

Practice Guidance for Deferments from Fostering Panel

This practice guide provides clarity around the process expectations when the fostering panel has deferred matters under consideration.

What is a Deferment?

Fostering panel may be asked to consider a Mainstream Assessment, Kinship Assessment, Regulation 25 Extension Request, Regulation 26 Brief Report, Foster Carer Annual Review with or without a Change of Terms of Approval and make a recommendation accordingly.

Where panel members do not believe they have sufficient information contained within the submitted paperwork, they may wish to defer the matter for a later date. This will mean the matter will effectively be postponed and will need to return to panel within a clear timeframe.

It is important all paperwork is deemed fit for purpose and has been quality assured by management prior to being presented to panel. Where possible, any concerns regarding the quality of paperwork should be discussed by the chair with the panel advisor and/or service prior to the panel date to try and avoid a deferment being necessary.

Grounds for a Deferment

Following panel discussion where a deferment is agreed, it is the panel chair's responsibility to verbally outline the grounds for the deferment to the attendees when offering their feedback.

These grounds should be very clear reasons based on the information submitted to panel in the original paperwork or based on information shared within the panel meeting by the attendees. The chair should be very clear about what information is required for panel to make a recommendation in the future.

The information given to the attendees and what information is required should be captured within the panel minutes.

Where further information or actions are requested by panel members, these should also be verbalised during the panel meeting and subsequently included within the minutes.

After panel, the minutes should be quality assured and signed off by the panel chair.

The involvement of the ADM

Where a deferment has taken place, the minutes should not be shared with the ADM. The ADM decision sheet in the minutes should be removed.

The ADM will only have sight of the minutes, as and when the matter is returned to panel. The deferment minutes should then be included in the panel paperwork to be considered for a decision alongside the new minutes.

Recording the Deferment

The minutes of the deferment should be uploaded on the carers' LCS file.

The panel administrator should also log the deferment in the panel section on LCS and indicate a deferment has taken place. This section should also include a brief summary as to why the matter has been deferred.

The ADM section should be left blank.

Returning to Panel

When a matter is deferred, it will be the responsibility of the panel advisor to re-book the matter into panel for further consideration once they have agreed with the social workers when the additional work will be completed.

The panel advisor should set a clear timescale for the information/action points to be completed and submitted.

A new panel date should be set to allow the information to be sought, but also to prevent drift and delay.

Where a deferment of panel's recommendation for a foster carer's annual review has occurred due to concerns or the incompleteness of action points recommended by the FIRO in the previous review meeting, the recommendation deferment should be communicated to the fostering team manager and allocated FIRO by the panel advisor following panel.

Depending on the issues identified by panel, a decision should be made by the team manager in consultation with the FIRO as to whether an Early Review meeting should be held. This may be appropriate, for example where concerns have arisen in the intervening period between the review meeting and the carer(s) attending panel.

If an Early Review meeting is agreed, a date for the Early Review meeting should be agreed with the FIRO and take place prior to the carer(s)'s return to panel.