total:
- 12 were first annual reviews;
 - 2 were early reviews requested by the Agency Decision Maker to check progress in addressing concerns identified when the carers were recommended for approval.
 - 4 were held following a Local Authority Designated Officer investigation, i.e. where there were allegations or concerns of a safeguarding nature.
 - 3 held due to some agency concerns
 - 2 following a change in the foster carers' circumstances.
 - 1 was held to consider a variation in matching considerations. It was subsequently clarified that such reviews need not be presented to the panel.
32. The low number of first annual reviews of Family and Friends foster carers presented to panel may be explained by the number of such cases where special guardianship orders are made with a year of the carers' approval.

33. All reviews were chaired by an officer independent of the service. In all but one case panel supported the review recommendation. The exception was one of the 5 reviews that recommended the termination of the carers' approval. It concerned a Family and Friends foster carer whose approval the Agency Decision Maker decided to terminate.

Matches for long term fostering

34. A revised policy for long term matching of children with foster carers was implemented during the review year, which requires such cases to be presented to the panel. 20 such cases were presented during the review year, the majority in October and November, which necessitated the extra panel meetings mentioned above.
35. 25 children were matched with 20 families. Six of these children were in sibling pairs and there was one sibling group of 3. The average age of the children was about 11½, with the youngest being 6 and the oldest 17; both of these were in sibling pairs.
36. All of the children were already placed with the foster carers. The average time in the placement was about 21½ months, with the shortest being 12 months and the longest 37 months.
37. Many of these arrangements involved making a child-centred long term commitment to an independent fostering agency placement.

Other panel business

Regulation 24 placement notifications	2018-2019	2017-2018
	28	34

Regulation 25 requests	2018-2019	2017-2018
	20	16

38. As in previous years, most Regulation 25 requests were prompted by outstanding checks, including medical reports and DBS checks. This was the main reason for the need for extra time to complete the assessment in 11 of the 20 cases. The difficulty in obtaining prospective foster carers' medicals from certain GP practices has been raised repeatedly. In 9 of the 20 cases, no full assessment was subsequently presented; different arrangements will have been made for the children concerned.
39. As noted in the six month quality assurance report for the period April – September 2018, in a small minority of cases, the maximum time limit for the temporary approval of Family and Friends foster carers was exceeded, resulting in the placements being unregulated. In some cases, there appears to be a delay between the placement being made and it being authorised by a manager as a Regulation 24 placement and assessment by the Fostering Service being triggered. Panel queries the legal status of the placement during this period.
40. More positively, there have been no instances of the children's social work service failing to recognise an arrangement as a Regulation 24 placement, indicating that this is now well understood.

Notification of exemption to the usual fostering limit	2018-2019	2017-2018
	7	2

Deferred/withdrawn agenda items	2018-2019	2017-2018
	2	1

41. The Agency Decision Maker deferred making a decision in respect of one case, requesting that additional work be completed with the applicant and the assessment be re-presented to panel in 3 months. In the other case, an annual review, panel found that in the absence of the foster carer's views and other essential information, the reports did not constitute an annual review and deferred its consideration pending further information.

Disruptions

42. A key area for panel development is learning from disruptions. Panel should be notified of all disruptions and receive the learning points from the Disruption Review for its consideration. Panel was notified of 2 disruptions during the review year, both in the first half of the year. The learning from the agency's review of these disruptions has yet to be presented to panel.

Agency decision maker

43. During the review year, the Agency Decision Maker supported all but three of the recommendations made by the panel. These were:
- The case noted above, when the Agency Decision Maker deferred her decision, pending further work with the applicant. She was subsequently approved.
 - A Family and Friends foster carer whose review was presented to the panel following a LADO investigation. Panel did not accept the Fostering Service's recommendation that the carer's approval should be terminated. The Agency Decision Maker overruled the panel's recommendation and decided to terminate approval.
 - An assessment of a prospective Family and Friends foster carer who the Agency Decision Maker approved against panel's recommendation.
44. The Agency Decisions Maker's response to panel advice, observations on cases, panel's decisions and follow up actions for service managers, practitioners or the service advisor are valued by the panel. To provide panel with feedback on actions allocated by the Agency Decision Maker to service managers or practitioners, the Service Advisor, in collaboration with the panel administrator, has developed and refined a "panel advice tracker" which is providing feedback.

FEEDBACK FROM THOSE ATTENDING PANEL

45. Foster carers, social workers and managers attending panel are asked to complete a simple pro forma, noting their experience, attached at Appendix 1. 121 forms were completed and as in previous years, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The majority found the venue to be good or excellent, with a minority of 16 rating it only satisfactory. All of the forms recorded the panel chair and members to be welcoming and approachable, albeit a minority of 9 recorded this as only "partly". All but 2 recorded the questions asked to be clear and relevant, the exceptions being social workers. A substantial majority recorded feeling that their views were listened to, with one, a child's social worker, responding that they felt they were neither fully nor partly listened to.

46. One supervising social worker recorded attending panel as a negative experience. Two applicants, 3 foster carers, one supervising social worker, one child's social worker and two managers found it neither positive nor negative. Thus the majority found it a positive experience.
47. The pro forma invites respondents to suggest anything that could be done differently. Only a small minority of respondents take up this invitation and most of those that do use the opportunity to comment further on their experience of the panel.
48. Existing foster carers were unanimously positive in their comments. The majority of prospective foster carers commented that they found the panel welcoming and friendly, but two reported finding the panel intimidating, as did two supervising social workers. Other social workers' comments were largely positive; one supervising social worker and one child's social worker commented on panel's lack of understanding of court proceedings, contact and resources.
49. Of particular concern was the comment by one supervising social worker stating that panel's attitude to Family and Friends applicants is generally negative. This prompted a development event for panel, led by an external speaker. The structure of panel's initial discussion of cases was changed whereby panel members are invited to identify the applicants/foster carers strengths, as well as their vulnerabilities. It is hoped that this approach will ensure a focus on the positives, without ignoring or minimising any negatives.
50. The pro forma does not invite comment from foster carers about their experience of assessment and training. This is often mentioned during their discussion with panel and most foster carers are positive about the assessment process and the assessing social workers. They are also positive about the training provided, although some existing foster carers comment on the difficulties in participating in training as most is held only on week days or because there are no crèche facilities. The availability of e-learning and of some Saturday training is welcomed.

FEEDBACK FROM PANEL MEMBERS

51. Feedback from panel members is a standing agenda item and is recorded by the panel administrator. As stated in previous annual reports, much of this feedback relates to individual cases, noting for example exceptional foster carers or assessments.
52. Common themes include:
 - The negative impact of frequent changes or extended absence of social workers
 - The child's voice is often reported but panel repeatedly requests that children/young people be encouraged to make a direct contribution.
 - Difficulties in ensuring the panel is quorate, due to a lack of social work members.
 - The need for a clear agency policy governing the response to unplanned placement endings.
 - Family and Friends assessments that do not explicitly address suitability to foster.
 - Problems with Liquid Logic formats.
 - The long delay in the presentation of proposed matches.
 - Where applicable, matching reports need to confirm that funding has been agreed, should open with details of the foster carers' household and some brief information about the child's family.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Timescales for assessments of prospective foster carers

53. The agency target for the completion of mainstream assessments is 18 weeks; it assumed that the service monitors performance against this target. Panel data is available only on Family and Friends assessments. As stated above, of the 20 completed assessments presented during the review year, only 9 had been completed during the standard 16 weeks, an extension of the temporary approval having been agreed in the other 11 cases.

Reports to panel

54. The Service Advisor gate keeps reports for panel and contacts practitioners/managers, advising on any necessary improvements prior to the report's presentation to panel. He has also met with managers to clarify panel's expectations.

Assessments

55. The assessment report is fundamental to Panel's judgement of the quality of any assessment, supplemented by the presentation of the assessing social worker at the panel meeting. Panel's judgement can also be influenced by relevant comment made by the prospective foster carer/s during the meeting.

56. Panel will deem an assessment report to be of sufficient quality when it is seen to provide comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the applicant/s, identifies strengths and vulnerabilities, and makes clear and persuasive the reasons for the recommendation and matching considerations, thus reflecting a sound assessment.

57. When reading assessment reports, Panel members routinely check that all required basic components of an assessment have been completed, for example

- that checks, medicals and references have been completed;
- the applicant's history, relevant experience, motivation and understanding of the fostering task explored;
- that applicants have participated in the Skills to Foster training (where appropriate) and have expressed a commitment to further training and development;
- that any children or relevant ex-partners have been consulted;
- that any health and safety issues have been addressed.

58. When introducing an assessment, the Panel chair routinely asks Panel members whether the report provide sufficient information on which to base discussion and make a recommendation. Occasionally, panel will agree to ask the assessing social worker to provide verbally any missing factual information. During the review year, panel did not defer its consideration of any assessment due to concern about the quality of the report.

Reviews

59. Panel is content with the basic framework for reviews, all of which are chaired by an officer independent of the Fostering Service. There has been an improvement over the review year in children's social workers contributing to foster carers' reviews, although this is still not universal. Panel's concerns about the child's voice are discussed below.

60. There has also been an improvement in the timeliness of the presentation of reviews to panel.

61. As in previous years, in the small number of reviews prompted by concerns, Panel was satisfied that the investigations had been robust and the conclusions justified.

Long term matches

62. Overall, panel is satisfied with the reports presented when a long term match is being recommended for its consideration. The format of the key report is very helpful, in that it requires the child's needs to be identified by the social worker, with the foster carers indicating how they meet those needs and concludes with the responsible managers' summary of their reasons for recommending the match.
63. However, panel has repeatedly requested that a brief introduction be provided, giving details of the foster carers' household. Without this information, panel does not know, for example, if there are any other children in the placement, which can be a key factor in considering the proposed match. Panel has also asked that brief details of the child's birth family be included in the introduction, to enable it to understand contact arrangements, etc. There has been no response to this request.

Termination of approval

64. Panel receives the foster carer/s' letter of resignation supported by a brief report from the supervising social worker, which provides the necessary information. As is the case with reviews, there has been a continuing improvement in the timeliness of the presentation of resignations to the Panel.

The QA pro forma

65. Fostering panel members' view of the quality of reports is captured using the pro forma attached at Appendix 2. The pro forma is completed by consensus after each agenda item and copied to the social worker and practice manager/team manager. Panel draws attention to any significant factual errors to ensure that they can be corrected.
66. As noted in previous reports, it is recognised that the pro forma is a blunt instrument and can be subjective. However, it has been reviewed informally with the conclusion that it supports a reasonable analysis of the reports within the panel time available.
67. A summary of the pro forma completed during the review year is attached at Appendix 3. As in previous years, the summary indicates that, with a few exceptions, most of the reports presented to the panel meet the positive measures.
68. The summary includes that given in the QA report for the first 6 months of the review year. There has been little change, so most of the comments made then are reiterated in the comments below.
- Almost all were judged to be well written, readily understandable and up to date.
 - A minority were noted to include factual errors or be out of date. In most cases, the errors would be minor, e.g. dates. In a small minority of Family and Friends assessments, the child's social worker's contribution can be out of date
 - Most provided sufficient detail and an appropriate level of analysis; deficiencies in these areas would be addressed during panel's discussion with the social workers and applicants.
 - In all but two mainstream assessments, there was evidence that issues of equality and diversity had been addressed. This was judged to be the case in the majority of Family

and Friends assessments, and there was improved performance against this measure in matches and reviews. In the latter, several pro forma recorded issues of equality and diversity as not being applicable, as it was considered unreasonable to expect these to be explicitly addressed.

- In the main, the views of children are represented, but there is comment on this below.
- Reports were signed, confirming that they had been read by all concerned. However, sometimes the version of an assessment circulated to panel members does not include signatures; it is understood that this is one of the issues with the digital record. In those cases, panel is assured that there is a signed copy on file and applicants confirm that they have read the report.

69. The pro forma allows panel to make specific comment on the report or practice in the case. Examples of such comments made by panel are “Report very confusing as children’s initials used inconsistently”; “Six month delay between SSW’s report and the review ...”; “Report out of date”.
70. A comment made repeatedly is that the report would have benefitted had it included the children’s views as expressed by the children and young people themselves. Frequently, children’s views are reported second hand, e.g. “child A said they are happy in the placement.” There is increasing evidence that children and young people are being encouraged and supported to make a direct contribution, with panel receiving material ranging from detailed notes written by young people to drawings from young children. However, this is far from universal. Panel appreciates that some children and young people will refuse to engage with such an exercise, but questions if it is always attempted.
71. That stated, one recent panel was delighted to meet the young people concerned when a long term match was being considered. The young people were invited to meet the panel and make any comment they wished about the match, but were not present for the discussion with the foster carers and social workers.
72. Family and Friends assessment are often dual purpose, also serving as Special Guardianship assessments. In some cases in care proceedings, it is evident that the local authority is to recommend Special Guardianship as the outcome of the proceedings, but that they will not conclude within the maximum 24 weeks allowed for the assessment. In order to maintain the regulated status of the placement, it is necessary for it to continue as a foster placement. Previous panel chair’s reports have commented that a small number of Family and Friends assessments presented to panel made no reference to the applicant’s suitability to foster. This omission has now largely been addressed.

Quality assurance conclusion

73. Overall, panel the Fostering Panel continues to be satisfied with the standard of practice and the quality of the reports presented to it. There is evidence of improving practice, for example children’s social workers understanding of Regulation 24; assessing social workers addressing prospective Family and Friends foster carers’ understanding of and ability to meet the fostering standards; placing social workers’ contribution to reviews.
74. Although there is the occasional outlier, panel deems the majority of reports presented as being fit for purpose and authors are usually able to provide any missing information during the discussion with the panel.

75. While still in need of further development, the improvement in the timeliness of review and resignation reports largely has been maintained, as has the improvement in the inclusion in reviews of feedback from placing social workers.
76. The inclusion of the child's voice and means to do so remains an area for development, in particular in Family and Friends assessments and matches.

ANNUAL REPORT CONCLUSION

77. Although the number of assessments presented to panel has decreased, the panel's work has been increased by the new responsibility to consider long term matches. The change in the usual frequency of panel meetings from fortnightly to three weekly, introduced in the previous year, has worked well in the main, although it was necessary to convene additional meetings in October and November to accommodate long term matches.
78. Most prospective foster carers report positively on their experience of assessment and training. Foster carers and most presenting social workers are positive about their experience of attending the panel, feel that questions are relevant and sensitively expressed and that they are listened to.
79. Panel notes that reports have improved and that most are of good quality. Placing social workers now more usually contribute to reviews and there is an improvement in ensuring the child's voice is heard, although this remains an area for development. The presentation of reviews and resignations is usually timely. The Liquid Logic system and templates seem to cause some difficulties.
80. The three cases in which the Agency Decision Maker decision was contrary to the panel's recommendation involved delicate issues of balance between fostering standards and the wellbeing of individual children. This was the case in the previous year and panel did not perceive these cases as indicating any lack of confidence in its work.
81. The introduction of a tool to track the agency's response to panel advice or comments is welcomed.
82. The apparent overall reduction in the number of mainstream foster carers is a concern. Panel has asked for a briefing on the Fostering Service's response to foster carers' resignations. Panel is aware that the service of retiring foster carers is celebrated and that mainstream foster carers are usually offered an exit interview when they resign. Panel is interested in what attempts are made to retain foster carers and whether consideration is given to exploring whether resigning Family and Friends foster carers might be suitable as mainstream carers.
83. The learning from disruption reviews/unplanned placement endings is important in informing panel practice. It is unfortunate that there has been no such feedback to panel during the review year.
84. During the review year, the children presented to panel for long term matches have been in placement on average for over 21 months. After such a length of time, panel would have to have grave concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing not to recommend the long term match, raising doubts about panel's role in such cases. It is hoped that these long delays are due to a backlog in long term matches, following the introduction of the new process.

85. The following lists the priorities for panel development included in the 2016/17 annual report and a note of their progress.

Priorities for panel development 2018/2019

Task	Aim	Outcome
Panel members' appraisals	To comply with requirements	Members' appraisals completed in June 2018
Recruitment of social workers to the central list	To reduce difficulties in convening a quorate panel	An independent social worker was recruited but this is a continuing task
IRO's perception of panel	Seek to identify the IRO and discuss	It was not possible to identify the IRO
Refresh panel development programme	Review during members' appraisals and set date for training event	Training event held on 1 st October 2018
Provide feedback to panel on agency's response to advice/comment	Implement tracker tool, review and refine	Tracker tool refined and implemented. Service advisor provides feedback to panel.
Permanence/matching policy	Book briefing for panel on revised policy, practice and its role	Briefing provided on 23 rd May 2018
Panel data	Review data set to ensure all relevant details are being included	Data set reviews but this is an area for continuing development

Priorities for panel development 2019/2020

In some respects, the development of the panel is dependent on the development of the agency's practice. As described in paragraph 22 above, panel's suggestions about this are discussed in the forum with the Agency Decision Maker and other managers. The new "tracker tool" also provides an opportunity for panel to contribute to the development of practice.

There will be a new panel chair in the next year, who will have their own views about the development of the panel. However, there are some continuing tasks, which include

- The recruitment of social work representatives, independent of the agency'.
- The recruitment of a foster carer.
- The introduction of questions for applicants, developed by a forum of cared for young people.
- Updating the panel "welcome book".
- Confirming Gill Merry's continuing role as vice chair and identifying a second vice chair
- Further refining the data set

Shelley Lewis
Outgoing Independent Fostering Panel Chair

5th April 2019

Fostering Panel Evaluation

Date of Panel: _____

I am a (please✓) . . .

Foster Carer

Prospective Foster Carer

Supervising Social
Worker

Social Worker

Other

1. How did you feel about the venue and waiting facilities? Were they . . .

Satisfactory Good Excellent

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

2. Did you feel the Panel Chair and Panel Members were welcoming and approachable?

Yes Partly No

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

3. Were the questions asked of you and others present clear and relevant?

Yes Partly No

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

3. Do you think Panel members listened to and took account of your views?

Yes Partly No

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

4. What was your overall experience of attending Panel today?

Positive Neither Positive nor
Negative Negative

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

If you wish to include any suggestions for anything that could be done differently, please do so here:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation

FOSTERING PANEL

QUALITY ASSURANCE FEEDBACK REPORT

Date of Fostering Panel Meeting: _____

1 Type of Case *(please tick)*

1. Approval
2. Matching
3. Review (change)
3. Resignation
5. Deregistration

Assessing Supervising Social Worker's Name: _____

Mainstream Supervising Social Worker's Name: _____

Child's Social Worker's Name: _____

Name of foster carers _____

Name of Child (if applicable): _____

GENERAL FEEDBACK ON REPORTS	Y	N	N/A
The report is well written and readily understandable			
The reports contain grammatical and/or typing errors affecting meaning			
The reports contain factual errors / is out of date			
The reports provide sufficient detail for panel recommendation			
There is an appropriate level of analysis			
There is robust evidence that issues of equality and diversity have been addressed			
The report contains the views of the applicants' own children <i>(where appropriate)</i>			
The report contains the views of foster children <i>(where appropriate)</i>			
The report contains the view of the child concerned <i>(where appropriate)</i>			
The report has been signed by all parties			
Confirmation that actions are carried out			

cont'd...

Additional Comments on the report

Any comments on practice

Any Comments on Presentation to Panel

Form completed by: _____

Date: _____

Date seen by Social Worker _____

Date seen by Practice Manager _____

SUMMARY OF REPORTS QUALITY ASSURANCE PRO FORMA: 2018 - 2019

	Mainstream Assessment			Family & Friends Assessment			Match			Reviews		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
The report is well written and readily understandable	20	3		10	1		18	2		21	2	
The report contains grammatical and/or typing errors affecting meaning		23			11			20			23	
The report contains factual errors/is out of date	4	19		2	9		1	19		1	22	
The report provides sufficient detail for panel to make a recommendation	21	2		8	3		19	1		22	1	
There is an appropriate level of analysis	20	3		8	3		20			22		1
There is robust evidence that issues of equality and diversity have been addressed	21	2		9	2		16	3	1	14	3	8
The report contains the views of the applicants' own child/ren (where appropriate)	12	3	8	3	1	7	5	2	13	13	2	6
The report contains the views of a foster child/ren (where appropriate)	3	1	19	1		9	16	1	3	17	3	3
The report contains the view of the child/ren concerned (where appropriate)	4	2	17	4		7	5	1	14	5		18
Reports were signed by all parties	20	3		10	1		17	3		21	1	
Confirmation the actions are carried out	4	1	1	2	1	2	1		1	4		2