

Introduction

This report summarises the work of Lancashire's Fostering Panel from 1st October 2015 to 31st March 2016.

Composition of panels

We currently have 14 panel members who, between them, sit on two fostering panels a month. We have:

- 1 Independent chair
- 1 Panel Advisor
- 1 County Councillor
- 8 Independents – including 3 from the health sector
- 3 social workers

During this 6 month period we have recruited additional social workers and independent members.

Involving young people

We have also made considerable efforts to recruit young people to be panel members during this period. This is yet to come to fruition although progress is being made.

We have successfully engaged the young people involved in an advocacy group called LINX (run by Barnardos) who have taken the lead in our joint fostering and adoption development day in the last 6 months and this proved very beneficial to the panel members who attended. In addition, they have produced a list of questions that they consider important to ask potential carers. The panel chair now includes one question from the LINX group for all new approvals.

Support and training available to panel members

During this period, panel members had access to the following:

- A development day
- Training for new panel members from an outside agency
- Briefings each and every month which are stored on the server
- An appraisal
- A buddy as required
- Supervision/support from the panel chair and/or the panel advisor on any particular issues raised.

Panel Functions

The key functions of the fostering panel as determined by Regulation 25 are:

- To consider the suitability of prospective foster carers

- To recommend any terms of approval
- To consider the first review of foster carers and any other review as requested by the service
- To advise on the procedure for reviews and periodically to monitor their effectiveness
- To oversee the quality of reports submitted to panel
- To give advice and recommendations on any other matters referred to it

In addition to the above, the fostering panel considers resignations that occur within the first year of approval as a 'lessons learnt' exercise.

Fostering Panel Statistics 1st October 2015 – 31st March 2016

	1st Oct 2015 – 31st March 2016	1st April 2015 – 30th September 2015
<u>Types of Items</u>	<u>Number of Items</u>	<u>Number of Items</u>
Full Approvals	9	10
Connected Persons	3	6
Concurrent Approvals	1	4
Reassessments	0	4
First Reviews	23	20
Change of Approval	0	2
Review following Allegations	3	4
Agency Exemption	4	3
LCC Exemption	4	3
Regulation 25	2	2
Appeal	0	1
Resignation within 1 st Year	1	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>59</u>

Further detail in regard to the above

- There was 1 item out of the 50 where the ADM did not agree with the panel recommendation.
- No items have been deferred.
- 11 out of 11 panels had the ADM within 7 working days.
- 44 out of 50 foster carers were told in writing within 5 working days of the ADM.
- 6 out of 50 foster carers were told in writing within 7 working days of the ADM.
- 9 out of 50 were verbally told of the ADM decision within 2 working days
- In 41 cases out of the 50, the verbal confirmation of an ADM decision cannot be confirmed as no case note was recorded.
- 2 out of 50 were agency social workers, and therefore cannot confirm if they were verbally told of the ADM decision within 2 working days.

Analysis of the above

1. There has been a decrease in the number of new approvals in comparison to the last period. The total number for the assessment of mainstream, connected and concurrent carers has dropped from 20 to 13. That equates to a drop of **35%**.
2. In the majority of cases, it has been impossible to conclude if verbal feedback regarding an agency decision has been given within regulatory timescales with a total of **82%** being undetermined.
3. There are no other significant comparisons to draw from the above data.

Quality of reports

Of the 13 assessment reports submitted to panel during this period all 13 received comprehensive feedback regarding their quality from the panel. This feedback is an electronic system and the results are passed to the social worker and their manager. Reviews and other items do not receive this feedback.

The grading system in use goes from 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent, 4 Very good, 3 Good, 2 Satisfactory and 1 Poor. The feedback is broken down and covers various aspects of the report and the oral presentation of the social workers who attend, however for ease, this report gives the details of the quality of written reports overall.

- Of the 13 reports submitted, 6 were considered to be of excellent quality by the panel; that's **46%**.
- Of the 13 reports submitted, 5 were deemed to be very good; that's **38%**.
- Of the 13 reports submitted, 1 was deemed to be good.
- Of the 13 reports, 1 was deemed to be only satisfactory.
- There were no reports considered to be poor.

The reasons given by panel for the assessment judged to be only satisfactory was that the paperwork was confusing, not written logically and therefore difficult to follow.

The general reasons given by panel for assessments being judged to be excellent was that they consisted of accurate information, robust analysis and were clear and easy to read.

Analysis of the above

1. Of the 13 reports submitted **92%** were considered to be at least of good quality and above. There is therefore a generally high standard of assessment submissions to the fostering panel.

2. Assessments are generally considered to be excellent when the information is accurate and well analysed and the writing style clear and easy to read.
3. There has been a **35%** drop in the number of assessments (mainstream, connected and concurrent) coming to panel compared to the last 6 month period.

Conclusion

1. There is a significant drop in the number of new prospective foster carers being assessed and brought to panel.
2. Social workers in the Recruitment and Assessment team who prepare the assessment reports, are on the whole producing excellent assessments. It may be useful to feedback the general pointers that panel consider make an excellent assessment, which are:
 - Accurate information
 - Robust analysis
 - Clear and easy to read writing style

During this 6 month period there has not been a consistent panel chair and therefore this report has been completed by the panel advisor.



T Kelly 7/6/16