Job description and Person specification for Independent Vice Chair of Suffolk Fostering Panel

Job description

Purpose:

The Independent Fostering Panel Vice Chair will be required to lead Panel meetings when the Chair is unavailable. When not acting as Chair, the Vice Chair is invited to sit as an independent Panel member, contributing to robust scrutiny and balanced decision-making.

Main Duties:

In the absence of the Fostering Panel Chair, to chair meetings of the Fostering Panel which meet on a weekly basis. **When chairing**:

1. To ensure that all items of business are covered and that Panel operates in accordance with Fostering Regulations 2011, National Minimum Standards and other statutory guidance, as well as the policies and procedures of the Fostering Service.
2. To ensure that the panel addresses all relevant procedural and practice issues in relation to the main categories of items brought before the panel namely whether applicants are suitable foster carers, including kinship carers; and whether approved foster carers continue to be suitable.
3. To safeguard the confidentiality of all panel papers and panel discussions.
4. To prepare for panel meetings, to read all panel papers carefully and critically, identifying key issues and alerting the panel adviser as necessary to ensure, as far as possible, the case is suitable for panel hearing.
5. To respond to requests from the panel adviser for case consultation and/or decisions on such matters as may arise including conflicts of interest and observers attending.
6. To facilitate the active participation of all panel members in contributing to the panel's consideration of cases and to the making of clear and well-evidenced recommendations with the reasons for these.
7. To ensure that all those attending panel are treated with respect and courtesy; and address diversity issues and promote anti-discriminatory practice at all times.
8. To ensure that clear and accurate minutes are written, which record any serious reservations which panel members may have, and to be involved in checking and agreeing draft minutes with other panel members before they are sent to the agency decision maker (ADM).
9. To facilitate Panel in their role of monitoring the quality of work presented to them.

This job description sets out the major duties associated with the stated purpose of the post. It is assumed that other duties of a similar level/nature undertaken within the context of the Suffolk Fostering Panel are not excluded simply because they are not itemised. The duties of the post could vary from time to time as a result of new legislation, changes in technology or policy changes and in that case appropriate training may be given to enable the post holder to undertake this new/varied work.

Accountability
To the Independent Fostering Panel Chair and on a day-to-day basis to the Professional Adviser (Fostering) who is also the Panel Adviser.

Person specification

Skills

	Essential
1	Authority, expertise and competence to chair a panel, command respect of participants and ensuring all requirements of the agenda are met.
2	Excellent interpersonal and listening skills and ability to communicate effectively with a wide variety of people, from different backgrounds and in different roles.
3	Ability to assist Panel in the effective use of time
4	High level of oral and written communication skills
5	Able to facilitate discussion and encourage active participation of those attending panel (members and invitees) and ensure a collaborative and democratic approach is used.
6	Well-developed ability to analyse and summarise issues clearly and succinctly
7	Ability to recognise and solve problems.
8	Ability to manage the expression of strongly held but possibly conflicting views by panel members and to help panel to reach a recommendation which takes account of all these views.
9	Ability to stand back from one's own viewpoint in order to ensure the effectiveness of the Panel as a whole in making recommendations.
10	Ability to work closely with the panel adviser, when required, to ensure the smooth running of panel as a whole; within and outside of panel meetings

Experience

	Essential
11	Experience of chairing complex meetings including Panel style meetings, dealing with a significant amount of information, which may have an emotional impact on participants.
12	Experience, professionally or personally or both, of the placement of children in foster families and of children cared for away from their birth family.
13	Experience of fostering and/or kinship practice.

Knowledge

	Essential
14	Good working knowledge of fostering processes and practice as well as the legislative framework for the work of Panel including Fostering Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering etc.
15	A thorough understanding of the purpose and function of the fostering panel and of the services which the panel is serving.

16	An understanding of child development and appreciation of the effect of separation and loss on children and young people.
17	An awareness of the richness of different kinds of families and their potential for meeting children's needs.
18	Well-developed knowledge of the roles of the various professionals and agencies in promoting the safety and welfare of children

Personal Characteristics

	Essential
19	Strong commitment to the values underlying the policies of the Suffolk Fostering and Kinship Services and to achieving best outcomes for Suffolk's children.
20	Clear dedication to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.
21	High degree of integrity and reliability.
22	Ability to show emotional sensitivity and empathy.
23	Willingness to increase knowledge and understanding of issues through reading, discussion and training.