

Working draft -NOVEMBER 2016

Slough Children's Services Trust fostering (SCST) panel – Process for referral and consideration of cases.

Fostering Services regulations 2011 and Care Planning, Placement and case review regulations 2010.

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Remit of Panel - Cases.

SCST panel deal with the following types of case.

- Approval of new foster carer applications which includes Connected persons carers and cases where prospective approved adopters are taking a “foster to adopt” placement.
- Consideration of “brief reports” where the agency are proposing to terminate a fostering assessment at stage 2. (This includes Connected persons assessments).
- Requests for continuation of temporary approval/ extensions to complete Connected persons assessments (regs.24/25)
- Consideration of foster carer household reviews – first annual review following date of approval and at 3 yearly intervals thereafter.
- Consideration of all cases where a foster carer review results in recommendation to terminate approval, or where there is a change of approval proposed by the agency, that the foster carer does not agree with.
- Approval of Long term fostering matches with SCST or Independent/Voluntary agencies carers.
- Consideration of foster carer review following standards of care investigation or S47 investigation.
- Consideration of applications from home from home carers (note these applications do not fall under fostering regulations and role of panel in these cases is currently under review)
- To receive and note all formal notifications of SCST foster carer resignations submitted to the FPS.

In all cases Panel will consider the reports provided ;meet with social worker and any applicants/carers on the agreed panel date and will then make a **recommendation** (as requested on the report to panel by the social worker) to the Agency Decision maker (ADM) .

The Panel can decide to agree a recommendation, change a recommendation, defer a recommendation or reject a recommendation.

The Panel must always provide reasons for making any recommendation and may also include advice to the ADM.

The ADM will consider the panel recommendations and all available paperwork and will normally make a decision within 7 working days of panel taking place.

The ADM can decide to agree, change, defer or reject a recommendation and will provide reasons for their decision.

Applicants/ carers will normally be informed of these decisions by letter within 10 to 14 working days of panel.

Name of Panel.

The panel is known as Slough Children's Services Trust Fostering Panel and all documents submitted to panel should reflect this title.

Booking a case for Panel

Panels are normally held every second Tuesday of the month. All cases should be booked in at least two months in advance of the panel date required. It is very important to anticipate any cases that may be coming up well in advance of the date that the panel is required, and get them put in the foster panel diary which is held by the Panel Advisor and Panel Administrator.

Emergency or special panels can be organised by arrangement according to need.

To book a case to be heard at panel you should email the panel advisor (Currently Jo Blake – October 16 Tel 07867855355) cc Panel administrator (currently Jill Callard - October 16) with following details

- Type of case (as per above)
- Full Names and addresses of applicants/carers
- Full name of any child/ren with dates of birth and gender that are being matched or considered for a CP carer or specific approval.
- Name, designation and team of presenting social workers.
- The wording of the recommendation that you are seeking from panel.
- If the case is a **long term match** please confirm that the carer (s) have been approved as long term carers. If the carers are from an IFA or voluntary agency, then that agency must approve them as Long term carers before they come before SCST fostering panel for a match. If carers are registered with SCST then they must already be approved as long term carers or there must be a recent review that has considered their status and agreed/recommended that they are suitable to be long term carers. It also important to confirm that there is an up to date CPR on any children completed by the child's Social worker and that the Form F has been updated if more than a year old.
- If the case is for **connected persons fostering approval** then please indicate the date by which the approval must be granted to ensure the placement remains regulated.
- If it is for an **extension to the temporary approval under reg. 25** then indicate the date by which is anticipated the assessment will completed and

will be coming back to panel. This enables panel to agree if a special panel needs to be set up to ensure the placement is regulated.

- You must send a note of any Names and designations of any Social workers, managers and applicants/carers who are expected to be attending panel at time of booking the panel.

Attendance at panel

- There is an expectation within the Trust that all Foster carers attend their panel review as part of their work as SCST foster carers. The Supervising Social worker should check with the carers that they are able to attend before booking the case into panel.
- The applicants should always attend panel for SCST fostering and. connected person's approvals and Home from Home applications along with their assessing social worker. It is not necessary for the author of the second opinion report to attend but it is recommended.
- It is a requirement that the child's social worker is present in cases of long term matches along with current supervising social worker for the foster carers. The prospective long term carers should also attend.
- It is also recommended that the Practice Managers for the social workers who are at panel are present but this is not a requirement.
- Where an assessing Social worker is making positive recommendation for the approval of SCST foster carer it is recommended that the supervising social worker who will be supporting that new carer attends the panel meeting.

Please note that we are working to develop a "booking tool" to try and simplify the process and will amend this guidance once this is operational.

Preparation of Case papers prior to Panel.

All case papers should be submitted in one single electronic file. This is because the ADM requires her papers to be submitted to her electronically and panel are also in process of moving towards a full electronic system. There is also a risk of papers getting lost or filed in wrong order if sent as several different attachments.

All bundles must have

1. Front sheet that clearly shows full names of any applicants and names and d.o.b of any children who are part of the case consideration. (Please see formats at Appendix 1).

2. Names of workers who have written reports and are presenting the case with team and email address clearly indicated.
3. Date of presentation to panel
4. An index that provides list of contents of bundle in the order that they are placed in the bundle
5. The exact wording of the recommendation (s) that is being sought from panel.
6. Every report or case paper submitted must be signed and dated by the author and any other people listed at end of that report. This is particularly important the case of Child's permanence reports as they are a key record of that child's life that they may wish to access later.

A list of papers/reports/format to be used for each type of case is provided at appendix one.

Timetable for submitting case papers and reports to panel.

All panel papers must be with the Panel advisor a minimum 4 weeks prior to the booked panel date for quality assurance and checking purposes. This timeframe is necessary in order to ensure that papers are all in order and received by panel members in time so they can read before panel

A timetable showing these dates (until March 2017) is at Appendix 2.

It is essential that the complete file of papers is sent to the panel advisor no later than the date shown on the timetable at Appendix 2. If they are not received by this date the case will be deferred to the next available panel.

There is a requirement that the relevant Practice Manager will have read, quality assured and signed off the papers/report before they are submitted to the PA. The role of the PA is to take a "second look" to check that nothing has been overlooked or is missing from the bundle.

The Panel advisor will read the bundle and make written comments. These will be sent back to the Social worker (cc relevant Practice manager - PM) who is submitting the bundle via email within 7 working days of receipt.

The Social worker (s) and Practice Manager (s) will consider these comments and amend or change the report as they feel is appropriate. The Panel advisor will be available for consultation if needed.

The final bundle with any amendments completed, must be submitted electronically to the Panel administrator by the dates shown on the timetable – this is normally the just under two weeks before Panel meets (i.e. the Wednesday that falls 9 working days before panel meets).

(If the panel advisor considers the reports require significant improvements that will not be fully achieved within the timeframe as described above, then there will be discussion with the Social worker and practice manager about the need to defer the case to the next available panel).

A covering email must be sent with the bundle to the administrator confirming who will be attending panel (full names, designations and email addresses) and indicating if there are any time constraints on anyone in the group attending. A contact phone number must be provided for the lead social worker/practise manager so they can be contacted on the day of panel if needed.

The Panel administrator will print the bundles (pending being able to send them out electronically) and post out to panel members by the Thursday of that week and also send electronically with the agenda to the Agency decision maker.

Preparation for attending panel

The panel administrator will send out the agenda for panel to the Social workers and practice managers.

They will issue an electronic invitation to applicants/carer's that contains details of venue, timing and map to any applicants. This will also include a booklet that explains the role of the panel.

Applicants are able to bring a supporter to panel if they wish. The role of the supporter is limited to providing applicants/carers with advice and they cannot address the panel directly. Social workers should ensure that the Panel advisor and panel administrator are informed if a supporter is attending.

It is the responsibility of the Social workers and Practice Managers attending the panel to ensure that any applicants/carers are aware of the need to attend to panel and to make arrangements to facilitate attendance if needed.(i.e. by suggesting back up carers for any foster children if foster carers need to attend panel etc.)They should also agree where and when to meet with the applicants/carers on the day.

The Panel meeting

The panel must consist of at least 5 members to be quorate. One member must be a Social worker and one must be an Independent member. The Panel Chair and Vice chair are independent of SCST. The panel will usually consist of 7 or 8 members.

The panel will first consider the case papers without the applicants, social worker or Practice managers being present and will formulate a series of questions to clarify or amplify any points in the reports

Whilst this is happening Applicants and carers will be given the opportunity to look at a Panel member's file that gives information about each panel member and some brief information about the remit of the panel. They will also have the opportunity to look at short questionnaire that asks them about their experience at panel which they can complete following consideration of their case

Panel will normally invite applicants and carers along with Social workers and Practice managers into the meeting together. Introductions will be made and the chair will confirm the reason for the case being brought to panel and the recommendation that is being sought.

Questions will be put to the relevant professional or carer/applicant and as it is important that panel get as full a picture as possible. It is quite acceptable for anyone attending panel to provide relevant additional or supplementary responses to questions as they feel is necessary.

There will be an opportunity for applicants/carers and social workers/practice managers to ask questions of the panel.

At the end of the discussions the applicants/carers and professionals will be asked to withdraw for a short period while the panel deliberates about the recommendation.

They will then be asked to return to the meeting and the Chair will convey the panel recommendation and provide the reasons for their conclusions. The panel may also provide advice for the ADM to consider.

The Chair will indicate the likely timescales by which the ADM will make a formal decision and by which the applicants will receive a decision in writing. The session will then conclude.

Quality assurance and improvement process – feedback mechanisms

Applicants/carers and professionals will be asked to complete a short feedback questionnaire outside of the panel meeting about their experience at panel. This is not compulsory but the feedback is very much appreciated by panel as it helps them learn and improve the panel process. The results of any feedback will be analysed by the Panel Advisor and fed back to panel at the next meeting.

The panel will also complete a feedback form regarding the quality of reports and presentation on the day by the professionals. The panel advisor will also note any comments made by ADM on the decision sheet, when they meet to discuss cases with regard to the quality of the reports.

Result of these two processes will be fed back by the panel advisor to the Lead FPS social worker and practice manager via email. It is the responsibility of the FPS to take up any of these issues with Social workers or PM's in Children's Services.

The Panel Chair and Panel Advisor will hold half yearly (please note this is to be confirmed with new panel chair) meetings with FPS and Children's services Practice managers to feed back issues and discuss ways to improve the panel process.

The Fostering panel annual report will always include a section about the above issues.

Observers

Panel wish to encourage relevant professionals to have the opportunity to observe panel for their own learning and development purposes.

Requests to observe a panel must be made at least one month in advance to the Panel Advisor. There is a maximum of 2 observers permitted at each panel meeting.

The Panel chair will always check with applicants/carers that they are happy to have an observer listen to their case and if they are not, then the observer will be asked to withdraw from that session.

Post panel process

The Panel administrator will draft the minutes of the panel meetings. These will be checked by the panel advisor before being sent to the Panel chair to amend as needed and to formally sign off. This process will take place on the Wednesday and Thursday of the week that panel meet.

The panel minutes will therefore be sent to the agency decision maker within 3 working days of the panel meeting, i.e. normally by the Friday after the panel has met. Under the regulations the ADM then has 7 working days to make a decision.

If the panel is hearing an exceptionally large number of cases it may not be feasible to adhere to this timetable, and a request for extension of this time period will be requested of the ADM which may or may not be granted at their discretion.

A decision sheet (see example at Appendix 3) and formal letter to applicants conveying the ADM's decision will be drafted in line with the panel's recommendations.

The ADM and panel advisor will normally meet on the following Tuesday after Panel i.e. one week after panel has met

.At this meeting the Panel advisor will brief ADM and provide advice in order to assist her in reaching a decision.

ADM will normally reach a decision at that meeting and agree and sign the decision sheet and letter to applicants.

The letter to applicants/carers will be posted out by the panel administrator within 24 hours of this meeting. Copies will be emailed to the social workers and Practice managers in FPS. It is the responsibility of FPS to pass on the relevant information to other Social workers and professionals who attended panel for the case.

The information will also be entered on ICS by the panel administrator. A copy of relevant sections of panel minutes will be placed on carer's file.

If ADM chooses to make a different decision from the recommendation of the panel then SWs and managers will be informed by the Panel advisor within 48 hours of the meeting, and appropriate letters and decision sheets redrafted. (See below re applicant review process)

It is the responsibility of the presenting Social workers and practice managers to keep in touch with applicants/carers after panel and support them through the process.

When the approval is for a new foster carer for SCST, then the ADM letter will contain a copy of the foster care agreement.

Where foster carers are coming over to SCST from another agency it will be necessary for those carers to have resigned from their current agency before they can formally be registered with SCST as carers. If the carers choose to wait until after panel to tender their resignation then it will normally take 28 days from the date of the letter of resignation for their registration with the other agency to cease. It is important that a specific decision making process and letter are used in the cases and Panel Advisor should be consulted regarding this.

Applicants/carers right to have their case reviewed - following a Panel recommendation and/or ADM decision not to approve.

The ADM may choose to reject or change a recommendation.

If this happens it is important that the correct letter called a "qualifying determination" is sent out to the applicants. This has to follow a formal form of wording and will explain to the applicants/carers that they have two choices if they are unhappy with the ADM decision. They can either a) make representations back to the agency or b) apply for the "qualifying determination" to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism – an external body set up by the Government for this purpose currently run by Coram/BAAF.

Neither process is an “appeal” so use of this term should be avoided when talking to applicants. It is a review of the case and the process followed.

It is not often that these set of circumstances will arise so the whole process is not covered here. The Panel Advisor will contact social workers and Practice Managers to brief them on the process should this happen.

The IRM have full information on their website and there is also a leaflet available for applicants.

APPENDIX ONE – PAPERS/FORMAT OF FRONT SHEET TO BE SUBMITTED TO PANEL

Please note the reports/papers are listed in the order that they should be placed in the bundle with the front sheet and index placed first.

All reports in the bundle must be signed and dated by relevant professionals or they will not be acceptable to go before panel

- **SCST Foster carer approval**

SLOUGH CHILDREN’S SERVICES TRUST FOSTERING PANEL

Date of Panel

Purpose of presentation: Assessment of prospective carers for approval as SCST foster carers

Recommendation requested

Assessing social worker

Second opinion social worker

Name of applicants:

Contents: (Please tick)

Full Form F (with all required checks)

Full medical report/Agency Medical advisor recommendation

Referee visit reports.

Applicant’s comments on the report

Second opinion report

All reports dates and signed.

Evidence of sign off/QA process by Practice Manager

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If carers are coming over from another agency or have fostered previously, it is expected that the assessing SW will have viewed that agencies file and will make reference to first form F assessment and foster carer reviews in their report. A reference from the current agency must be provided

- **Brief report to terminate assessment at stage 2**

SLOUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST FOSTERING PANEL

Date of Panel:

Purpose of presentation: Request to terminate assessment of prospective foster carers (SCST or Connected persons) at Stage 2.

Recommendation requested:

Assessing Social worker:

Second opinion Social worker

Name of applicants

Contents: (please tick)

Brief report (that contains all information gathered to date)

Applicant's comments on the report

Second Opinion report

All reports signed and dated

Evidence of sign off by PM

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Please note the title "brief report" is a misnomer. The Panel must receive a report that contains all the available information gathered from the assessment process to date, stage one and stage two, with clear reasons/evidence for recommendation to terminate assessment.

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- **Reg. 24/25 extension of temporary approval request for connected persons assessments.**

SLOUGH CHILDREN’S SERVICES FOSTERING PANEL

Date of panel:

Purpose of presentation: Request for extension of temporary approval of a Connected person (s) Foster carer

Recommendation requested

Assessing Social worker

Children’s Social worker/hub

Name of Applicants

Names of Child(ren) dob and relationship to applicants

Date temporary approval granted by ADM

Date case referred to FPS

Dates by which assessment must be completed

At 16 weeks

At 24 weeks

Contents –(Please tick)

Copy of viability assessment (VA) on applicants.

Regulation 25 report – request for continuation of temporary approval.

All reports signed and dated

Evidence of sign off by PM

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The reg 25 report should cover

Brief circumstance/description of the children in question (if not included in viability above)

Brief circumstance/description of the temporary carers (ditto)

Brief chronology of work completed to date or set in train on the assessment

Reasons for request for extension

Any significant risks or concerns already identified with regard to the suitability of the carers.

Request for additional/extra meeting of panel to consider final assessment (if this is required to comply with timescales)

- **Connected persons (Family and Friends) foster carer approval**

SLOUGH CHILDREN’S SERVICES TRUST FOSTERING PANEL

Date of panel:

Purpose of Presentation: Assessment of prospective carers as Connected persons (family and friends) Foster Carers.

Recommendation requested

Assessing Social worker

Second opinion Social worker

Name of applicants

Name of Child (ren) dob and relationship to applicants

Child(rens) Social worker/hub

Date of Viability assessment

Date children placed with applicants as Looked after children

Date case referred to FPS for assessment

Date temporary approval granted by ADM

Date extension to temporary approval granted by ADM

Date on which placement would become unregulated.

Contents (please tick)

Family and Friends (Connected Persons) /SGO assessment report

or

Full form C

Second opinion report

Reports signed and dated

Evidence of both PM sign off for relevant section of report

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- **Foster care reviews (year one and three yearly intervals) or where review results in recommendation to terminate approval or change terms of approval which carer does not agree with .**

SLOUGH CHILDRENS SERVICES TRUST FOSTERING PANEL

Date of Panel:

Purpose of presentation: To consider recommendations from first or three yearly interval foster carer review/or to consider recommendation from a foster care review where there is a proposal to terminate approval or change terms of approval which carer does not agree with.

Recommendation requested:

Foster carers:

Date of approval:

Current terms of approval:

Date of this review:

Date of previous review

Date of last review to panel:

Supervising Social worker

Independent Reviewing Officer

Contents (please tick)

Independent reviewing officer's report

Supervising Social workers report

Update report since review

Feedback forms Social worker

Child

Foster carer

Foster carer's children (if applicable)

Last panel minutes/ADM decision

Letter from applicants if termination or change of approval

All reports dated and signed.

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IRO report of the foster carer review – this must be less than 2 months old , contain full evidence that all required checks are clear and in date, and training requirements have been met with clear recommendation about continuing approval and terms of that approval.

Supervising SW report – this must be up to date and if more than 2 months old an update must be provided.

Feedback available from Foster carers. Placing social workers, children who have been or are in placement, foster carers own children should be included in full.

Minutes of the last SCST foster panel meeting where carers were presented

Brief update report of any significant events or changes that have occurred since review took place i.e. child left, new placements etc.

First annual review only – Form F and minutes of panel meeting when carers were recommended/ADM decision and date with reasons.

- Long term foster care placement match

SLOUGH CHILDREN’S SERVICES FOSTERING PANEL

Date of Panel

Purpose of presentation : Long term fostering Match

Child’s name and dob:

Date of looked after review when long term fostering was agreed as child’s permanence plan:

Date when child placed with carers:

Child’s Social worker/team or hub

Foster carer’s Supervising Social worker

Date when carers approved as long term and wording of registration status:

Family finding social worker:

Contents:

Matching report

Support plan

Family finding report (if applicable)

Childs permanence report

Carers form F (with update addendum if more than two years old.)

Note of ADM decision to approve long term or panel minutes

Carers last review report (if review has not occurred within previous 12 months then one should take place before presentation to panel)

All reports signed and dated

Evidence of sign off by PM for child’s SW (CPR) and PM for supervising social worker/family finder reports.

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Matching report must cover how carers can meet long term needs of child into the future including leaving care.

CPR must outline work that has been done with parents of child or persons with PR to inform them of placement. Must also cover the preparation work for long term placement and life story work with child.

CPR and matching report should outline the consideration given to other permanence options and cover the work done with child and carers regarding this making clear why long term fostering is permanence plan that best promotes and safeguards the child's best interests.

- **Standards of care investigation /S47**

SLOUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST FOSTERING PANEL.

Date of panel:

Purpose of presentation: Consideration of the independent report of foster carer review following a standards of care investigation/ S47 investigation.

Foster Carers

Date of original approval

Current registration as foster carers

Supervising Social worker

Independent Reviewing Officer

Investigating Officer

Contents:

The S of C Investigation report

Copy of review meeting that followed the standards of care meeting

Copy of last annual review prior to standards of care investigation

Minutes of panel meeting if review was year one or three yearly.

Form F with update if report more than one year old.

1. Home from Home carer approval

Under discussion – to be agreed.

relevant

APPENDIX TWO – PANEL DEADLINE DATES.

Please note if the complete bundle of papers does not reach the panel advisor by the dates specified below for QA purposes then the case will be deferred to next available panel.

SLOUGH CHILDREN’S SERVICES TRUST PANEL DEADLINE DATES SEPTEMBER 2016 TO MARCH 2017.

Date of Panel	DEADLINE DATE FOR DRAFT REPORTS TO PANEL ADVISOR* (Case must be booked in at least one month prior to date below via email to Panel advisor cc Panel Administrator)	Final reports to panel administrator for printing by;	Panel advisor briefing meeting with ADM for panel decisions	Letters sent out to applicants and ADM decision sheets to SW and TM by;
13.09.16	16.08.16	26.08.16	20.09.16	23.09.16
11.10.16	13.09.16	28.09.16	18.10.16	21.10.16
08.11.16	11.10.16	26.10.16	15.11.16	18.11.16
13.12.16	15.11.16	30.11.16	20.12.16	22.12.16
10.01.17	13.12.16	28.12.16**	17.01.17	20.01.17
14.02.17	17.01.17	01.02.17	21.02.17	24.02.17
14.03.17	14.02.17	01.03.17	21.03.17	24.03.17

- Papers (full set required) that are not sent by this deadline will be held over to the next panel.
- ** - dates may change due to annual leave etc. – please watch for emails.

APPENDIX THREE – TEMPLATE OF ADM DECISION SHEET.

To be inserted.