

## The role of “supporters” at Norfolk foster panels

There are times when foster carers may feel they would like someone to accompany them when attending a panel. This *support* would be to offer (to the carer) encouragement if they are apprehensive, emotional assistance if they become distressed or advice if they are experiencing confusion as a result of anxiety. It is not the role of the supporter to speak on the carer’s behalf or intervene in the meeting in any way.

In recognition of this need for support, Norfolk Children’s Services has purchased an independent advice and mediation service from Fostering Network on behalf of carers.

However, there may be occasions when carers would prefer to be supported by someone else, for example perhaps a close friend or a family member.

This is acceptable as long as the carer has checked with the fostering service that their chosen supporter is appropriate. This check is necessary considering the nature of the sensitive information that may be disclosed at the panel, for example information on a looked after child.

It may be that a conversation with the supporter will be necessary prior to the meeting in terms of outlining their role and how the meeting will operate.