

Connected Persons Panel Protocol

This document will outline the procedures regarding connected persons assessments attending the fostering panel. This document has been created in consultation with the panel advisor, fostering manager, connected persons manager, panel chair and assistant director of children's services.

Generally, the expectations of connected persons assessments being presented at panel are as follows:

- Presentation to request an 8 week extension of the Regulation 24 assessment for a further period of 8 weeks (Regulation 25)
- Presentation of completed connected persons fostering assessment with long-term recommendation for the carers to remain foster carers (all checks and references need to have been completed)

Attendance at Panel

For an extension request, the assessing worker only needs to attend the panel. With regards to the presentation of full assessments, then the expectation is that both the assessing worker and the children's social worker attend the panel for discussion. Supervising social workers are not required to attend the panel for connected persons assessments.

Timescales

As per the Fostering Regulations, the panel can only make recommendations to those assessments that are presented within the designated timescales (i.e. within the 16 weeks or 24 weeks if an extension has been agreed). Any cases which are presented outside of the timescales, panel can only offer advice to the agency decision maker as these placements will already be unregulated. Prior to panel, the children's and assessing social workers will need to discuss these unregulated placements with their manager, head of service and the agency decision maker.

Cases Not for Panel

Some Connected Persons cases do not need to be presented at panel. This includes:

- Cases in which court proceedings have already taken place and carers are now Special Guardians
- Cases in which court proceedings are due to conclude and the long-term plan is highly likely to be a Special Guardianship Order
- Any connected persons assessment that does not have the necessary checks (i.e. DBS, medical) back as of yet
- Cases whereby the assessment is negative and the individuals do not wish to attend panel/have personal information shared with the panel

Cases That Should Attend Panel

- Full assessments seeking connected persons approval on a long-term basis
- Connected persons assessments whereby the court proceedings remain ongoing and therefore the fostering arrangements will continue for a period that is likely to exceed three months