



Phoenix Community Care Ltd Foster Care Agency

0218 - Panel Policies & Procedures

Version	Written	Updated/ Reviewed	Scheduled Review Date	Author/ Reviewer	Approving Body	Date Approved
2	Nov. 2013		Oct 2014	G. Areola	PCC Directors	05.02.14
		Jan '15	Jan '16	J A Coates	PCC Director	Feb '15
		July'16	July '19	J A Coates	PCC Directors	July'16

The Fostering Panel Policy

PCC will appoint an independent Foster Care Panel in accordance with fostering service Regulations part IV (Care standards act 2000) Fostering services National Minimum Standards 2011.

We are committed to operating our agency in according to National Minimum Standards and will provide excellence in the standard of care provision. We recognise that the role of the Fostering Panel in ensuring the maintenance of such standards is very important.

PCC will maintain a Fostering Panel of personnel recruited individually who will carry out their responsibility with regard to the welfare and best interests of the children and young people who will be placed in the care of the organisation, paying particular note of placements ethnicity, and ensuring appointed foster carers are appropriately aware

PCC will recruit Foster Panel member who will work within an anti -discriminatory and anti-oppressive practise framework

All Panel members will be subject to a DBS check and PCC will take references and C.V's that will show evidence of their credentials. All relevant ID will be checked.

PCC will expect objectivity and impartiality of its panel member in making conclusions and recommendations. For this reason, we will appoint an Independent Chair.

PCC of the panel members will be required to declare any interest in any particular case being heard, they will then be asked to temporarily step down from that panel meeting.

We will prepare members of the Fostering Panel by providing training and information appropriate to their responsibilities, we will also offer the members of the panel further training to assist in their personal development particularly when that will benefit the function of the panel.

PCC will arrange for the Chair of the panel, access to medical information and as necessary specialist medical advice in reference to applications and will make sure that the Independent Chair of the Foster Care Panel has access both to the Foster Care Manager and as necessary PCC's Board of Directors.

PCC will make sure that all Panel Members are made aware of the standards by which Carers are to be assessed.

PCC expects the appointed panel members to attend at least 75% of all meetings within a year. If that does not happen we would ask them to stand down and a replacement found. We shall remunerate panel members appropriate to their time given and expenses incurred.

All panel members, including the Chair are required to undergo annual reviews. This is an opportunity for PCC and the panel member to assess their contribution to the work of the panel and of PCC over the past year. The Chair's annual review should be carried out by PCC's Decision Maker who should observe at least one panel meeting and obtain feedback from other panel members and those attending panel meeting regarding the Chair's work. The Chair and

the Decision Maker will then carry out the review. The Chair will carry out the reviews of all other members of the panel.

PCC will ensure that accurate minutes of meetings are recorded, detailing the decisions taken as well as the process of that decision, ensuring that reasons are given. Any dissensions will also be noted. The panel Chair will pass final decision and recommendations to the Fostering Manger and PCC's Board of Directors.

The Fostering Panel will also be responsible for quality assurance, in as much as bringing it to PCC's attention if the foster carer's review or the Form F application are not completed in a satisfactory manner. The panel is also expected to approve PCC's annual reports.

PCC's Fostering Panel will be subject to inspection by OFSTED and we understand Ofsted's duty to monitor our standards of service and care.

PCC will arrange for an independent qualified social worker or for the advocacy/support services of the Fostering Network to be involved if there is a lock up in decision making. All parties are required to observe and sign the agencies confidentiality policy.

Panel Exceptions Policy

In the circumstance of PCC considering placing a looked after child with a carer 'out of their approval status, the agency manager, decision maker and chair will approve temporality until a panel is held to ratify the decision.

This decision will be made following consultation with the placing local authority.

The Fostering Panel Procedure

- PCC procedure for the operations of its independent Foster Care Panel will be in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations.
- The Foster Care Panel will consider each application to foster for PCC, recommending whether or not each person is suitable for approval or not to act as a Foster Carer.
- The Foster Care Panel, when it recommends approval of an application will give the terms on which the approval is given. Such things as Age range, Number of Children, Gender, ethnicity and type of placement.
- The Foster Care Panel will Carry out regular review of Foster Carers working with PCC and on review recommend if, or not a person continues to remain suitable. At this time, the Panel will also consider any proposed changes to an existing Foster Carers approval or basis on which the original approval was given.
- The Foster Care Panel will carry out reviews on the request of Management and Directors of PCC when requested to do so.
- The Foster Care Panel will consider any case referred to it under the Foster Care regulations.

- The Foster Care Panel will advise on procedures under which reviews are carried out by PCC. Periodically monitoring their effectiveness.
- The Foster Care Panel will oversee the conduct of assessment carried out by PCC giving advice and making recommendation on such matters or cases as PCC may refer to it.
- The Foster Care Panel will have the right to recommend the termination of the registration of a Foster Carer that it has previously approved.
- The Foster Care Panel will be convened each time there is need, or at least quarterly, for the assessment of applications, for reviews (at least once per year) or for consideration of the potential problems that may warrant termination of a foster carers registration with PCC.
- The foster care Panel Member must give at least one month's notice if they wish to resign their membership of the Panel.
- PCC will give Panel Members notice in writing if they are no longer required as Panel Members.
- Foster Care Panel Members will be required to sign a confidentially agreement.
- The Foster Care Panel will have least two weeks to consider written reports on cases to be presented to them at the convened meetings.
- The Foster Care Panel will require that the verifying Social Worker will be at the Panel meeting; otherwise no approval will take place.
- Portfolios of Evidence supporting the applications will be presented to the meeting as well as the written reports that the panel will have received two weeks previously.
- The Foster Care Panel will encourage the applying Foster carer to be at the Panel meeting, but discussions concerning their final approval shall be handled by the Panel only, without the Potential Carer present.
- PCC will arrange a suitable venue, and notify the panel at least one month in advance. They will also notify potential foster carers and assessing Social Workers.
- The Foster Care Panel must be quorate in order to conduct its business. A quorum consists of no less than 5 of the potential nine members of the Panel. Of these 5 one must be the chair or Vice Chair, and 1 must be the Assessing Social worker, and 2 must be independent members of the Panel.
- The Foster Care Panel will give majority votes to approve their decisions, where there is a split vote the Chair will not have a casting vote, if necessary a further panel meeting will be arranged but in all situations the overriding principal will be the best interest of any placed children/young people and their welfare. The recommendations of the panel will be notified in writing to the Chair of PCC (the decision maker).

- Minutes of The Foster Care Panel will be taken and circulated to all members of the Panel within 1 week of the meeting.
- The decision maker will notify in writing the applicant(s) of PCC's decision for acceptance as a foster carer or not which of course will be reflective of the recommendations from the panel.
- Applicants, Foster Carers and other persons concerned will be able to contact the Panel Chair if they are dissatisfied with the recommendations that The Foster Care Panel make. This must be done within 28 days of the receipt of the written notice, and the complaint or dissatisfaction must be made in writing. If there is no representation back to The Foster Care Panel, within 28 days it will be assumed that the decision of the Panel has been accepted.
- PCC will discuss any representation with the Chair of the Fostering Panel and then take the matter back to a further convened meeting for that purpose.
- PCC will hold all minutes of The Foster Care Panel in its secure files at its operation office. They will be available to The Foster Care Panel member on request.
- The Foster Carer Panel will review all PCC's Foster Carers at the end of their first year and then at least every three years. PCC reserves the right to take a foster carer's annual review to panel as and when they see fit. Review will be taken to panel under the following circumstances:
 1. Changes to approval
 2. Following any/all child protection concerns
 3. Significant changes in the home

The Panel will look at:-

- The age range approved for that particular Foster Carer
- Identifying areas where further training and support of the carer is needed
- Propose or recommend changes to policies, procedures and practices that **PCC** uses in relations to Foster Carers to better improve the service.
- Monitor the reviewing process of The Foster Care Panel, and of the Reviewing process presented by the Assessing Social Workers. Recommending any changes to PCC.
- In the unlikely event of a total 'lock up' in terms of decision making by The Foster Care Panel, PCC will recommend one of the other agencies listed at the back of our Policies and Procedures booklet, or Aphelia Ltd, Fostering Service, to arbitrate on behalf of the Panel and the parties involved.