**Practice Guidance**

**Practice Guidance for attending your first Fostering Panel**

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**Please read in conjunction with the Fostering Panel procedure**.

The Darlington Family Placement Panel is a joint panel, considering matters relating to Fostering and Adoption. This includes the approval of Foster Carers and Adopters, and Family and Friends connected carers, also the approval of matches of children to their carers via either adoption or long term fostering. Panel also considers specific foster carer review and resignations and de-registration of carers.

The Family Placement Panel will consider all of the reports for individual cases, and will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. Panel members will have read the reports prior to the date of the Panel. It is essential that you submit your reports to the Panel Administrator on the identified date to ensure Panel members have sufficient time to fully consider the contents.

**Observe a Fostering Panel**

Gaining experience of how the Family Placement Panel operates will give you a better understanding of what to expect when you are in attendance. Observing a panel will provide you with an opportunity to witness how the panel works. If you feel it would be beneficial to observe a panel, liaise with the Professional Advisor to Panel, who will seek permission from the panel chair.

**Members of the Panel**

Panel members include a range of professional and independent people, who bring a wealth of experience to the decision making process. Examples include social workers, foster carers, adopters, local councillors, education and health professionals.

**Attendance at Panel**

Prior to Panel, ensure you have prepared the applicants for the role of panel, and for what they can expect to happen on the day.

Plan to arrive at the venue in good time to meet the applicants and help put them at ease.

Ensure you have prepared fully by having a copy of your paperwork with you, and be familiar with your report. Consider potential questions that the Panel may ask, and be able to provide updates that may have occurred since your report was submitted.

**Support the applicants during the panel**

The Panel Chair will introduce Panel members, and explain the Panel process. The Chair will ensure that the applicants are put at ease, and questions will be directed to whoever is best placed to provide the answer. Social workers will support the applicants, and ensure that they answer the questions fully.

**Meet with the applicants after panel (post-panel debrief)**

Applicants and Social Workers may be asked to leave the Panel meeting until Panel members reach a recommendation with reasons for their recommendation. It is the role of the Panel Chair to advise applicants of the recommendation and reasons

Applicants will be reminded that the Panel is making a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, who will make the decision. The applicant will receive a letter confirming the ADM decision. The applicant should have the opportunity to discuss their experience with the Social Worker, and will be able to provide written feedback on their experience of attending Panel. The feedback will be considered regularly by Panel, and any identified learning will be followed up.

**Learning from Practice**

You may attend Panels in different areas and for different Agencies, which may vary in the way they function.

Take note of any questions you are asked and any l comments that are made as it will help inform your practice and assist you in developing assessment skills.