



Children's Safeguarding and Social Work

Constitution and terms of reference for
Camden's Fostering and Permanence
Panel

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Part 1 Function and purpose of the panel

1.1 Introduction

The Fostering and Permanence Panel is an independent panel that has been set up to oversee Camden's fostering and permanence service as set out in the Children Act 1989, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Panel will ensure that when conducting business it complies with the statutes listed and meets the requirements of the following regulations in order to meet its core legal duties and required standards:

- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011
- Children Act, Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4, Fostering Services 2011
- Fostering Services: Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers 2013
- Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services(Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Independent Review of Determination (Amendments) Regulations 2011 & 2013
- The Children and Families Act 2014

The panel's role is to make decisions and recommendations on the cases that are presented. The final decision is made by Camden's agency decision maker, the Director of the Children's Safeguarding and Social Work Division or, in their absence, the Executive Director of the Supporting People Directorate.

1.2 Function and purpose of the panel

The following are the panel's overall functions and purpose:

- the approval of prospective foster carers and the terms of their approval;
- the continuation of foster carer's approval terms at the first annual foster carer review and then at intervals of 3 years or as requested by the Fostering Service;

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- the continuation of specialist foster carer's approval terms at an annual review, including remand and parent/mother and baby carers;
- the continued approval of foster carers as part of care standards procedures;
- the termination of approval of foster carers;
- the suitability of a long term fostering placement;
- the extension of Regulation 24 placements assessments from 16 weeks of commencement, for a further 8 weeks to enable completion of the assessment;
- representations made by applicants who are appealing against a decision made by the Agency Decision Maker;
- the conduct and standards of assessments carried out by the Fostering Service;
- any other issues affecting Camden's Fostering Service, or any matter referred to the Panel by the Fostering Service.

1.3 Core values

Where permanent placements are being considered:

- The panel will ensure that when making decisions regarding a child, the paramount consideration will be to promote the child's welfare until they are 18 and throughout their life.
- The panel will actively promote the placement of children in the most appropriate family setting that meets their needs.
- The panel will actively ensure that siblings are placed together with the same family, unless there are sound reasons for them to be cared for separately.
- The panel will ensure that plans and decisions regarding children are made within a timescale that is right for the individual child and at all times bear in mind that any delay in coming to the decision is likely to prejudice the child's welfare.

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- The panel will at all times promote the Council's policies on equality and valuing diversity and ensure their decision-making process is fair and transparent.
- Panel members will be aware of the implications of the various permanency options and will be prepared to consider each case on its merits without any pre-conceived ideas.

Where fostering is being considered:

- The panel will ensure that when making any recommendations, the overriding consideration will be ensuring the welfare and safety of Looked After children.
- The panel will actively promote the placement of children in the most appropriate family setting or fostering setting that meets their needs and where they can thrive
- The panel will give due consideration to the needs of the foster carers and their household, including birth children and other dependents
- The panel will give due consideration to all applications from prospective foster carers regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or religious persuasion and support the Council's policies on equality and diversity to ensure fairness and transparency

1.4 Membership

Camden aims to ensure the Panel reflects the diversity of the borough and includes representation from as wide a field as possible in terms of professional knowledge and experience of adoption and fostering.

To achieve this, Camden will hold a central list of panel members who have been recruited because they have the necessary experience and expertise to contribute effectively to the discharge of the panel functions. From this list, a core membership will be taken for each Panel meeting to ensure the Panel's duties are carried out.

This central list will include:

- The panel chair, a professional with knowledge and experience of fostering and permanence and who is independent of Camden;

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- One or two vice chairs, who can deputise for the panel chair;
- One or more social workers who have at least three years post qualifying experience with some direct experience of fostering and permanence. This could be working with foster carers or with a child placed in foster care. The social worker does not need to be employed by Camden;
- Camden's medical advisor;

The central list may also include:

- An elected member of Camden Council who is also a member of the Corporate Parenting Group or has some responsibility for children's services;
- Other panel members, some of whom will be independent. These members should between them reflect the experience of education, kinship care, fostering, short break carers and therapeutic services.

The panel also has an agency adviser who is a non-voting member and takes no active part in decision-making. Where necessary, the chair may request specialist advice from other professionals where this is necessary to ensure the panel can make informed recommendations.

The Fostering and Permanence Services will endeavour to ensure that panel membership is gender-balanced and reflects the ethnic and cultural composition of Camden as much as possible, using active recruitment from under-represented groups where necessary.

1.5 Appointment

Panel members are appointed for no specific term but panel member turnover will be reviewed regularly through the appraisal process. Panel member turnover will also be managed to take account of the need to maintain some level of consistency and ensure that new perspectives can be brought to the panel.

A person cannot serve on the panel as an independent member if they are:

- a Camden foster carer
- employed in Camden's Fostering or Permanence Service

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- concerned in the management of Camden's Fostering or Permanence Service
- an elected member of Camden Council.

Relatives of any of the above will be considered on an individual basis. All appointments to the panel are subject to enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and the taking up of references. No panel member may sit on the panel until all checks and references have proved satisfactory.

Panel members will be disqualified from serving on the panel if they have any convictions or cautions for offences against children, or any violent offences. Serving panel members who are cautioned or convicted of any of these offences must notify the panel chair immediately.

The panel chair will be independent of Camden and will demonstrate the following:

- a sound understanding of permanence and fostering processes
- authority and competence to chair the panel
- ability to analyse and explain complex information
- ability to identify key issues, problems and solutions
- good interpersonal and communication skills.

All panel members should sign a written agreement which sets out expectations for performance; this agreement will form the basis of their annual performance review.

1.6 Recruitment

Panel members are recruited jointly by the agency adviser and the panel chair. The panel chair is recruited by the Director of CSSW and the LAC Head of Service.

When considering panel member recruitment, there must be consideration given to the existing panel membership in terms of race and gender to ensure that panel membership reflects the diversity of the children and foster carers whose cases are presented to it.

Appointment to the panel may only be confirmed following a successful interview and subject to satisfactory references DBS checks.

1.7 Conduct of panel members

Attendance

There is no limit to the number of panel meetings panel members can attend and the Fostering and Permanence Service, in consultation with the Panel Chair as appropriate, will decide which panel members will be invited to any panel meeting. This will ensure there is a robust mix of expertise for the intended business of any panel meeting. This will also be subject to the considerations around Panel quoracy.

Panel Attendance is monitored by the panel co-ordinator and will be considered at each panel member's annual appraisal.

Confidentiality

All information given to Panel members during the course of their duties is strictly confidential and must not be shared with anyone except other panel members. All new panel members should sign a confidentiality agreement before they may observe their first panel meeting.

Panel documents are uploaded to a shared drive and panel members must log on to access the papers. The shared drive is facilitated and monitored by the Panel co-ordinator. Panel members will be trained to ensure they understand how to use the system and comply with the IT security requirement.

Any breach of confidentiality by a panel member should be taken up by the Panel Chair, who may consider termination of the panel member's appointment.

1.8 Statement of interest

On occasions, a panel member may have some knowledge, either in a personal or professional capacity, of a case under consideration. In these circumstances, the member should declare an interest by informing the Chair of the panel prior to the case being discussed. This should be done at the earliest opportunity to ensure that panel is quorate.

Depending on the circumstances, the chair will decide whether the panel member should be present for the item and whether they should take part in any discussion or decision making. Personal knowledge of cases declared to the chair will normally mean that a panel member will not take part and should

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withdraw from the room. A record of the declaration and action by the chair should be noted in the minutes.

Both the legal adviser and the agency adviser are likely to have knowledge of the cases being presented, but as neither is a voting member of the panel, and will not take part in reaching a recommendation, no declaration of professional interest is required.

1.9 Induction and training

Induction and training for panel members should be provided in accordance with the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, and is the overall responsibility of the agency adviser.

Induction

All new panel members should have undertaken and completed induction training within 10 weeks of becoming a panel member.

As part of their induction training, new panel members should receive the following:

- an information pack about adoption, including a copy of “Effective Panels” Book by (BAAF)
- the opportunity of observing a panel meeting
- an opportunity to meet with senior staff in the Division responsible for the placement of children.

Panel members should receive regular training and written information on the relevant legal framework, current good practice and available research to assist their decision making about permanent placements.

Training

The following training should be provided for all panel members:

- an annual joint training day with Camden’s Fostering and Permanence teams
- training in the basic principles of the law relating to fostering and permanence

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- updates on relevant changes to legislation, regulations and guidance in respect of fostering
- any other appropriate training and skills development relevant to the work of the panel.

1.10 Preparation for hearings

Reports that are to be presented to the panel are made available electronically by the panel co-ordinator 7 days in advance of the Panel meeting. Panel members are required to read all reports and make notes on any issues, strengths, concerns and other points, to be raised for discussion at the hearing. Reports that are submitted late should be made available to panel members on the Wednesday preceding the Thursday panel meeting.

1.11 Performance monitoring

All panel members, including the chair, should be monitored and their performance reviewed as part of a professional appraisal process. The panel chair should appraise the performance of panel members on a regular basis and a formal appraisal should be held annually. Concerns about the performance of panel members should be raised with them by the Panel chair/LAC Head of Service during these appraisals, unless the matter is considered serious and requiring immediate action, in which case it will be raised as soon as possible.

The panel chair's performance will be appraised annually by the Director. Panel members, staff fostering and permanence teams as well as other panel attendees will be invited to contribute.

The performance monitoring of these appraisals for the chair and panel members should be set against performance objectives that have been discussed and agreed by the panel chair and the agency adviser.

1.12 Resignation and termination

Panel members must give at least one month's written notice of resignation to the panel chair and the agency adviser. Panel members are asked not to announce their intention to resign to others until their formal written notice has been given.

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Notices of resignation can be withdrawn before the 1 month notice period has expired if the panel chair and the agency adviser agree to this. However, withdrawal of a notice of resignation will not be accepted where it is believed the panel member has resigned due to disagreements arising from specific panel decisions.

Panel members who do not abide by the rules of conduct set out in this policy, or whose performance does not meet the required standard, may have their appointment terminated.

Any issues regarding a panel member's conduct or performance should be raised with them during performance appraisals with the panel chair and the panel adviser and the LAC Head of Service where appropriate, and they should be notified in writing of any action that should be taken to improve conduct or performance.

In the event that concerns are not adequately addressed, the panel chair and the agency adviser and the LAC Head of Service where appropriate, should meet to consider what further action should be taken, including terminating the panel member's appointment.

The agency adviser or LAC Head of Service should send a written notice of termination to the panel member, giving clear reasons why the appointment is being terminated and allowing the panel member 10 working days in which to make representations.

When 10 working days has lapsed, the agency adviser will consider any representations from the panel member. Where representations have been received these will be fully discussed with the LAC Head of Service, following which a final decision will be made.

The Panel Chair is expected to give 3 months notice of resignation to the Agency Advisor and the Director.

1.13 Allowances

Members who are not employed by Camden are entitled to claim an allowance for attendance at panel meetings. This is to cover expenses for travel, mileage, parking fees and child care costs. Panel members should refer to the panel agreement for full details.

Part 2 Role of the panel

2.1 Role of the panel regarding permanence

2.1.1 Long term foster care

The panel should consider all arrangements for the long term foster care of children including:

- Deciding whether a long term placement with foster carers or the current family and friends carer is in the best interests of a child.
- Approving people who wish to become long-term foster carers.
- Approving the long term placement of a particular child with particular long term foster carers.
- Approving a child's current family and friends carer as their long-term foster carer.
- Providing advice on the level of autonomy to be delegated to the foster carer in terms of making day to day decisions for the child's care.

In all cases, the panel will consider arrangements for the child to have contact with their birth family or other significant people in their lives and the support services that will be required by the prospective carers.

2.1.2 Support packages

The panel should consider any assistance that may be required so that long term carers can be supported to provide stable and permanent homes for the child placed with them. Support may include:

- financial assistance;
- support for contact arrangements between children and their birth relatives or with other people with whom they share significant relationship;
- therapeutic services;
- services to ensure the success of the placement e.g. respite care, special training or equipment to meet the special needs of the child..

2.1.3 Disruptions

Following the breakdown of any long term foster placement, social workers are responsible for convening a placement disruption meeting to consider what contributed to the breakdown, and make further plans for the child.

2.2 Fostering

2.2.1 Approval of foster carers

The panel's role is to consider all information provided and make a recommendation on the suitability of applicants and their household to foster for Camden. As part of their recommendations, the panel should ensure that the assessment process, including preparatory training and the taking out of references and relevant checks, has been completed satisfactorily.

The panel must be satisfied that prospective foster carers either meet or have demonstrated an ability to meet core fostering competencies, and that this is clearly evidenced in the assessment. The panel must also take into consideration the National Minimum Standards and the Training, Support and Development Standards and should make recommendations regarding the foster carer's terms of approval.

2.2.2 Review of foster carers

The panel should carry out the foster carer's first annual review and every subsequent third review, or as requested by the Fostering Service where:

- re-approval/recommendation is a consideration
- there are concerns about care standards
- there have been significant changes in the household, including criminal convictions.

The role of the panel is to make recommendations as to whether:

- the foster carer and their household remain suitable for the purposes of safeguarding Looked After Children
- the foster carer continues to meet fostering competencies and provide high standards of care

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- the foster carer continues to meet the National Minimum Standards and the requirements expected of Camden
- the terms of the foster carer's approval remain appropriate, and make recommendations on any new terms where necessary.

The panel should also ensure that the review process has been carried out in accordance with the Fostering Service policy and that relevant stakeholders have been consulted and their views included and considered.

2.2.3 Exemptions

All exemptions to a foster carer's terms of approval that have been agreed by the Fostering Service Manager and the Service manager for Care Provision must be presented to the panel within 6 weeks for consideration so that they are able to scrutinise the decision and make recommendations on the continuation of the exemption.

It is an expectation that the supervising social worker attends the panel to explain the circumstances in which the exemption was agreed and to put forward the case for its continuation.

2.2.4 Terminations of Approval

It is important that Camden's register of foster carers is kept as up to date as possible, and that terminations of approval are formally dealt with via the panel. This will help the panel to monitor care and service standards and plan for service provision.

Where a foster carer notifies the Fostering service that they intend to resign, the panel must confirm their termination and make a note of the reasons for this as part of their quality assurance role.

As part of the service commitment to good practice, exit interviews will be conducted by the Fostering Service for all foster carers leaving Camden and this information will be periodically shared with the Panel to ensure continuous learning and development.

Foster carers who wish to take a career break should discuss this with their supervising social worker and decide whether or not they should be de-registered in the meantime; normally, career breaks lasting more than 12 months will require de-registration and re-assessment.

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Where the Fostering service decides to terminate a carer's registration because it is felt that the carer and/or their household are no longer suitable, an assessment must be completed in the same way as would an annual foster carer review and this should be presented to the panel. The panel will formally make a recommendation which will then be presented to the Agency Decision Maker.

If the Agency Decision Maker decides that a foster carer's approval or application is to be terminated, they will be given a qualifying determination. This will be conveyed in a formal letter which will also explain the rights they would have to appeal or make representation.

2.2.5 Appeals and written representations

Any applicant or foster carer who wishes to appeal against the qualifying determination, will need to contact the Agency Decision Maker within 28 days of the receipt of the formal letter.

The applicant or foster carer may request a representation to the Secretary of State for a review of the qualifying determination by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) to reconsider the qualifying determination or they may wish to be re-heard by the panel again. They cannot do both.

2.2.6 Family and friends care arrangements

The Fostering Panel may extend a Regulation 24 care arrangement for 8 weeks beyond the statutory 16 weeks duration if the fostering assessment has not been completed or the Regulation 24 carer wishes to appeal a decision not to approve them as a Camden foster carer. The panel should consider all Regulation 24 assessments **before** the 16 weeks has expired.

The panel must utilise and exercise a range of skills and knowledge when considering family and friends care assessments to ensure ultimately recommendations made are in the best interest of the child, taking due notice of the relationship between the carer and the child particularly in the light of other factors which otherwise may not fully comply with regulations and standards as listed in A1 above.

2.3 Consultative Role

The specialist nature of the work of the panel means that panel members develop considerable knowledge and expertise. Additionally, the composition of the panel means that they can provide a very particular perspective and understanding to the consideration of such issues. From time to time, Camden will use this expertise to seek consultation on panel matters. This may be in relation to general issues or specific cases.

2.4 Quality Assurance

The panel plays an active role in maintaining the quality and standards in relation to long and short term fostering. The panel chair should report to the agency decision maker through the agency adviser on any cases involving poor practice, so that these can be addressed through the line management system.

Good practice and consistency of approach and fairness by panel members should be promoted through:

- training
- legal advice
- professional advice and guidance from the agency adviser
- regular discussions between the panel chair and the agency decision maker.

2.5 Role of the panel chair

The panel chair is responsible for:

- ensuring that panel meetings are conducted in a professional and proper manner and that all items of business are covered;
- co-ordinating panel discussions and time –keeping;
- ensuring all applicants, social workers and managers attending panel are treated with respect and courtesy;
- ensuring all panel members participate fully in the meetings and that members are aware of their role and responsibilities and contribute to the decision making process;
- discussion with panel members where there are concerns about their behaviour or conduct in panel meetings or their ability to attend panel;

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- carrying out an annual appraisal of panel members with the agency adviser.

The Panel Chair should be consulted about urgent matters, including when an additional panel meeting may need to be convened or when action outside of a panel meeting may need to be taken.

The panel should appoint a vice chair from within the panel membership, who will act in the absence of the chair.

2.6 Role of the agency adviser

The agency adviser to the panel is responsible for:

- assisting the agency with the appointment, termination and review of panel members;
- acting as a link between Camden and the panel;
- monitoring the performance of panel members;
- general administration of the panel;
- giving advice to the panel as requested, either on specific cases or in general;
- providing the panel with information and figures on a range of matters including recruitment of foster carers, children in foster care and family and friends placements, placement disruptions and training and support matters;
- overseeing the training and induction of panel members.

The agency adviser must attend every panel hearing in an advisory capacity and contribute to panel meetings by raising issues and providing advice on such matters as Camden's policy and procedure on fostering and permanence. However, they will not take part in reaching any recommendations.

The agency adviser should also oversee the quality of reports that are submitted to panel and where there are concerns about reports, **the adviser should, in consultation with the panel chair, decide whether the report is adequate for submission.**

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The agency adviser is responsible for seeking the views of all applicants and social workers presenting to the panel through the use of feedback forms which will be used to monitor practice and ensure a high quality of service delivery.

The agency adviser also has a role in monitoring the quality of social work practice and assessments and taking up issues with the respective managers.

2.7 Role of Medical Adviser

The medical adviser should be consulted and provide reports or guidance on a number of issues including:

- a summary health report on the child's health for the child's permanence report
- a summary on the health of prospective foster carers and renewed reports for foster carers at agreed intervals.

The medical advisor is responsible for informing the panel of any contra-indications which would either need to be heeded or which may render an applicant/existing carer unsuitable to foster.

2.8 Role of Legal Adviser

The legal adviser is not a member of the panel and will not take part in reaching a recommendation.

The legal adviser is responsible for:

- giving specific legal advice to members on each individual case presented to panel
- giving general advice to panel members on the legal functions and duties of the panel.

2.9 The Agency Decision Maker

There is a clear distinction between the function of the chair of the panel and the Agency Decision Maker in terms of responsibility. No member of the panel may take part in any decisions on behalf of the Division by the Agency Decision Maker that relates to any matter that has been considered by the panel.

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Where the agency decision maker is not minded to accept the recommendation of the panel, they should consult with another senior manager who is not a member of the panel and record the discussion on the relevant file, in accordance with regulations and guidance.

2.10 Observers

Occasionally, there may be an observer attending the panel to learn about its work. The panel chair must give permission for an observer to attend a panel in advance of the meeting.

Observers should give a written undertaking that they will keep all information confidential and will not disclose information outside of the panel.

2.11 Specialist advisers

There may be occasions when it is necessary to seek specialist advice or consultation. In these instances the chair person of the panel will work with the panel advisor to identify and invite the relevant specialist advisor or consultant to attend panel.

Part 3 Conduct of panel meetings

3.1. Cases to be presented to panel

Permanence

The following cases should be presented to the panel:

- children for whom permanent fostering is the permanence plan for the child;
- approval of long term foster carers;
- permanent fostering matches;
- rescinding any decision made about a child's permanence plan;

Fostering

The following cases should be presented to the panel:

- approval of prospective foster carers and the terms of their approval
- annual reviews of specialist foster carers and three yearly review of mainstream foster carers
- extensions of time for the assessment of family and friends carers under Regulation 24
- approval of temporarily approved Regulation 24 carers
- any written representations made by applicants who are appealing against an earlier recommendation by the Panel
- de-registrations and terminations of a foster carer's approval
- exemptions and changes to a foster carer's terms of approval
- cases where there have been care standards and child protection proceedings.

3.2. Frequency of panel meetings

The panel meets once a month. The panel co-ordinator should distribute a list each July giving details of dates and venues of all panel hearings for the coming year.

3.3. Applications to panel

All applications to be heard by the panel must be made to the panel coordinator at least 2 weeks before the scheduled panel date. Reports can only be submitted late if the case is urgent, and must be submitted to the agency adviser, who will decide whether or not to accept the report after consultation with the chair.

When a booking has been made, the panel co-ordinator should send the practitioner a detailed confirmation e-mail stating what paperwork is to be submitted and the deadline for submission, normally 3 weeks in advance of the panel date.

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The panel co-ordinator should send an email to the practitioner four weeks in advance of the panel date, to ascertain if the application will go ahead. If the practitioner needs to cancel the application, or transfer to another panel date, the panel co-ordinator should be informed of the reason, as this information must be monitored.

Applications must be supported by the relevant documents and information. Please see Appendix 1 for details of reports and the worker responsible for providing them.

3.4. Notifications to attendees

Panel invitation letters and a leaflet explaining the role of the panel are sent out to applicants and representing social workers attending the panel a week in advance of the panel hearing when the agenda has been finalised.

3.5. The panel agenda

Once the panel co-ordinator has established whether applications are going ahead, the panel agenda is set. The agenda should have 6 cases listed, with each case allocated about one hour.

For permanence cases, priority is given in the following order:

- Approval for Regulation 24 carers including 8 week extensions
- Approval for plans of permanent fostering for children
- Permanent fostering matches
- Approval of long term foster carers.

The agenda should also contain a standing item at the beginning of every panel meeting to enable panel members to declare any interest in any case that is to be considered, and for the chair to decide whether the panel member should withdraw from discussion on that particular case.

3.6. Inquorate meetings

Panel meetings should be considered inquorate and should not go ahead, unless at least 5 members are present, which must include the chair or vice chair, 1 social worker and three other members.

If the chair is not present and the vice chair is not independent, then at least one other panel member must be independent. For Fostering recommendations 2 independent members are required to be present.

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Where it appears that a planned panel meeting is likely to be inquorate, the panel co-ordinator should inform the agency adviser and the chair, and a decision made as to whether or not the hearing should go ahead.

Where a panel hearing does not go ahead because it is inquorate, the panel co-ordinator should write to attendees informing them that the hearing has been cancelled, and give details of the date that the meeting will be re-scheduled for.

3.7. Emergency meetings

Exceptionally, it may be necessary for the panel to meet before the next planned meeting to deal with an urgent placement. In this case:

- The agency adviser should discuss the matter with the Chair or Vice Chair of the panel to determine whether the matter cannot wait for the next panel meeting.
- The panel co-ordinator should then assemble a quorum of 5 panel members to discuss the urgent matter and make recommendations as required.

All meetings which are called using the emergency procedures should be fully minuted and the contents discussed at the next planned meeting of the panel.

3.8. Reports for panel

It is essential that all reports to the panel are of a good standard and contain all relevant information to enable the panel to consider applications in full. Reports must be submitted within 3 weeks of the panel date, and late reports can only be accepted with the agreement of the agency adviser and the chair.

Reports must be completed by suitably qualified staff, or by staff who are supervised by a manager who has the requisite qualification.

All reports that are submitted to panel should be checked by the agency advisor, and may be returned to the social worker if they are considered to be unsatisfactory. Reports should contain a recommendation from the social work practitioner.

3.9. Brief reports

Where the Division is not minded to continue with the assessment of approval for a prospective foster carer and these applicants do not wish to withdraw their application, a brief report prepared by the assessing social worker may be submitted to the panel for consideration.

The panel should either:

- request further information;
- ask that the assessment is completed **or**;
- be satisfied that the brief report provides sufficient information to enable it to make a recommendation about suitability.

The panel cannot make a recommendation that someone is suitable on the basis of a brief report, as this recommendation may only be made on the basis of a full report.

The process of decision making and notifying the applicant is the same as for full approvals. If the decision is that Camden is not minded to continue with the assessment, the applicant may then make representations through Camden's procedures or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism.

3.10. Attendance by social work staff

Children's social work staff and staff from the respective Fostering and Permanence teams, together with their manager or supervisor, should attend any hearings where they are involved in an application to panel. This is to provide the panel with clarification of information contained in their report, and to support applicants during the hearing.

3.11. Discussion and recommendation

The panel should discuss each application listed in the panel agenda and make a final recommendation. Where there is a disagreement between panel members, the chair should decide whether further information is required to make a recommendation or whether a majority decision should be sought. The minutes should clearly reflect any dissensions and a note made of any case where the chair used their casting vote.

3.12. Panel recommendations

Each application for which the panel makes a recommendation should be written up as a decision sheet by the panel co-ordinator. The panel co-ordinator is also responsible for preparing letters of notification which should be signed by the agency decision maker.

The panel co-ordinator should pass all documents, including the panel minutes, to the agency decision maker as soon as possible but not later than 7 working days. The panel co-ordinator/panel advisor will be responsible for any follow up notifications or other matters following panel.

3.13. Panel minutes

Panel minutes for each application heard should record the following points;

- reports received
- who attended and for which part of the discussion
- medical advice
- legal advice where appropriate
- the main points of the panel's discussion
- panel's recommendations, the reasons for this and any dissensions
- any advice given by the chair.

If the panel is unable to reach an agreement regarding a particular application, this should be recorded in the minutes, and the reasons for this noted.

The panel co-ordinator is responsible for writing up panel minutes. The minutes should be approved by the panel chair and sent to the agency decision maker within 7 working days of the panel meeting so that the agency decision maker will meet the timescales for making the decision as set out in the relevant procedures.

Minutes relating to individual cases should be kept on the relevant case file, and the panel co-ordinator should also keep a central record of all panel minutes.

3.14. Timescales

The panel

Camden should ensure that sufficient panels are arranged to avoid any unnecessary delays to the business of the fostering, adoption and permanence teams.

The panel should receive all necessary reports and information no later than 6 weeks from the completion of the assessment report.

The child and birth parents should be informed of the panel's recommendation by the child's social worker, and prospective adopters by the APT social worker, within 24 hours.

The Agency Decision Maker

The agency decision maker should make a decision on all panel recommendations as soon as getting the final set of minutes and recommendations but not later than 7 working days.

Decisions should be conveyed both orally and in writing to the applicants (by the social worker) and the child and the birth parents (by the child's social worker) within 48 hours, and confirmed in writing within 5 working days.

3.16 Appeals

Applicants who wish to challenge a decision about their approval should be informed of the appeals procedure by the social worker and the information about the appeals procedure should also be included in the agency decision maker's letter informing the applicant of their decision.

Applicants may submit representations directly to the agency decision maker within 28 working days (for fostering decisions) of the date of notice of the agency decision maker's decision giving notice of their intention to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism **or** of their wish to appeal once more to the Panel.

Applicants can decide which representation procedure to choose but only one method can be pursued. Applicants have no right of referral to the Independent Review Mechanism if they wish to challenge a decision about a match.

Procedures for the Fostering and Permanence Panel

The agency decision maker should formally acknowledge all correspondence within 3 days and inform the applicant of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 14 working days.

3.17 Complaints

All complaints should be made to through Camden's complaints system.

This document was reviewed and approved by the Agency Decision Maker in August 2020.

Appendix 1 Presentation of cases to the Adoption and Permanence Panel

PRESENTATION	PAPERWORK	TO ATTEND
Approval of children's permanence plan for long term fostering, kinship fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FormE(Fostering) • Genogram/eco-map • Medical Reports – • School report • Carers report • Assessment of needs form • Sibling checklist • Expert assessments- agreed summaries and conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's social worker or manager
Approval of prospective long term foster carers/kinship foster carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form F • ECO map • Genograms • References – written and interviews • Financial statement • 2nd opinion report • Preparation Group write up. • Employment references • References from ex-partner, school, health visitor (children in placement) • Any child care observations • Checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanence Team/Fostering social workers • applicants
Matching of child/ren to adopters, long term foster carers/kinship foster carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • /Matching report (LTF) • Previous panel minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's social worker or manager

Procedures for the Fostering and Permanence Panel

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated child's paperwork (see 1st section) • Updated LTF carers paperwork (see 2nd section) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanence Team/Fostering social workers (including family finder) • Independent agency social workers where applicable.
Review of prospective LTF carers	Annual Review Form	Permanence and Fostering Team social worker and manager/supervisor
Termination of approval	Termination of approval report	Permanence and Fostering Team social worker and manager/supervisor

Attendance of applicants

It is the London Borough of Camden's policy that all applicants who wish to become long term carers will be invited to attend the panel when their case is being discussed at approval.

All applicants will be encouraged to attend the meeting so that they are involved as much as possible but this is not compulsory. If they feel unable to attend, this will not affect the panel's recommendation. The main source of information for panel members is the BAAF Form E and this will be the main factor when reaching a recommendation.

Changes to policy and procedures

With the agreement of the Panel and Camden, the policy and procedural instructions for the Fostering and Permanence Panel can be reviewed and changed at any time as long as these changes fall within the Fostering Regulations 2013 and any subsequent legislation.

Annual Report

The panel chair will produce an annual report in April of each year. This report will record the work of the Fostering and Permanence Panel for the year. This report will be presented to the panel and will be incorporated into the Fostering Service and the Permanence Service's annual report that is presented to the elected members.