



Fostering Relations

Fostering Relations Panel

Annual Report 2011



Fostering Relations... with children... with carers... with you!



Fostering Relations



Introduction.

This report will focus on three areas as prescribed by Standard 12/6 National Care Standards foster care and family placement services (2005)

- Details of Members
- Terms of Reference
- Summary of work

Details of Members

Richard Waite

Independent Panel Member

Richard started in this field 23 years ago when he founded a residential service for vulnerable children and adults using innovative approaches to outdoor education and groupwork. He moved to the mainstream as a child and family social worker, managed two local authority children's homes and then a child and parent support project for children with offending behaviour. Richard now works as an independent social worker, trainer and consultant with a specialism in intensive work with families.

Across the past six years his consultancy into Local Authorities has included carer assessments, team development facilitation, Form F and Form E assessments and facilitating a public consultation exercise. Richard's training work has included domestic abuse awareness, childcare and poverty, child development, child protection and management and leadership coaching. He has also been involved in delivering therapeutic interventions for parents and children affected by trauma.

Qualifications:

Certificate in Child Protection Studies,
University of Dundee 2002

Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work,
University of Stirling 1998

BA (Hons) Philosophy and Politics, University
of Southampton 1985



Sandra Manning

Independent Panel Member

I have been a Foster Panel member at Fostering Relations for almost 3 years and have undertaken appropriate training for this role.

Having gained a BSC (Social Science) Business Studies in 1997, I joined the Civil Service where my experience has been wide and varied. I worked in the Benefits Agency for many years as a special case officer visiting vulnerable families in their homes, working with support agencies to provide guidance and practical help to individual families and enable them to move forward with their lives.

For the past 14 years, I have worked as a policy manager in the Scottish Government in the areas of education and child protection, which has required close partnership working with multi-disciplinary services both statutory and voluntary as well as direct liaison with families. Through this work I have built up a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the legislation and policies around the education and care of children. Examples of the work in which I have played a key role include:- taking education legislation through Parliament and producing supporting guidance for parents/carers and professionals; managing a national consultation on child protection and producing the latest national guidance for practitioners; developing a new advocacy scheme for parents/carers at education Tribunals across Scotland; and managing national projects including the Child Protection Line and 'Enquire', an independent advice and information service for young people and parents/carers of children with additional support needs.

I have just taken early retirement and intend to work part time or in a voluntary capacity with children and families.

Judy Barker

Panel Chair

I have worked with various social work services through my career including criminal justice, children and families, psychiatric services and older people's services. Since becoming involved with SVQ I have worked mainly with professionals working with children and young people and have assessed foster carers to achieve their SVQ as well as chairing Fostering Panels for the appointment of new foster carers. I have a real passion for promoting a high quality of care practice for all services and love working with Fostering Relations as I know they share this vision for the care of the children and young people.

Qualifications:

B.SC in Social Science
CQSW
Diploma in Management
Social Work Practice Teacher Award
SQA Assessor and Internal Verifier qualifications

Leah Levein

Independent Panel Member

- Community Education worker with Fife Council for 12 years
- Child Protection trainer
- Currently responsible for developing community based learning opportunities for vulnerable young people and adults
- Co-ordinator of Kirkcaldy area Adult Learning Planning Group
- Co-ordinator for the development of 16+ Activity Agreements Kirkcaldy area
- Member of Kirkcaldy Youth Strategy Group
- BA Honours in Community Education



Details of Members

David Forsyth

Independent Panel Member

My name is David Forsyth and I am married with two grown up children. Perhaps unusually for a Panel Member, my background is not social work or education but before I retired early four years ago, I was a chemist and spent all of my working career within the petrochemical business based in Grangemouth. Hopefully this gave me lots of experience in working with teams, problem solving skills and understanding what people need to do the best job they can – all matters relevant to Panel work I hope you agree.

However I do have some other elements to my background that hopefully contribute towards good Panel membership. My two daughters were adopted by us as babies and so we have had experience of the care system through that. I was also a Children's Panel Member for 12 years and then for 8 years a member of the Children's Panel Advisory Committee. As chair of this latter group, our committee over-saw Children's Panel Members' performance and played a leading role in recruitment of new Panel members for Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannanshire.

Although officially retired I still carry out some work by helping my sister with her small engineering firm and when I have spare time, like to cycle, hill walk and ski in the winter. I am also a very average bridge player. We also have a caravan and like to tour Scotland – again when the weather suits.

Claire Robinson

Panel Deputy Chair

I have worked with children and young people for 30 years, starting my career as a Nursery Nurse for 5 years then as a Social Worker both with the local authority and independent sectors. I am currently Chief Executive for a small, independent organisation which offers residential care to young people between the ages of 6 – 18 years. We have 40+ staff looking after 11 children in three community based houses.

Fostering Relations is the third fostering panel I have been part of in the last 8 years and I admire and value greatly the work foster carers undertake with very vulnerable young people.

Charlie Gracie

Independent Panel Member

Charlie has been a social worker for over twenty years and previously managed a fostering and adoption service in a local authority. Prior to that he had several roles: chair of Child Protection Case Conferences; policy and operational support across early years, child care and criminal justice; managing services for young homeless people and for families and in direct practice with young people and families.

He currently works independently, focussing on direct work with families and consultancy for social work, social care and housing organisations.

Alongside this, he is a Social Work Practice Teacher and is involved in delivering training across a range of issues including child protection and inter-agency working.

As well as being a member of the Panel for Fostering Relations, he also has a role as Independent Reviewing Officer for the agency.



Terms of Reference

The Panel is appointed and operates in accordance with the regulations:

The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009

Fostering Relations must be satisfied that the numbers, qualifications and experience of individual members of the Panel enable it to efficiently discharge its functions.

The key functions of the Fostering Panel are:

- to consider any person referred as a prospective foster carer and to make recommendations to the agency decision maker the person's suitability to become a foster carer.
- To determine the specific nature of the fostering task to be undertaken by the foster carer
- To review any foster carer where:
 - alternative of use is proposed
 - termination of use is proposed
 - there are any other circumstances in relation to a foster carer which may affect his/ her continued use as a carer
 - it is the carer(s) first annual review
- to consider and make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker on fostering matters and advise on any matter referred to it.

Supplementary functions of the Fostering Panel

- to give interim advice to assessing social workers who may request an opportunity to avail the Panel of information that may/ may not require consideration in the progression of the assessment.

- To receive feedback/ information about the work of the agency and the progress of placements
- Individual members may also be requested to attend other relevant meetings.

Membership

The Panel pool shall consist of up to ten members, which includes both men and women. The Panel shall include:

- Chairperson
- Medical Adviser (cannot make up the quorum)
- Foster carer
- Service user representative
- Education Service representative
- Independent members
- Social worker (s)
- Fostering Relations representative (s) – up to two.
- Legal representative (cannot make up the quorum)

Each member of the Panel should possess such knowledge, skill or experience as will enable him or her to make an authoritative contribution to the assessment task.

Each member of the Panel will be subject to Disclosure Scotland check. A reference will be sought from the local authority in which the member resides. Two personal references will be requested.

The Panel will have a balanced representation of people who have professional and personal experience/ knowledge relevant to family placement.

Members shall be appointed for three years but may be re-appointed for a second period of three years.





Meetings of the panel shall generally be convened on a monthly basis though it is anticipated that there will be a build up to this frequency as the agency develops.

The agency shall set the agenda for meetings and hold responsibility for sending out the appropriate papers timeously.

Quorum

The meeting shall be quorate when any three members are present. Where possible, this should always include one man and one woman.

Participation

The Chairperson shall invite all persons to contribute to the discussion, but only the Panel members present shall be responsible for the recommendation. If members are unable to make a unanimous recommendation, the matter shall be decided by a vote of members present.

Minutes

Minutes of each meeting shall be prepared by the panel administrator within seven days. The minute shall record the panel's discussion and its exact recommendation and reasons for these. The Panel Chair requires to sign the minute as an accurate reflection of the panel discussion. On receipt of the Chair's agreed minute, the minute shall then be e mailed to the attendant Panel members. Any comments must be made directly to the Chair within 24 hours.

Decision Making

The Panel shall convey its recommendation in the minute to the Agency Decision maker within two weeks of the Panel.

Re-consideration Procedure

Applicants can ask for a review of the decision by writing to the Agency decision maker within twenty eight days. The Agency Decision maker may make arrangements to convene a review Panel who will consider the matter and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision maker who will notify the applicants of the decision.

Confidentiality

Members shall be expected to treat written and verbal information with the utmost confidence, in accordance with the terms of their appointment. Information of a particularly private nature may be discussed before non members are asked to join the meeting. All papers shall be returned at the end of the Panel meeting.

Training

Fostering relations recognises its responsibilities to facilitate appropriate ongoing training to all Panel members. Training needs of Panel members will be identified through consultation between Panel and Chair. It is expected that Panel members will attend at least an annual training event.

Fees

Panel members will be paid a fee for serving on the Panel. This fee reflects the time and work involved in preparing for and attendance at Panel meetings. Panel members are expected to contribute fully in the consideration of any business presented to the Fostering Panel. The fee will be inclusive of the reading and consideration of all reports relative to the agenda of the day and travelling expenses.

(Reviewed October 2011)



Summary of Work

During the period January 2011 to December 2012 we held 11 Foster Panels in total, generally speaking these took place once per month.

Most though not all comprised the review of existing foster carers as per regulation and policy, and the examination of new applications to the agency by way of a completed Comprehensive Assessment.

There were

- 8 Annual Reviews
- 10 Initial Applications to Foster
- 2 Resignations
- 2 Permanence Approvals
- 1 Change of Approval Status

There was in addition to the above a Panel Business Meeting to review and discuss the previous report and the agencies recruitment policies and projections for the period 2011 to 2012.

Inherent within the panel process is a feedback mechanism in order to capture the applicants views of the panel.

Responses were in general very positive

"Found the Panel to be very informal and relaxed"

"Panel members made it a very friendly meeting"

"When I first arrived I felt a little nervous but once the process was explained I was put at ease I thought the Panel were friendly and open and I didn't feel intimidated"

This process resulted in a synopsis of panel member's history and experience being completed by each of them and presented to applicants prior to the panel, thus allowing for greater transparency of process. Additionally the Terms of Reference for the Panel were reviewed and updated in 2011 in order to ensure continued compliance.





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