



Job Description and Person Specification for Fostering Panel Vice Chair

Bradford Children and Families Trust are seeking to appoint an Independent Fostering Panel Vice Chair to sit on our Fostering Panels.

Fostering Panel make recommendations on who is suitable to care for vulnerable children, ensuring that the children in our care are placed in the best homes possible. We hold four face-to-face panels each Thursday in Bradford City centre and are seeking to appoint a Vice Chair for two of our Fostering Panels.

The Vice Chair must be committed to supporting our aim to provide high quality foster care and achieving the best possible outcomes for our children. Due to current under-representation on our panels, we would particularly welcome applications if you are from a Global Majority background.

We would also particularly welcome applications from people with:

- Personal experience of being a Kinship Carer or Special Guardian (this cannot be with Bradford)
- Personal experience of having been a looked after child

In addition to sitting as an active panel member as Vice Chair it is also expected that you will Chair some cases presented to Fostering Panel and step in for the Chair when required. The expectation is that the vice chair commits to a minimum of eight panels per year.

To support you with your new responsibilities we will provide you with the opportunity to attend training relevant to the role, as well as providing an annual training day with continuous access to online learning.

Job description

As a Vice Chair, your main responsibilities in this role will be:

- Facilitate the post panel discussion regarding the quality of paperwork presented for each case to feedback to the wider service.
- Chair cases to be heard at panel, in discussion with the Panel Chair prior to the meeting, and step in for the Panel Chair when required.
- Ensure that the Panel operates in accordance with Fostering Regulations and the policies and procedures of the agency.

- Preparation for Panel meetings, reading Panel papers carefully, identifying key issues and alerting the Panel Advisor and Panel Chair if necessary to ensure, as far as possible, that the case is adequate for submission to Panel.
- To ensure that all those attending Panel are treated with respect and courtesy, promoting anti-discriminatory practice at all times.
- To ensure that any issues of concern, in relation both to individual cases and to more general matters, are shared with the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor.
- To support panel to identify key issues and to reach robust and well evidenced recommendations regarding the approval of foster carers or their ongoing registration.
- Regular liaison with the Panel Advisor, Chair of Panel, decision-maker and with other senior managers as required.
- To safeguard the confidentiality of all panel papers and panel discussions.

Person Specification

Experience and qualifications

- Experience of either professional, personally or both, of the placement of children in foster families and of children being cared for away from their birth family
- Experience of chairing complex meetings

Knowledge

- An appreciation of the effect of separation and loss on children
- Awareness of the richness of different kinds of families and their potential for meeting children's needs.
- An understanding of the purpose and function of the panel and of the agency which the panel is serving.
- An understanding of the fostering process and of the legislative framework for the work of the panel, or the capacity to develop this knowledge quickly.

Abilities

- The authority and competence to chair a panel, ensuring that the business is covered and that the panel operates in accordance with Regulations, Guidance and the policies and procedures of the agency.
- Excellent interpersonal and listening skills
- The ability to communicate well and clearly both verbally and in writing.
- The ability to process and analyse large amounts of complex and sometimes distressing information.
- The ability to identify key issues and possible solutions and to communicate these clearly.
- The ability to facilitate the active participation of all panel members in contributing to the panel's consideration of cases and recommendations.
- The ability to ensure that those attending panel are communicated with respectfully while also ensuring that panel members are able to explore any concerns they may have openly and honestly.

- The ability to manage the expression of strongly held but possibly conflicting views by panel members and to help the panel to reach a recommendation which takes account of all these views.
- The ability to take up issues as required with the agency, liaising with the decision maker and other senior managers.

Attitudes and values

- A commitment to keeping children within their own family or community where this is possible and to maintaining contact between children living in adoptive families and their birth families where this appears to be in the child's best interests.
- A commitment to fostering as a way of meeting a child's need for permanence, where this appears to be in the child's best interests.
- A valuing of diversity in relation to issues of ethnicity, religion, gender, disability and sexuality.
- An understanding of, and a commitment to, the need for confidentiality.
- A willingness to increase knowledge and understanding of issues through reading, discussion and training.
- A willingness to contribute constructively to the annual review of their role as panel Vice Chair.