

IRM Newsletter

End of Year 1 statement

DfES guidance and training

Welcome to the second IRM newsletter for Adoption Agencies.

The IRM has now been operating for a year and we thought it was time to update you on what has been happening at the IRM office and panels.

The newsletter is being sent to your Agency Liaison Officer and can be shared with senior managers, adoption team staff, adoption panel members, legal teams and anyone else with an involvement in adoption in your agency. Please feel free to circulate it widely. It will also be placed on the IRM website.

An End of Year 1 Statement providing statistics will be posted on the DfES adoption website on Thursday 30 June 2005 and will also be made available to agencies in the next newsletter.

(www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption/update300605a.shtml)

DfES guidance on the Adoption Agency Regulations and the other regulations made under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 is expected shortly and we will highlight the changes to the IRM in the next newsletter.

DfES will also be implementing a training programme this autumn to ensure that those working in adoption and children's services are fully up to speed with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 before it comes into force in December 2005. Training tools will be made available on www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption.

Statistics

We had a reasonable response from agencies to a request for information from the DfES on the number of qualifying determinations issued. For agencies that did not respond at the time late responses are still welcome.

Spreading the Word

We have tried to ensure that both agencies and prospective adopters know about the IRM, what it does and how it works.

Elaine has given presentations to BAAF social work, medical & legal groups and has welcomed opportunities to talk to Consortia and is happy to receive future invitations.

IRM Website

www.irm-adoption.org.uk

Visits to the IRM website have increased over the last few months and we know people are accessing the website through links from Adoption UK, BAAF, DfES & a few Council websites.

We are happy for agencies to include a link to the IRM website from their adoption information pages.



The IRM leaflet is also on the website. It has recently been corrected to remove the design markings so agencies can print it off to give to prospective adopters in information packs or at information meetings or preparation groups.

New leaflets will be printed at the end of 2005 to take account of changes in the Adoption and Children Act.

www.irm-adoption.org.uk/leaflet.pdf

What cases are eligible to be reviewed by the IRM?

Our most frequent queries are about eligibility so hopefully the following will clarify this question;

What is a qualifying determination

- This is where an adoption agency proposes not to approve a prospective adopter as suitable to adopt a child or proposes to withdraw its earlier approval for the prospective adopter to adopt a child.
- A full assessment of the prospective adopter's suitability to adopt a child must have been completed and submitted to the agency's adoption panel for consideration and recommendation.

Cases which are eligible would include;

- Any prospective adopter whose agency issues a qualifying determination that they are not suitable to adopt
- Any prospective adopter who was previously approved but is then having their approval withdrawn following a review, change of circumstances or placement disruption
- Prospective adopter/s who have been assessed as adopters for a family member or a child known to them. In these cases the IRM panel will only look at the adopter/s suitability to adopt. Any decision about the suitability of the match remains a decision for the agency once the suitability has been determined.
- Any prospective intercountry adopter/s whose agency has issued a qualifying determination.

Cases which are not eligible would include;

- Prospective adopter/s where the agency has decided to approve them but they do not agree with the age range or number of children proposed
- Prospective adopter/s where the agency has decided to 'counsel' them out and not to present their case to panel. In this instance applicants would be advised to

Feedback From IRM Panels



[www.irm-
adoption.org.uk
/swleaflet.pdf](http://www.irm-adoption.org.uk/swleaflet.pdf)

use the agency complaints procedure.

However where a full assessment has been completed agencies are advised to consider whether it is reasonable not to present the case to their panel.

We have sought feedback from all applicants and agency workers and panel members and where necessary made changes in response to that feedback.

Overall applicants and agency representatives have been positive about their experience of the review panel meetings.

Applicants felt well received and that they were listened to.

However they commented that they would have liked their agency to have supported them more through the process.

This is an area that your agency may therefore wish to think about in the event of your agency being involved in a case coming to the IRM.

We have produced a **Leaflet for Workers** which goes into more detail about what will happen at the review panel meeting. It is sent to agencies having a case heard by the review panel and is available on our website. This leaflet was developed as a result of the feedback we have received.

In early panels a frustration for agencies and to a lesser degree applicants was the waiting times experienced. It was difficult initially to predict the time needed for each case to be heard.



We have tried to ensure that there is space to work and access to fax, telephone and photocopying facilities etc for social workers to allow them to undertake other work while they wait.

Panels have taken great care to ensure that both applicants and agency workers were given time to state their cases as well as answer the Panels' questions.

Applicants are often in the panel meeting for up to an hour but they have apparently welcomed that chance to be heard.

Some applicants have commented that they were not asked any questions by the original panel about the reasons that were then given in recommending they were not approved.

Agency representatives can also be in the panel meeting for up to an hour.

Feedback from Panel Members has acknowledged the complexity of all the cases coming to the IRM.

Requests for additional information on behalf of the IRM panels have been made in the following areas;

- Clarification of CRB check status
- Updating of medical information
- Clarification of information in the assessment report
- Family trees or support ecomaps not included in paperwork
- Updating or seeking additional personal or family references

IRM Staff



We are a small team of 2 at the IRM office but there should always be someone available in the office and we would encourage agencies or prospective adopters to contact us to discuss any queries they have about how the IRM works or whether a case is eligible.

Elaine Dibben is the Contract Manager and Chris Blythe is the full time Administrator.

Contact Details

IRM
Dolphin House
54 Coventry Rd
Birmingham B10 ORX

Tel: 0121 766 8086
Fax:(0121) 766 8557
E-mail: irm@baaf.org.uk

IRM PANEL DATES 2005

LONDON 1

Tuesday 5 July

Tuesday 2 August

Tuesday 6 September

Tuesday 4 October

LONDON 2

Wednesday 13 July

Wednesday 17 August

Wed 21 September

Wednesday 19 October

Wed 23 November

BIRMINGHAM

Tuesday 12 July

Tuesday 9 August

Tuesday 13 September

Tuesday 11 October

Tuesday 6 December

BRISTOL

Thursday 14 July

Thursday 11 August

Thursday 13 October

Thursday 17 Nov

Thursday 15 December

CAMBRIDGE

Tuesday 19 July

Tuesday 16 August

Tuesday 20 September Tuesday 18 October

Tuesday 13 December

LEEDS

Tuesday 26 July

Tuesday 23 August

Tuesday 27 September Tuesday 25 October

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 27 July

Wednesday 24 Aug

Wednesday 28 Sept

Wednesday 26 October

NEWCASTLE

Wednesday 3 August

Wednesday 5 October

Wednesday 7 December

N.B. IRM panels are meeting for training in November/December which accounts for fewer panel dates being available at these times.

