



FOSTERING RELATIONS PANEL REPORT 2014





Introduction

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

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David Forsyth (Chair)
Mairead Crumlish (Chair)
Vicky Marshall (Vice-Chair)
Sandra Manning (Independent Panel Member)
Richard Waite (Independent Panel Member)
Carolann Loudon (Independent Panel Member)
Jill Gawish (Independent Panel Member)
Audrey Fleming (Independent Panel Member)
Eric Mcqueen (Independent Panel Member)
Cheryl Leggett (Independent Panel Member)
Michahaila Downie (Independent Panel Member)
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Details of Members

This year saw us consolidate membership both in the West and East slowly building up membership in both areas. Below please find details of the members as they themselves have constructed them.

We use these profiles at every Panel in terms of generating a list for carers attending with these profiles attached in order that Carers gain an appreciation of the background to each Panel member in attendance that day.

David Forsyth (Chair)

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 my entire 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 oversaw 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.

Mairead Crumlsh (Chair)

I have worked with children and young people for 10 years. I started my career as a Residential Worker in children's units in the Republic of Ireland before moving to Glasgow to train as a Social Worker. I have been a qualified Social Worker for 8 years and for the first 4/5 years worked with children and young people in an area team setting for the Local Authority. This involved working with children and young people who were looked after and accommodated, children and young people on the child protection register and children and young people who were looked after through Section 70 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. More recently, I have been working with children under the age of 5 years, in a multidisciplinary team comprised of Health, Social Work and Education staff.

Fostering Relations is the first fostering panel I have been involved with however, in my personal life, my parents have been foster carers for 25 years and I grew up within this household so am fully aware of the responsibilities and limitless support that foster carers are expected to provide for the children and young

people in their care. I appreciate that this is a very difficult job and have great admiration for those who chose to become foster carers, offering safe and nurturing environments for the most vulnerable of children.

Vicky Marshall (Vice-Chair)

I have been working with young people, children and families for over 10 years. My current role as Community Learning and Development Worker (schools) involves supporting families who demonstrate often complex family and parenting needs. This position requires a sensitive approach and negotiating difficult and complex family relationship and behaviours.

I am also currently a chair on the Glasgow Children's Panel. My role here involves engaging with vulnerable children and their parents/carers, whilst making difficult decisions about the welfare of children at risk from harm. This experience has allowed me to develop an understanding of the issues that face troubled and challenging families. I also frequently have to liaise with foster carers and have gained an understanding of the legal context surrounding foster placements. Fostering Relations is the first fostering panel that I have been a member of, and I hope to bring all my relevant skills, knowledge and experience to the role. I understand the importance of providing a safe, nurturing and secure family placement to ensure the welfare of the child. In addition, I want to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential within a nurturing fostering placement.

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.

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

Carolann Loudon

(INDEPENDENT PANEL MEMBER)

I have worked with children and young people for about 26 years, I spent many of these in Youth work working within community education and youth information & advice. I later moved to social work and firstly worked in a young person's homeless project, I then moved onto Residential childcare in local children's homes. I worked there for 13 years.

I have just taken a career break recently. I have been a Foster Carer for 10 years and have had 2 boys for 9 ½ of those, I still have the youngest who is 17 and my oldest has moved on to through care. I have in recent

months provided respite care to 2 girls and have only a few weeks ago taken another full-time placement.

I have been a Fostering panel member for another organisation for about 1 ½ years now, I really enjoy this work and look forward to continuing it with Fostering Relations.

I have a real commitment to Fostering work and would say that it has definitely changed my life and the lives of the young people I have looked after.

Jill Gawish

(Independent Panel Member)

I have worked with children and young people in a variety of settings – as a play leader in an afterschool club; A nursery nurse in a nursery; a project leader in a throughcare setting for 16-18 year olds; a volunteer guider for rainbows and brownies; a volunteer befriender for a young carer's project and a volunteer helper in a club for children with special needs.

I have been working for CHILDREN 1st since 2005. During this time I have set up a befriending project for vulnerable 7-16 year olds. I have also directly supported young people age 14-19 (who are not engaged in education, training or employment) and their families through individual work, group work, family support, family group conferences and matching with volunteer mentors. I currently work in the Argyle and Bute area as an advocate on behalf of children and young people who are on the child protection register and those in foster care. Many of the children I have worked with have been through the care system and as a result I have always had an interest in fostering.

Audrey Fleming

(Independent Panel Member)

I have been working with children, young people and families for over 25 years as a volunteer, sessional worker and qualified Social Worker. I have worked predominantly in the voluntary sector where I feel I have been able to offer the support people needed to help families make significant changes in their lives. I presently work for a large national voluntary organisation as a Project Team Manager offering support in various areas.

I am also a full-time foster carer for a local authority and am fully aware of the demands and stresses of the role. As a panel member for Fostering Relations I hope to be able to bring my experience, skills and knowledge to the role to help improve the lives of children and young people by being involved in approving foster carers.

Eric Mcqueen

(Independent Panel Member)

I have been working in residential care for one of Scotland's oldest charities for almost 17 years looking after young people between the ages 12-18 years olds who display a complex mix of social, emotional, educational and behavioural problems. Firstly as a sessional worker for 12 months and then as a full time Child & Youthcare worker for 6 years where I was keyworker to numerous young people looking after their welfare and working with their families before gaining promotion to my current role as Night Service Manager/Duty Manager.

My current role involves line management of six members of staff and overseeing the running of the school throughout the night while providing staff with advice and assistance where necessary. My position requires me to have good knowledge of the young people who reside in Kibble as I am the first port of call in the event of any situations that arise.

During my 17 years working with young people and families it has provided me with knowledge and understanding of the issues that many young people have experienced while living within the family home before being received into care. Therefore I believe I would be able to use my experience, knowledge and skills as a Fostering Relations panel member to help improve the lives of children and young people and hopefully provide carers with knowledge and advice that maybe helpful in their role.

Cheryl Leggett

(Independent Panel Member)

As a teenager, I was placed in voluntary foster care. It became apparent very quickly that I had a very positive experience compared to a lot of young people I met, having been placed with a family which perfectly met my needs. Even before leaving care, I began campaigning for my local authority, trying to raise awareness of the issues children and young people in foster care face, as well as encouraging more foster carers to come forward.

I left my foster family to study at university in Glasgow at the age of 18, and began working with the Fostering Network Scotland and the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum. I volunteered with these charities for over 11 years, and was involved in a number of campaigns including the annual Fostercare Fortnight drive to recruit more foster carers, and to change legislation, policy and practice in relation to young people leaving care. I now work for the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum dealing with membership for the charity, and

am in the process of studying a youth work degree. Through my work I am in contact with a number of professionals who work with young people who are preparing to leave, or have already left, care in Scotland. With my own personal experience, and having met lots of young people through my voluntary work, I have a good understanding of the kinds of issues children and young people face when they are in care, their needs and wants, and how their experiences (even from a very young age) can impact them in later life. This has given me a drive and passion to make a difference for children and young people in and leaving care.

Michahaila Downie

(Independent Panel Member)

I started my career working with children and young people in various residential settings. I began working as a support worker whilst studying for my psychology degree, working my way up to more senior levels. I supported some young people to move either into foster care and would work with them and their foster carers or if they were older into independent living. I then worked as a service manager and then area manager with adults with disabilities, although my specialism is autism and learning disabilities.

I have also volunteered as a befriender to a couple of teenagers in foster care, both are now young women at university and whilst we have all moved to different parts of the country we still have a close bond and see each other frequently. By being a befriender I gained an insight into the foster care system that I never would have had solely through my work, as it was a very personal experience, seen through the eyes of the young people and their foster carers who I also have a close relationship with.

I hope my experience and knowledge gained will be able to help children, young people and foster carers as I understand how important foster placements are.

Heather Watson

(Independent Panel Member)

Having raised four children (two of whom were adopted) my connection with the fostering panel team and the carers is close to my heart.

My early career was in nursing where I specialised in communicable diseases. Many of our patients were children and young adults. Once my own children were set on their school career paths, I returned to education and retrained as a Secondary school teacher, a job which continues to give me joy, yet presents daily challenges.

Carrie-Anne Reid

(Independent Panel Member)

I am a serving Police Officer with Police Scotland with over 9 years' service. As I am sure you are aware child protection is very much a consideration in everything we do already as police officers. I feel that with my training and experience I am able to consider the information provided in each case presented and make the right decision and that my experience, assessments and considerations compliments the mix of independent panel members that I have sat with. I am trained in Joint Investigative Interviewing and have carried out a number of these with children.

From a personal perspective it gives me a great sense of pride to be part of the panel and to be able to contribute to a process that can change and improve the lives of children and foster carers alike.

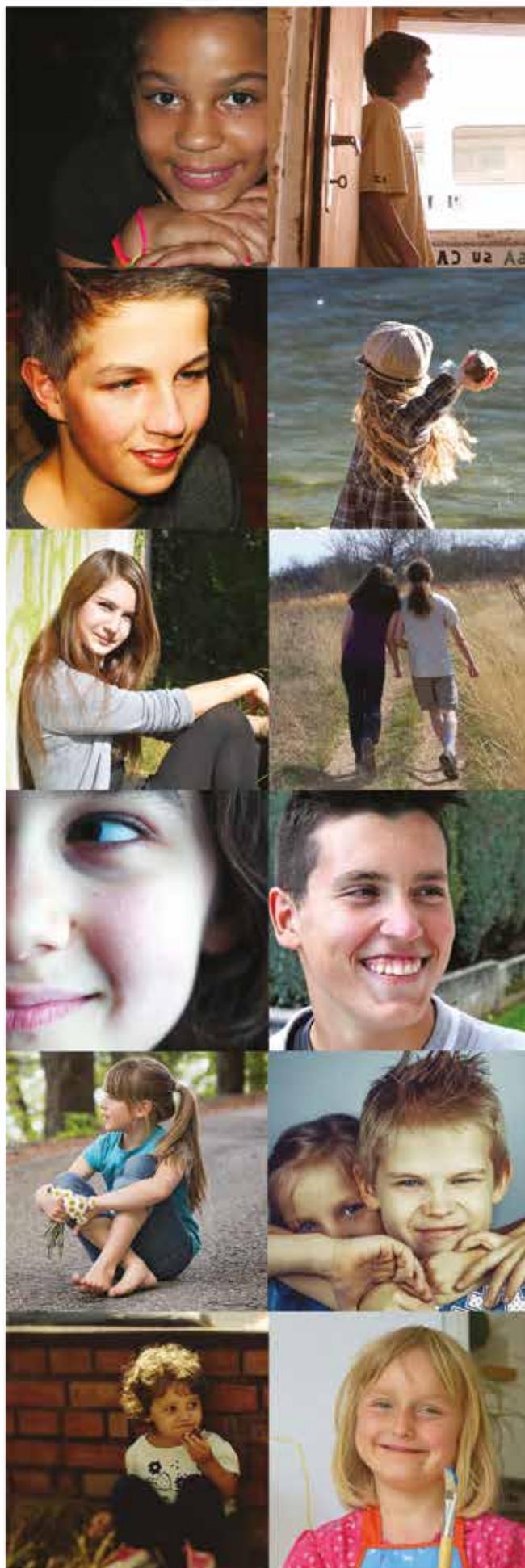
Lorna Kelly

(Independent Panel Member)

I have worked with vulnerable families for over ten years and as a qualified social worker for a large Local Authority since 2006. Much of my work involves child protection investigations, assessment and the subsequent management to reduce risks and improve outcomes for young people, children and families. My work also involves managing and planning for looked after children and the complex issues that often affect their lives. I have been involved in planning for children's futures and supporting them and their carers in managing transitions and the issues surrounding a different placement settings including permanency.

I am currently enrolled in the BAAF Securing Children's Future's postgraduate course which has a particular focus on using research to inform decision making and improve outcomes for looked after children. I work as a sessional fostering assessor for another organisation and am involved in preparing prospective foster carers for the fostering role and presenting at panel.

Fostering is an area that I have a keen interest in as I have seen the difference that good placements can make to children's daily life and longer-term outcomes. As a panel member with Fostering Relations, I hope I can influence outcomes for children by being involved in approving foster carers for this role.



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.

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.

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.

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.

Summary of Work

During the period January 2014 to December 2015 we held 15 Foster Panels in total for foster carers situated across the central belt of Scotland. Fostering panels were held in the Dalgety Bay and Hillington offices. This is an increase of 3 more Panels on 2013.

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

- 21 Annual Reviews
- 11 Initial Applications to Foster
- 3 Resignations
- 5 Permanence Approvals
- 3 Change of Approval Status
- 2 Interim Panels

Panel members are requested to provide their views on the quality of reports and timescales used to ensure they have enough information to make an informed

decision using the various feedback mechanisms provided by the agency. Similarly, new applicants and approved foster carers who attend fostering panels are all asked for their views in relation to quality assurance.

In respect of Quality Assurance the reports alluded to above please see Appendix 1 & 2.

The Terms of Reference for the Panel were reviewed and updated in 2014 in order to ensure continued compliance.

Staff Changes

In June 2014, we lost our Operations Manager who acted as Panel Manager this role was taken on by the Registered Manager, we also lost a social worker in July a replacement was recruited and took up post in late September in the Fife Office. Additionally, in August we saw the return of an experienced social worker from maternity leave.

Care Inspectorate

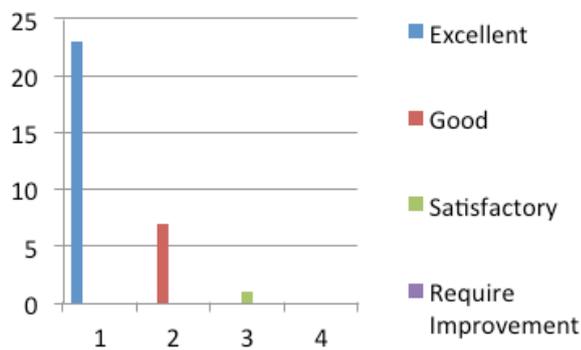
The Care Inspectorate inspected our agency in June 2014. Whilst there were no requirements issued following this inspection, a number of Areas for Improvement were recommended which the agency is currently addressing.

PANEL MEMBERS PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE 2015

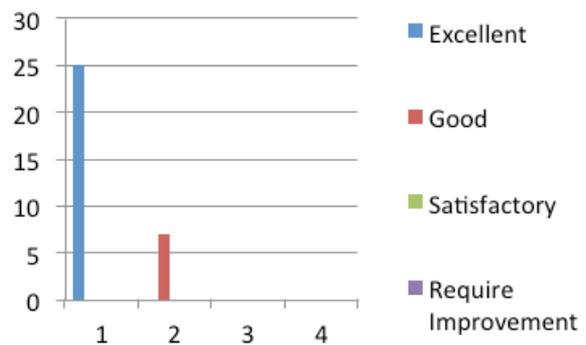


Survey taken on Panels over the last year (32 responses)

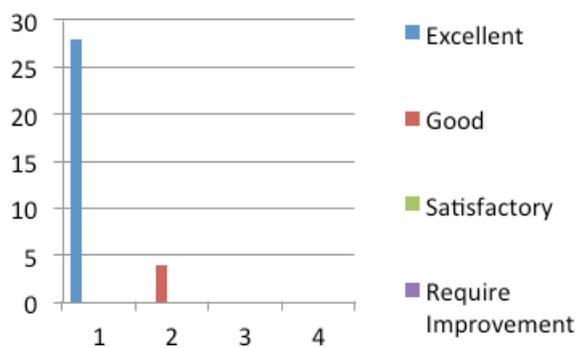
Q. Calibre of Reports Presented:



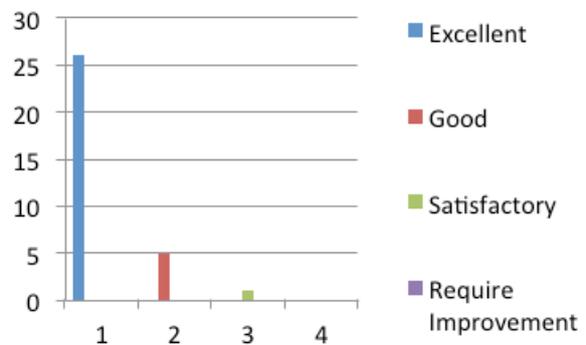
Q. Membership Meets the Standard required (Standard 12)



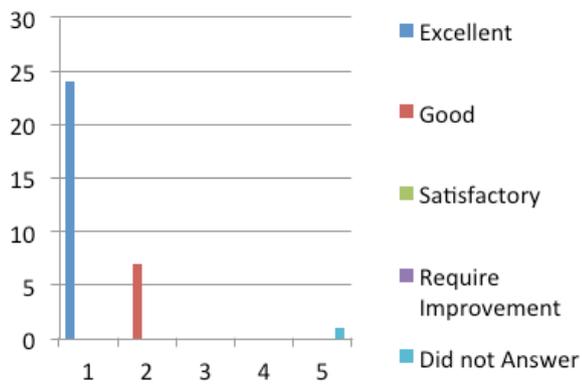
Q. Calibre of Presentation:



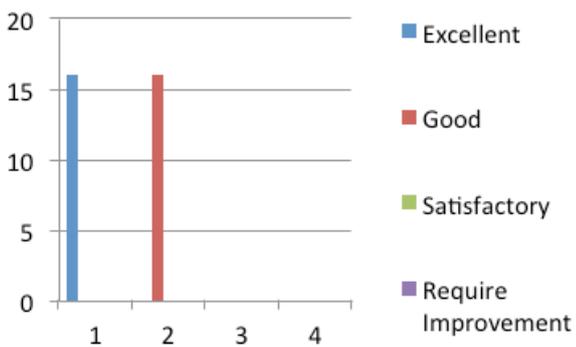
Q. Preparation Time:



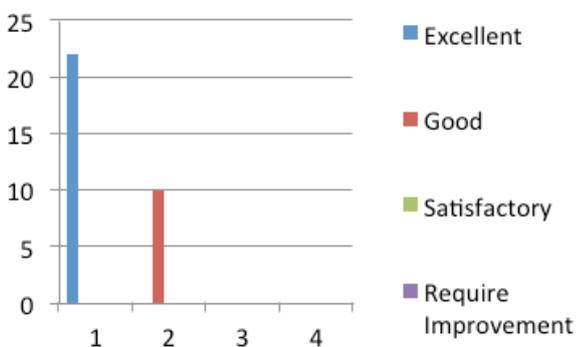
Q. Appropriate Documentation Submitted:



Q. Venue:



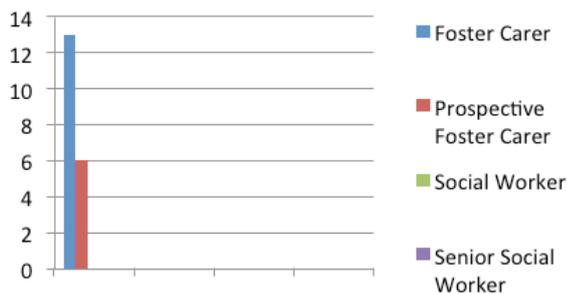
Q. Time of Panel:



CARERS PANEL PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE 2015

Survey taken on Panels over the last year (19 responses)

Q. In what capacity did you attend the panel?



Q. Were you received well when you arrived for your panel appointment?



Q. Did your panel commence at the pre-arranged time?



Q. Where you informed about who the panel members were and their role?



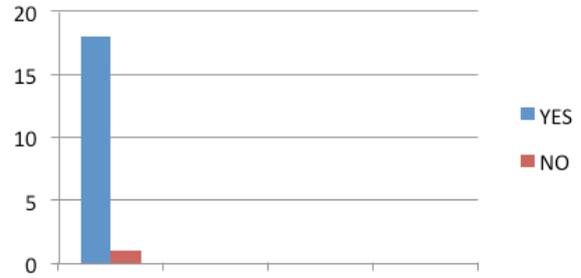
Q. Was the purpose/process of the meeting fully explained to you?



Q. Did the panel discuss all the points/issues you felt to be important?



Q. Did you think there was enough time allocated to the panel process?



Q. Did you get the opportunity to ask any questions?



Q. Was the venue suitable place for the panel?



Q. What are your views on your experience of attending the panel?

"Was impressed by speed of decision. Had no complaints at all regarding process"

"We were nervous at first, but the panel members made us feel comfortable and relaxed"

"Very positive. Allowed you to update and discuss issues with the panel. Share opinions"

"We were both very nervous however, the panel members were friendly and this helped us to relax during the meeting"

"The panel process is part of fostering, even though you have been through it before, it can still be nerve wracking, it is important to be sensitive as panel members to this"

"Everyone was very positive and explained what was happening. Nothing unhelpful"

"Both this year and our first one last year were very good, everything was done very well and we were put at ease and everyone very helpful"

"As usual I was slightly nervous attending the panel but all of the members put me completely at ease and were genuinely interested in my experiences and difficulties within this placement"

"Staff and panel members where very friendly and made us fell comfortable. Familiar venue made us feel at ease"

"Even after five years appearing in front of a panel is stressful however, we felt comfortable and well represented and that the panel had a good understanding of the challenges we face daily"

"Our experience of attending the panel was very positive, it gave us the support and encouragement we need as foster carers to be the best we can be whilst working with the child in our care"

"Our experience was very positive. The panel was very respectful and sensitive. The pace was good. We were made to feel relaxed and this was due to all of the panel members being friendly and approachable"

"The panel were very welcoming and I felt at ease. Questions put to me were clear and relevant. I was not kept waiting too long to be told their decision, which helped with the minimising of a potentially stressful time. I have no negative comments to make"

"We expected a panel that would listen to our point of view before making any decisions. We are still waiting for a written explanation of the decision"

"We felt like we were getting in the way when waiting in your busy office before and after our panel"

"Surprisingly, a pleasant experience. We were made to feel at ease, with warm smiles and words of encouragement"

"The whole day was very friendly and relaxed. We were made welcome when we arrived and afterwards we stayed behind to have a cup of tea, Tom even showed us down to the front door when we left"

"Very relaxed atmosphere. Made to feel comfortable, just a pity it hadn't been closer to home (my fault for changing the panel date)"



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