

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: ADOPTION, FOSTERING AND FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL – ELECTED MEMBER PARTICIPATION
From: HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES/CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER		
Date: 20 AUGUST 2008	Ref: MF/AB	

1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

To seek interest from elected members as community representatives to North Lanarkshire's Adoption, Fostering and Family Placement Panel (AF&FPP).

2. Background

- 2.1 In August 2006, Social Work Committee agreed that a member/officer group would be convened to consider the strengths of the fostering and adoption service and to highlight areas for development.
- 2.2 The group first met in September 2006 and five meetings were held over a six month period. The group considered a number of presentations and an action plan was subsequently developed which set out key priorities for action in respect of both fostering and adoption services.
- 2.3 The modernisation and key developments of the AF&FP were considered by the member/officer group and formed part of the action plan.
- 2.4 The findings and recommendations of the member/officer group were presented and agreed at Social Work Committee on 8th March 2007.

3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1 The modernisation of the AF&FPP commenced early in 2006 and is in the final stages of implementation.
- 3.2 The aim of the modernisation process was to review the purpose and structure of the AF&FPP, with a focus on modernising practice and procedures which improve the outcomes for children and young people. The process has also ensured compliance with national standards and has been benchmarked with other panels with the aim of achieving best practice.
- 3.3 The member/officer group concluded that the membership of the AF&FPP required to change as part of the modernisation process.

- 3.4 Consideration was given to the historical arrangement whereby an elected member had chaired the AF&FPP. While elected member involvement on the panel was valued, it was noted that this arrangement was not consistent with the council's approach to delegated powers and could be legally challenged. Following benchmarking with other agencies, it was agreed that an independent chair be appointed. This is currently being progressed.
- 3.5 The member / officer group recommended that elected members could continue as panel members, contributing their knowledge of the local community and assisting the panel in making decisions with regards to children and planning for their future.
- 3.6 Membership of the AF&FPP is provided from Housing and Social Work Services, Legal Services, Medical Services, Education, a Carer Representative and elected members.
- 3.7 The AF&FPP meets on a twice per month basis, albeit this can vary dependent upon need. Meetings usually take place on a Tuesday morning from 9.30am – 1.00pm.
- 3.8 In respect of elected member involvement in the AF + FPP, it is proposed that three elected members could form part of a rota with attendance for each member every third panel.
- 3.9 Each panel member is offered induction, training and developmental sessions appropriate to their role as a member of the AF&FPP.
- 3.10 As the service is regulated by the Care Commission each panel member is required to undergo a Disclosure Scotland check, departmental check and reference check.

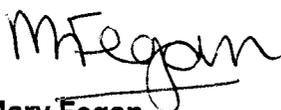
4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

- 4.1 As outlined at sections 2.4 and 3.4, this proposal has previously been agreed at committee, following the recommendations of a member / officer review. The proposal to seek elected member involvement as a member of the panel is consistent with legal advice and practice across Scotland.
- 4.2 There are no significant financial implications arising from this report. As advised in 3.10 above, each panel member is required to undergo a Disclosure Scotland, Departmental and reference checks.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) seek interest from elected members with a view to appointing three elected members to form part of the membership of North Lanarkshire's Adoption, Fostering and Family Placement Panel.



Mary Fegan
Head of Social Work Services/
Chief Social Work Officer
24 July 2008