

Frequently Asked Questions

What will my role be as an independent panel member?

As an independent panel member your role, along with other panel members, will be to consider and assess the suitability of prospective parents to become approved as adoptive parents.

How many panels are held each year?

Depending on requirements and the number of prospective parents being assessed by our Family Finding Social Workers there are approximately 24 panel meetings each year (two per month).

How many panels would I be expected to attend each year?

Families for Children would expect a panel member to attend at least three to four panels each year.

Where are the panels held?

We have three offices across the South West of England, Devon, North Devon and Dorset, and panels are held in each office over the course of a year. Buckfast holds the most panels, one per month.

Devon	North Devon	Dorset
Southgate Court	The Garden Flat	Unit 11 Herringston Barn
Buckfast	Castle Hill Estate	Herringston
Buckfastleigh	Filleigh, Barnstaple	Nr Dorchester
Devon	North Devon	Dorset
TQ9 6JN	EX32 0RQ	DT2 9PU

When are the panels held?

Normally the panels are held on a Wednesday and are in the morning starting at 10:00. Depending on the number of cases being considered the panels may last until just after lunch.

Would I be expected to attend panels at all of these offices?

No, Families for Children would assign you to one of these offices as your primary office. One or both of the other offices could be assigned as your secondary office, but if the other offices are not suitable due to the distance from your home then that is okay, you will just be asked to attend your primary office. If you are happy to attend panel at a secondary office then we may ask you to attend one of these panels only if we are unable to obtain a quorum of panel members.

How many members are required to make a quorum?

Five members make up a quorum but we always plan to have a minimum of six members attend each panel.

I have never attended a panel before, do I get any training?

Yes you will have an induction programme that includes observing a panel. We also provide a training day each year to keep panel members up to date on guidelines and focus on any issues that may have occurred over the year.

How will I know if I am performing my role well?

Families for Children will conduct a yearly appraisal with you which will give you and the Agency a chance to discuss How things are going? How can the Agency support you in your role? And for you to raise any concerns you may have.

So what happens during a panel?

Your induction programme will provide you with more detail, but normally a week before the panel meeting you will be sent the papers regarding that panel. These papers will include Prospective Adopters Reports (PARs) on the cases you are considering. You will be expected to read these beforehand and familiarise yourself with each prospective adopter.

At the meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss each PAR with the other panel members. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions of the adopters and their social worker to clarify points in the PAR and perhaps ask questions not already answered in the PAR. After each adopter has attended the meeting, the panel then collectively decides if they wish to recommend the prospective adopter to adopt a child.

These recommendations are then taken to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) after the meeting for them to agree or not with the Panel's recommendation. On agreement the prospective adopter becomes an approved adopter.

Do I get paid to attend a panel?

All our panel members are volunteers and as such do not get paid. However, Families for Children does pay reasonable expenses for travelling. Mileage is paid at 25p per mile on completion of an expense form. A sandwich lunch is provided on some panel days should the agenda require the meeting to extend over the lunch period.

How do I apply to become a panel member?

If you feel you are suitable and meet the requirements of the person specification and role description and would wish to proceed with your application then please email panel@familiesforchildren.org.uk or telephone our Panel Team to arrange an informal meeting.

What happens after my informal meeting?

Should it be mutually agreed between you and Families for Children that you would wish to become a panel member, then the recruitment process will be as follows.

- i) Families for Children will send you an application form for you to complete.
- ii) On return of your completed application form we will follow up your references and conduct a DBS check.
- iii) Should these be satisfactory then we will send you a formal offer of joining our panel which will include the Agency's panel agreement with you and your agreement with the Agency. Other forms will be enclosed for you to complete that will make up your Panel Member File.
- iv) At the same time we will pass on your details to our panel administrator who will provide you with an induction programme, including observing a panel.