

# adoption, fostering and permanence Panel



**information for applicants  
attending the panel**



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## Introduction

This information booklet will guide you through the process of attending Camden's Adoption, Fostering and Permanence Panel when you apply to become approved as a foster carer or when your annual review is being presented to the panel.

It will help you understand the role of the panel and explain who the panel members are and how they make recommendations about your case. The information will also help you prepare for the panel and to be clear about what to expect.

## The panel

Under government legislation, every local authority's service must have a fostering panel to look at applications to become a foster carer and whether current foster carers remain suitable to foster. Panels ensure safe and effective care for those children and young people who need to live away from home. They do this by making sure those caring for them have been fully assessed by the fostering service and are suitable to be foster carers.

## Panel members

To ensure the highest standards of practice, local authorities are required to keep a central list of panel members who have the experience and expertise needed to carry out the Panel's functions effectively.

The panel central list must include:

- the panel chair, a professional with knowledge and experience of fostering and who is independent of Camden
- one or two vice chairs who can deputise for the panel chair
- one or more social workers who have been qualified for more than 3 years and who have some experience of working in fostering services.

The central list can also include:

- an elected member of ~Camden Council who is also responsible for children's services

- other panel members, some of whom will be independent of Camden, with experience of education, family and friends care, short break respite care and therapeutic services.

The panel has an agency adviser who is a non-voting member and takes no active part in decision-making but lets panel members know about local and national trends and advises on specific cases. The panel also has a panel administrator who takes minutes.

The panel has access to medical and legal advice and where necessary, the chair may request specialist advice from other professionals to ensure the panel can make informed recommendations.

## Role of the panel

The role of the panel is to:

1. Consider all applications from people applying to become foster carers and make recommendations to the local authority as to whether or not the applicant should be approved. Panel can also recommend certain conditions for approval, such as the ages or numbers of children and young people the carer can look after.
2. Review the approval of foster carers and make recommendations to the local authority as to whether or not that person should remain a foster carer. Reviews of foster carers are generally carried out yearly, but the fostering service may ask for a review at any time. In general, a foster carer's first annual review is presented to the panel and after that it is presented every 3 years.

Annual reviews can also be presented to the panel if there is a change in the foster carers terms of approval or there are child protection issues or an allegation has been made against them.

3. Advise the fostering service on the procedures for reviewing foster carers and monitor this to check that the procedures are effective.
4. Oversee the conduct of the assessment process offered by the fostering service.
5. Advise the fostering service on any other matter that the service may refer to the panel.

The panel can only make recommendations. It is the agency decision-maker (in Camden, the assistant director) who makes a formal decision on approval of foster carers (known as the qualifying determination).

## Preparing for the panel

To present your case to the panel when your approval as a foster carer is being considered, your social worker will have carried out an assessment and prepared a report (called a BAAF Form F). They will discuss their recommendations and the contents of the Form F report with you so that any inaccuracies can be corrected. You will be asked to sign the final report and, if you wish, provide written comments for the panel to consider. When your case is being presented to Panel for your annual review, the social worker will complete an annual review report. For this, the views of other professionals, young people you care for and your own family will be sought and included in the report.

Once a panel date has been agreed, you should receive this information leaflet and will have an opportunity to ask your social worker any questions about the process. If you can attend the panel, you may want to prepare your own statement for the panel with the support of your social worker.

## Attending the panel

Panel meetings are held twice a month at the Town Hall, Judd Street, WC1. You will be sent an invitation to attend approximately two weeks before the panel date, giving you details of what time to arrive.

Your social worker will meet you and give you details about the members of the panel. Information about the members will be made available for you so that you will know a bit about each of them. Although every effort is made to keep to time, sometimes panel discussions run late so there may be other people waiting.

Panel members will have had an opportunity to read your social worker's report before the Panel meeting. The panel chair will ask members for comments on the reports and will draw up a list of issues to discuss. The chair will decide with panel members whether the social worker needs to be invited in alone to the meeting to clarify any issues before you come in.

When it is time for you to attend,

the panel chair will meet with you and your social worker outside of the meeting, where they will explain how the meeting will proceed and the areas the panel will discuss.

The chair will then bring you into the meeting and the panel members will introduce themselves. Members will also have name plaques so you can easily identify them.

The chair and other panel members will then ask you and your supervising social worker to clarify issues which they have identified from the reports.

You will then be asked to leave while the panel considers their recommendations. After this, the chair of the panel will invite you back into the Panel meeting to hear the outcome. The Panel chair will discuss the reasons for the recommendations and may recommend actions for you or the fostering service to carry out. The whole panel process normally lasts about an hour.

## Panel recommendations

After the panel meeting, the panel recommendation is passed on to the agency decision-maker, who makes the final decision about your approval once they have received the agreed minutes of the panel meeting. You will be told of this decision on the day and will receive written confirmation within 5 days.

If you do not attend the panel for any reason, your social worker should advise you of the Panel's recommendation within 24 hours.

If your approval as a foster carer or continued approval to foster is not recommended or if you do not agree with the terms of approval, you have 2 options:

- You may write to the fostering service within 28 days of the date of the decision by the agency decision-maker (qualifying determination) giving reasons or further information about why you feel your application should be approved. This will mean that your case will be referred back to the next Panel meeting for further consideration.

- You may apply to the Independent Review Mechanism for a review within 28 days of the date of the decision of the agency decision-maker.

If within 28 days you do not make any representations the fostering service will proceed to the final decision. If you undertake any of the above the final decision will be made once the chosen process has been completed.

To ask the council for reconsideration of your application, write to:

The Assistant Director  
Family Services and Social Work  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
Judd Street  
London WC1H 9JE.

To apply for an independent review, write to:

Independent Review Mechanism  
Unit 4  
Pavilion Business Park  
Royds Hall Road  
Wortley, Leeds LS12 6AJ  
Tel: 0870 034 6420  
Fax: 0870 034 6421  
email: irm@baaf.org.uk

## Comments and complaints

Camden Children, Schools and Families want to provide the best possible service. If a foster carer or someone using or planning to use our service is unhappy with any aspect of our service or a decision we make, they can make a complaint. Most people don't like to complain, but sometimes things do go wrong or you may feel that there is a better way of doing them. If you tell us about it, we can try to put things right.

It is the responsibility of the staff or their managers based in the fostering team to try to put right any concerns that you may have.

We have a foster carers' complaints procedure to manage those times when a foster parent is not happy with the service given to them by Camden.

If the complaint relates to services provided to a child or young person, then the Children Act complaints procedure must be followed.

The child or young person involved in the complaint will then be entitled to an advocate to support and represent them in the process.

You can get advice on making a complaint from the complaints and representations team in the Children, Schools and Families Directorate. You can contact the team on freephone 0800 393 561. Alternatively you can fax 020 7974 1439.

If you prefer, you can write to:  
The Complaints Unit  
Information and records management team  
FREEPOST RSLT-RJBR-TXAA  
Town Hall  
Judd Street  
London WC1H 9JE

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days. You should get a full response within 21 days.

For more details about how to complain, please ask for our complaints and suggestions leaflet by telephoning 020 7974 6673.





If you would like this Adoption, Fostering and Permanence Panel leaflet in large print, Braille, on audiotape or in another language, please phone 020 7974 6165/6224.

**Camden Fostering Service**  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
Judd Street  
London WC1H 9JE  
Telephone 020 7974 6783  
Email [fostering@camden.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@camden.gov.uk)  
Freephone 0800 028 1436  
[www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk)

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Pour obtenir la brochure Fostering Panel (comité de placement en famille d'accueil) en gros caractères, en braille, sur support audio ou dans votre langue, veuillez contacter le 020 7974 6165/6224

Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd in aad heshid waraaqaha Guddiga qaabilsan Korsashada Ilmaha oo ku qoran far waaweyn, farta dadka indhaha la' ee braille, isagoo cod ah oo cajalad ku duuban ama ku tarjuman afka aad ku hadashid, fadlan soo wac teleefoonkan 020 7974 6165/6224

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