

Independent Review Mechanism

(Adoption and Fostering)

**ANNUAL REPORT
2013/14**



Department
for Education

irm | independent
review
ENGLAND | mechanism

BAAF
ADOPTION
& FOSTERING

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Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report 2013/14 of the Independent Review Mechanism for Fostering and Adoption in England (IRM).

The IRM is managed by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. Its responsibility is to review qualifying determinations (referred to hereafter as QDs) made by a fostering service provider (FSP) or adoption agency about a person's suitability to foster or adopt, and to make recommendations to the provider or agency. It also considers applications from people applying to receive information from adoption records (where the adoption agency has made a determination not to accept their application or to disclose or withhold information against the wishes of the person to whom the information relates).

The IRM has now completed its fifth year of providing applicants with an independent review of their suitability to foster. For prospective adopters, the service has been in place for nine years.

Following a competitive tendering exercise earlier in 2014, the Department for Education (DfE) awarded the contract for providing the IRM to BAAF for another two years, with the option of extending that contract for a further two years after 1 August 2016.

The IRM is an England-wide service that provides a unique insight into adoption and fostering practice across the country. The cases it reviews are by their nature complex and challenging. This report provides statistical information on the cases considered over the past year. It also draws attention to key themes which have emerged during 2013/14 and reports on the feedback received from applicants and agencies.

We hope that you find this document helpful and informative, and that it contributes to your knowledge and understanding of adoption and fostering in England.

Donal Mullally
IRM Contract Manager

Alan Wood
Director, BAAF England

Executive summary

- Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, the IRM accepted 125 applications. This represented a slight increase over the figures for 2012/13. A total of 16 of these were adoption applications (the same as the number for the previous year) and 109 were fostering (an increase of four cases on the previous year).
- The IRM heard 111 reviews during 2013/14; 14 concerned adoption and 97 concerned fostering.
- The IRM made a positive recommendation in eight of the adoption cases, and in six of these the agency agreed with the IRM.
- The IRM made a positive recommendation in 40 of the fostering cases, and in 20 of these the agency agreed with the IRM.
- A total of 19 per cent of applicants were of black, Asian or mixed ethnicity.
- Adoption reviews overwhelmingly concerned issues of suitability arising from assessment.
- A total of 69 per cent of fostering cases concerned termination of approval.
- Of those, 11 per cent concerned assessment of suitability; 17 per cent concerned kinship or connected people carers; and three per cent concerned changes to terms of approval.
- The IRM noted an increase in agencies providing independent support to carers applying for an IRM review.

Section 1

Learning from the work of the IRM

THE ROLE OF THE IRM

The IRM is not a higher appellant body. Its purpose is to provide an independent review of proposed decisions by an adoption or fostering agency. The final decision always remains with the agency.

However, the IRM does provide a thorough and neutral examination of agency decision-making and an opportunity for the applicants to state their case and for any new relevant information to be considered. Our feedback suggests high levels of satisfaction from applicants, irrespective of whether they achieve a successful outcome. Similarly, agencies overwhelmingly value the role of the IRM for the independent scrutiny of its decision-making.

An IRM review offers the opportunity to go back and examine the decision-making process in detail. In doing so, it is able to test the robustness of agency policies and procedures and their adherence to the statutory regulations governing fostering and adoption. At the end of each case, the agency receives feedback on both strengths and identified weaknesses in their procedures and practice. It is hoped that this advice can then lead to changes which will improve the quality of the service.

IRM reviews generally consider complex and often life-changing decisions. This often reveals the actions of agencies and carers under exceptionally demanding circumstances. As such, they provide invaluable lessons for the future.

The IRM team is committed to sharing these perspectives and contributing to the development of fostering and adoption services in England. The IRM Manager is available to speak at agency and service user events or conferences; contact the IRM office (details at end of this document) if you would like to discuss a particular workshop or conference event.

ACCEPTED APPLICATIONS

Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, a total of 125 cases were accepted by the IRM. Sixteen of these were adoption applications (the same as the number in 2012/13), and 109 concerned fostering (a four-case increase on the previous year). Thirteen cases accepted during this period (all fostering) were subsequently withdrawn. Reasons for withdrawal included granting of special guardianship orders by the Family Court; withdrawal by applicants prior to the review; and a number of applicants resigning from their agencies before the review took place.

The remit of the IRM enables it to consider any aspect of suitability of an applicant, and it is not limited to the reasons provided in the QD issues that led to the application. There is value therefore in considering in detail the reasons given in QDs and the issues of concern as raised by the IRM.

The tables in Section 4 detail the issues from IRM cases heard in 2013/14 in adoption and fostering. They provide information on the broad areas of concern and detail which led to a recommendation of suitable or not suitable by the IRM.

Adoption

Adoption cases remain a small minority of those considered by the IRM. This partly reflects the relatively small number of adoptive families compared to fostering families. Additionally, the majority of adoption cases involved suitability to be approved rather than termination of existing approval; the opposite being the case in fostering. It is worth noting that the number of cases referred to the IRM has not increased, despite a significant increase in the number of adopters assessed in England.

In most cases, reviews reflected a high quality of assessment and preparation work by agencies employing social workers with significant experience of adoption. The issues which led to the review were rarely clear-cut, and in most cases came down to the assessment of an applicant's ability to successfully meet the needs of looked after children over time. In a number of cases, this was linked to the applicant's lack of direct experience of caring for children. It is important that agencies are proactive in making arrangements for prospective adopters to address this deficit and that they enable them to demonstrate the potential to develop and learn. Another key concern has been the extent and robustness of support networks available to prospective adopters. When traditional family support networks are weak, either because of distance or illness, this demonstrates the importance of post-adoption support services within agencies, in the form of support groups and access to specialist support. The recent allocation of additional funding by the DfE for post-adoption support should help to strengthen crucial support networks.

A perceived inability to work in partnership with agencies (noted in previous years' figures) has again figured significantly as a reason for not approving prospective adopters. Assessment is a dynamic process and one that lends itself to changing attitudes as applicants gain knowledge and understanding. It is crucial that agencies acknowledge this and ensure that applicants have the opportunity to demonstrate the impact of preparation activities during assessment.

Fostering

Fostering reviews form the overwhelming majority of IRM cases. This reflects the predominance of fostering in the care of looked after children in England. Unlike adoption, where the IRM reviews were almost exclusively

concerned with assessment at approval stage, fostering reviews focused primarily on termination of approval, 75 (69 per cent) falling into this category. Typically, these involve carers who have fostered for a number of years – in some cases over 20 years – and concern a breakdown in the working relationship between foster carer and agency. Although reasons for agencies proposing termination were rarely singular, the most common was a carer's inability to work with the FSP or other professionals. The importance of foster carers being part of a professional team caring for the child(ren) came through very strongly. Tackling problems within that professional relationship promptly is crucial, and the cornerstone of this is good supervision and training, linked to an effective reviewing system. In the main, supervision was regular and most carers did have annual reviews. However, problems identified through the reviewing system were not always addressed promptly and IRM reviews often considered situations which had deteriorated over time. It is important that action plans devised at annual reviews remain the focus of supervision sessions and that the training offered to carers is linked to that action plan.

Safeguarding concerns featured prominently in IRM reviews. In most cases, these issues were addressed in a timely and appropriate manner. However, this year the IRM once again dealt with a number of situations where children were removed from long-term placements at the outset of an allegation investigation, and without a review taking place as required by Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations. This caused unnecessary disruption and the fracturing of significant attachments for children. Where agencies are working in partnership, it is appropriate that the views of the placing agency are part of any reviewing process; however, the ultimate responsibility for decisions on continued approval or termination of approval must remain with the fostering agency.

Further information about the key issues that led to IRM reviews is contained in Tables 5a and 5b, in Section 4.

TYPES OF AGENCY OR PROVIDER

Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, the IRM heard 111 cases, made up of 14 adoption and 97 fostering cases. The breakdown of cases in relation to the local authority or voluntary adoption agency (VAA), and local authority fostering services and independent fostering providers (IFPs) is as follows:

- A total of 86 per cent of the adoption cases heard involved local authorities.
- The remaining 14 per cent involved VAAs.
- A total of 77 per cent of the fostering cases heard involved local authorities.
- The remaining 23 per cent involved IFPs.

OUTCOMES

IRM recommendations

Adoption

- In eight cases, the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were suitable to adopt or to continue to a full assessment. Four of these recommendations were unanimous.
- In six cases, the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were not suitable to adopt or to continue to a full assessment. Four of these recommendations were unanimous.

Fostering

- In 40 cases, the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were suitable to foster. Twenty-five of these recommendations were unanimous.
- In 57 cases, the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were not suitable to foster. Forty-eight of these recommendations were unanimous.

Final decisions

Adoption

- In six of the adoption cases where the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were suitable to adopt or should proceed to a full assessment, the agency agreed with the recommendation.
- In six of the adoption cases where the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were not suitable to adopt, the agency agreed with the recommendation.
- In two cases, the agency disagreed with the IRM recommendation and decided that the applicant/s were not suitable to adopt.

Fostering

- In 20 of the fostering cases where the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were suitable to foster, the FSP agreed with the recommendation.
- In 57 of the fostering cases where the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were not suitable to foster, the FSP agreed with the recommendation.
- In 20 cases, the FSP disagreed with the IRM recommendation and decided that the applicant/s were not suitable to foster. Eleven of these decisions went against unanimous IRM recommendations.

Enquiries

An important aspect of the IRM's remit is to offer support and advice to potential applicants and agencies. In 2012/13, we responded to 89 enquiries. This was made up of 28 adoption enquiries (21 from potential applicants and seven from agencies) and 61 fostering enquiries (33 from potential applicants and 28 from FSPs).

Providing advice to both applicants and agencies is an important function of the IRM, and correctly applying the regulations in this area can be complex. All enquiries receive an immediate response and the IRM team is happy to offer more detailed consultation and information as required.

Applications not accepted

Ten applications were received in 2013/14 which the IRM was unable to accept; seven of these related to fostering and three to adoption. The most common cause was applications being made beyond the qualifying period. Other reasons related to applications declined by agencies based on Stage 1 information, and therefore not attracting IRM review rights.

Section 2

Service evaluation

An IRM review makes considerable demands on applicants and agencies. For the vast majority of applicants, it will be an unfamiliar process and occur at a period of particular stress and upheaval. For some agencies, particularly smaller ones, it may be their first experience of the IRM. Our aim is to support applicants and agencies to understand how the service functions and ensure that the IRM panel has access to all the relevant information. IRM caseworkers are always available to discuss any queries or requests with applicants and agencies. An important part of refining and developing the service is listening to our service users. Each applicant and agency is asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the review.

Good preparation is essential to the efficiency of the IRM process and as we aim to have all cases completed within four months of application, we rely on applicants and agencies meeting the deadlines for the submission of documents. We plan on hearing two cases per day, allowing approximately two hours per case. Applicants and agencies are provided with the panel papers at least two weeks prior to the review, as is the panel carrying out the review. We recognise that this can be a demanding period for applicants and agencies, and the IRM team is always available to answer any queries that may arise for either party. We value the feedback we receive and it helps to inform service development.

Feedback from agencies

Questionnaires were provided to all agencies within the 111 cases heard; 62 agencies responded and 49 did not. Agencies were asked to provide feedback in the following areas.

- 1. The contact with the IRM team and the information received about the IRM role, process and panel members.**
- 2. The administrative and practical arrangements for the IRM review.**
- 3. The conduct of the review hearing in their individual case.**

Their feedback is summarised below.

1. All responding agencies were satisfied by the quality of the communication with the IRM team and the written information provided. Fifty-six of the agencies felt that the information they received about the panel prior to the review was adequate, although one agency felt that it would have been more helpful to have had the profiles of panel members before the day of the panel; and another would have liked more information on the panel's structure.

2. Agencies reported a high level of satisfaction with the administration of the review. Receiving the paperwork at least two weeks before the review allowed agencies sufficient preparation time. Only four agencies expressed some dissatisfaction. Concerns included unhappiness that a late submission by the applicant was accepted, the opinion that timescales for providing information were too tight, and a suggestion that the agency be provided with more than one copy of the panel papers. We also asked for feedback on the arrangements on the day of the panel, and 39 of the 48 comments received were positive, noting the comfort of the physical setting and in particular the practice of providing separate waiting rooms for both parties. The few negative comments received focused on difficulties encountered on the day, including parking arrangements and, for some agencies, travelling longer distances to the panel. There was a suggestion made that more venues be provided.
3. Sixty-one out of 62 responding agencies felt that they were treated with respect and understanding by the review panel; one agency expressed unhappiness with what they felt was a judgemental attitude towards them by the panel. Fifty-seven agencies felt that they had an adequate opportunity to present their case. Those few that did raise issues in one case expressed a concern that there was insufficient time (two hours are allowed for each review), and in another case responded that it was difficult to summarise their case at the end of the review.

The mainly positive responses from agencies reflect a high level of satisfaction with the IRM. Agencies have generally embraced the process and found that it has provided learning opportunities which can be important in developing and refining their own policies and procedures.

Feedback from applicants

Irrespective of the particular circumstances, the opportunity of applying for an IRM review will occur at a time of professional and often personal crisis for applicants. It is essential for them to have confidence in the process and to feel that the service responds quickly and accurately to their enquiries and applications. The IRM monitors satisfaction with the service by requesting that applicants complete an evaluation questionnaire at the end of their review.

In 2013/14, from the 111 cases heard, 49 applicants returned completed review forms. The evaluation focused on two key areas:

- support and information prior to the IRM hearing
- the IRM panel experience

Support and information prior to the IRM hearing

Satisfaction with support and information from the IRM was very high. All applicants completing the evaluation were happy with their contact with the IRM and their individual caseworker. We seek to respond to all applications within 24 hours and are particularly mindful of the high level of initial anxiety the process can involve.

IRM reviews are completed within four months of application and the process culminates with the IRM panel. This is normally the only direct contact an applicant has with the IRM, as all preparation is by letter, email or telephone. Gathering information about applicants' experience of the panel is therefore of particular importance. In terms of practical arrangements for the hearing, the comments that we received were overwhelmingly positive. In particular, applicants found the separate waiting rooms for applicants and agencies helpful, and their initial reception welcoming and reassuring. The few negative responses received referred to the distance that some applicants had to travel and occasional difficulties with transport and parking.

The IRM panel experience

Forty-seven of the 49 respondents commented positively on the IRM panel. They felt that they were well received and listened to with respect and understanding. We asked applicants whether they felt that they had sufficient time to present the information they wanted to support their case. Thirty-four applicants felt that this was the case and nine did not, with the remainder not responding to this question. Inevitably, time restraints can leave some applicants feeling that they could have benefitted from an extended panel, but the IRM process seeks to address that issue by gathering prior to the panel an extensive range of information which is included in the papers made available to panel members, applicants and agencies at least two weeks before the hearing.

Complaints and compliments

The IRM received four complaints during 2013/14; three from applicants and one from an agency. IRM panel recommendations are not open to appeal, so complaints focused on matters ranging from concerns about the minutes of the panel, to procedural decisions about whether applications met the conditions for IRM acceptance. All complaints were addressed through the IRM complaints procedure, which has three potential stages: the first involves a response from the IRM manager; the second allows a further consideration by a senior manager at BAAF; and finally, if required, the complaint will be addressed by the Chief Executive of BAAF.

The IRM also received five written compliments from applicants who had found the process supportive and well managed.

Section 3

Themes for policy and practice from independent reviews 2013/14

LEARNING FROM INDEPENDENT REVIEWS

The IRM offers a unique national perspective on adoption and fostering in England. The cases it considers reflect the diversity of provision across the country and include agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Cases reflect the range of complex issues faced by agencies responsible for these key services to the most vulnerable children in our society. Ultimately, the role of the IRM is to provide an independent recommendation to agency decision-makers before they reach a final decision on each case. The process is helpful, as it provides reassurance for applicants that the actions of agencies are subject to independent scrutiny. It also provides an opportunity to identify policy and practice issues which all agencies can learn from.

GOOD PRACTICE ISSUES: ADOPTION

In 2013/14, the IRM received 16 adoption applications, the same number as in the previous year. This was against a background of an increased number of assessments. With such a small number of cases across the country, it is difficult to confidently identify themes; however, the following observations can be made.

Second opinion reports

Many of the assessments reviewed by the IRM lacked second opinion reports. IRM panels considered this to be a missed opportunity to add additional insight to assessments where issues are identified by the assessing social worker which subsequently lead to a proposed decision not to approve as suitable to adopt. It was also felt that a second opinion was best provided by a worker or manager who had no prior involvement with the case.

Direct work with children of applicants

Assessing the impact of adoption or fostering on existing children in a family is an important aspect of assessment. This can be difficult to evidence, particularly with younger children, and the best method of gathering this information is through direct work. Equipping assessing social workers with the skills and resources to undertake this work should be an important training consideration for all agencies.

GOOD PRACTICE ISSUES: FOSTERING

Fostering reviews accounted for over 80 per cent of IRM cases. As in previous years, the majority of cases (69 per cent) concerned termination of approval. The fact that many of these cases involved carers who had fostered for many years provided insights into the quality of supervision and support.

Supervision and support

IRM reviews often reveal scenarios where there has been a failure to pick up on issues early, and poor and sometimes dangerous practice has been allowed to develop over time. Effective fostering involves foster carers, supervising social workers and looked after children's social workers communicating in an effective and timely manner. Although in general the annual foster carer reviews were completed, it was not always apparent that action plans were agreed to tackle gaps in knowledge and skills through training.

Independent support to applicants

In 2012/13 the IRM raised a concern about independent support being provided to applicants. We have noted a marked improvement this year in the independent support provided by adoption support agencies such as Fostering Network and Fostertalk, or by other providers of independent support. This provision remains crucial to applicants, who would otherwise face considerable isolation during a very stressful process.

Meeting the needs of looked after children

In some cases involving allegations against foster carers, children are still being moved from placements without due regard for their welfare. Whilst all agencies have a responsibility to ensure that children remain safeguarded, the IRM continues to see examples of children being moved from long-established placements without regard to Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010). Where foster carers are subject to a QD proposing termination of approval, the children should remain in placement until after the final decision, unless they are deemed to be at risk of immediate harm.

Agency decision-makers

The role of the agency decision-maker (ADM) is central to the IRM process. Too often the IRM considers cases when the ADM has merely endorsed the views of the panel. ADMs should follow the available regulations and guidance when reaching decisions. In particular, they should consider *Hofstetter v LB Barnet and IRM* [2009] EWCA 328 (Admin), in which the court set out guidance for the way in which ADMs should carry out their role in these matters.

SUMMARY

Ten years after its inception, the IRM has established its position as a national service independent of fostering and adoption agencies. It provides a unique perspective on fostering and adoption practice across England and gives confidence to applicants that a fair, objective and independent review will inform decisions taken about their suitability to care for children.

IRM panels are made up of experienced professional and lay members supported by high quality legal and medical advice. The unique national perspective developed through the experience of sitting on IRM panels means that decision-makers benefit from a thorough examination of each case before reaching a final decision.

IRM reviews also offer the opportunity to learn from practice across the country, and feedback to agencies enables them to develop policies and procedures that ensure they deliver a service that is child-centred, fair and transparent.

The IRM is committed to providing a service that listens to the views of its service users, both applicants and agencies, and welcomes any feedback on this report. If you or your organisation would like to learn more about the IRM, contact the IRM Manager (details at end of this document).

Section 4

Management information

(Please note that figures under five have been suppressed or conflated to ensure that individual cases cannot be identified.)

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Table 1: Adoption cases

TYPE	TOTAL	%
Full PAR assessment	13	81
Brief PAR assessment	2	13
Review report	1	6
Intercountry application	0	0
Special child adoption	0	0
TOTAL	16	100

Table 2: Fostering cases

TYPE	TOTAL	%
Full assessment	12	11
Review report	75	69
Kinship/connected carers	19	17
Change of terms	3	3
Short break carers	0	0
TOTAL	109	100

Table 3: Status of all applications

STATUS	TOTAL	GROUP TOTALS	%
Single male - heterosexual	4	4	3
Single male - gay	0		
Single female - heterosexual	49	51	41
Single female - lesbian	0		
Single female - unrecorded	2		
Couple - married	61	61	49
Couple - same-sex/civil partners	2	2	2
Couple - unmarried heterosexual	7	7	5
TOTAL	125	125	100

Table 4: Ethnicity of applicants

SELF-IDENTIFIED	SELF-IDENTIFIED ETHNICITY	TOTAL	GROUP TOTAL	%
White	White British	77	126	65
	White English	10		
	White UK	28		
	White Other - including White European, White Irish, White Spanish, White Malaysian, White European/Italian, White British Asian and White Asian	11		
Black	Black Other - including Black UK, Black Jamaican, Black Caribbean and Black Afro-Caribbean	8	8	4
Asian	Asian Pakistani	6	10	5
	Asian Other - including Asian British, Asian Muslim and Asian UK Indian	4		
Mixed	Including White/Afro-Caribbean and Mixed Heritage	3	3	2
Other Black	Including African, Afro-Caribbean, British, English, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Malaysian, Nigerian and Trinidadian	16	16	8
None recorded	None recorded	32	32	16
TOTAL		195	195	100

Table 5a: Concerns from agencies and IRM in adoption cases

(An explanatory key is provided under Table 5b)

(i) Reason for concern as stated by adoption agency or IRM	(ii) QD in cases not recommended by IRM	(iii) IRM concerns	(iv) QD in cases with a positive IRM recommendation of suitability
Accommodation issues	0	0	0
Allegation against applicant/s or applicant/s family/ serious conviction/domestic abuse	0	0	0
Financial concerns	0	0	1
Impact on existing child/family	0	1	1
Inability to change/reflect/learn/inflexible views	2	2	3
Inability to manage stress	0	0	1
Inability to parent a looked after child/meet child's emotional needs	1	2	1
Inability to prioritise child's needs above one's own/ one's family	1	0	1
Inability to understand the needs of a looked after child	1	4	3
Inability to understand the role of adopter/maintain professional boundaries	1	1	1
Inability to work with agency or professionals	2	2	1
Lack of childcare experience/previous parenting concerns	0	0	2
Lack of emotional resilience/emotional capacity to parent a looked after child	1	1	3
Lifestyle issues	0	0	1
Medical issues of applicant/s family	0	0	1
Motivation/commitment to adopt	1	1	1
References	0	0	0
Relationship issues	0	0	1
Safeguarding issues, potential risk factors, including inability to provide safe care	0	0	1
Standard of care issues	0	0	0
Support networks	2	1	4
Training issues	0	0	0
Use of corporal punishment/restraint/discipline issues/emotional abuse	0	0	0
Withholding, honesty or refusal to discuss information/issue re: communication	2	1	2
Work commitments	0	0	0

Table 5b: Concerns from providers and IRM in fostering cases

(An explanatory key is provided under Table 5b)

(i) Reason for concern as stated in QD or by IRM	(ii) QD in cases not recommended by IRM	(iii) IRM concerns	(iv) QD in cases with a positive IRM recommendation of suitability
Accommodation issues	2	6	0
Allegation against applicant/s or applicant/s family/ serious conviction/domestic abuse	15	11	5
Financial concerns	2	2	3
Impact on existing child/family	4	8	1
Inability to accurately record information	4	1	2
Inability to change/reflect/learn/inflexible views	18	27	9
Inability to manage stress	3	1	4
Inability to parent a looked after child/meet child's emotional needs	18	21	9
Inability to prioritise child's needs above one's own/ one's family	7	3	5
Inability to understand the needs of a looked after child	7	16	2
Inability to understand the role of foster carer/ maintain professional boundaries	12	20	13
Inability to work with FSP or professionals	31	13	15
Lack of childcare experience/previous parenting concerns	5	0	2
Lack of emotional resilience/emotional capacity to parent a looked after child	3	12	0
Lifestyle issues	2	2	2
Medical issues of applicant/s family	2	6	2
Motivation/commitment to foster	1	7	1
References	0	1	0
Relationship issues	6	4	1
Safeguarding issues, potential risk factors including inability to provide safe care	14	17	17
Standard of care issues	14	7	4
Support networks	1	5	1
Training issues	4	4	3
Use of corporal punishment/restraint/discipline issues/emotional abuse	1	0	2
Withholding, honesty or refusal to discuss information/ issue re communication	18	10	12
Work commitments	0	1	1

Key

(i) This column refers to the full range of reasons given for concerns expressed by agencies in their QDs and concerns raised by the IRM at reviews.

(ii) This column shows, where the IRM has made a recommendation that the adopter/foster carer is not suitable, the reasons given by the agency/FSP.

(iii) This column shows, where the IRM has recommended that the adopter/foster carer is not suitable, the reasons given by the IRM.

(iv) This column shows, where the IRM has recommended the adopter/foster carer as suitable, the reasons given by the agency/FSP.

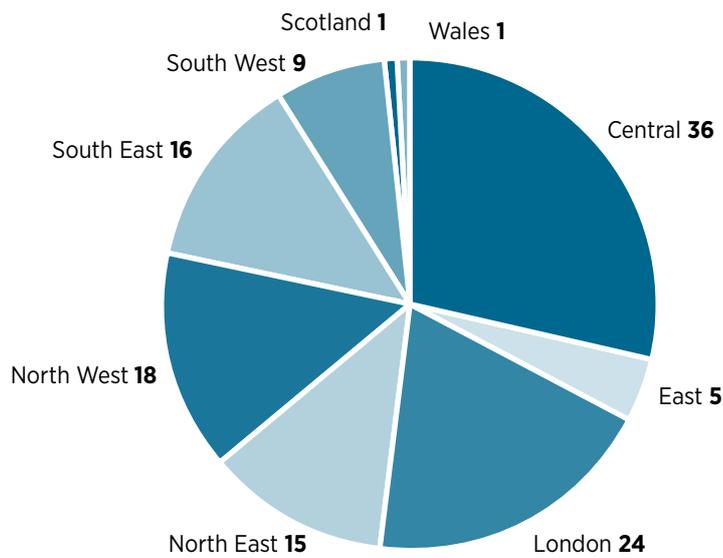
Location of applicant/s

The following is a breakdown of the location, in England, of the applicant/s of the applications accepted.

Central	36
East	5
London	24
North East	15
North West	18
South East	16
South West	9
Scotland	1*
Wales	1*

*Applicants can apply to IRM England if their FSP/agency resides in England.

Figure 1: Location of applicant/s

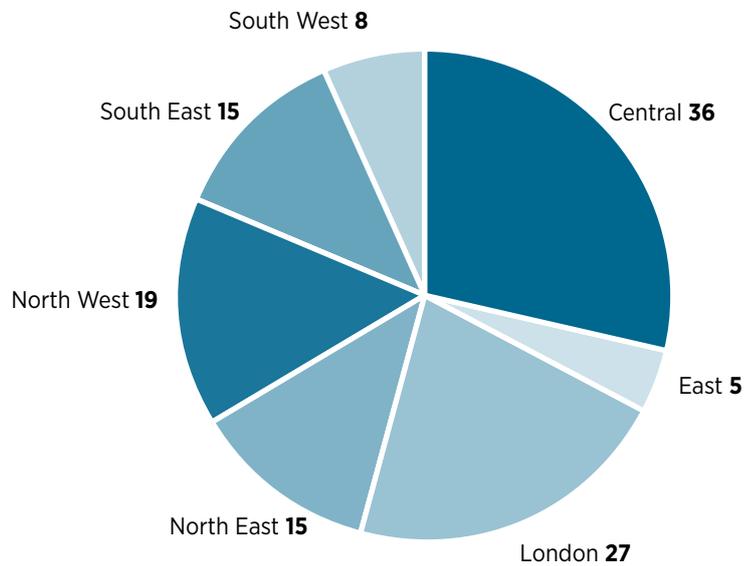


Location of agency/FSP

The following is a breakdown of the location of the agency/FSP of the applications accepted.

Central	36
East	5
London	27
North East	15
North West	19
South East	15
South West	8

Figure 2: Location of agency/FSP



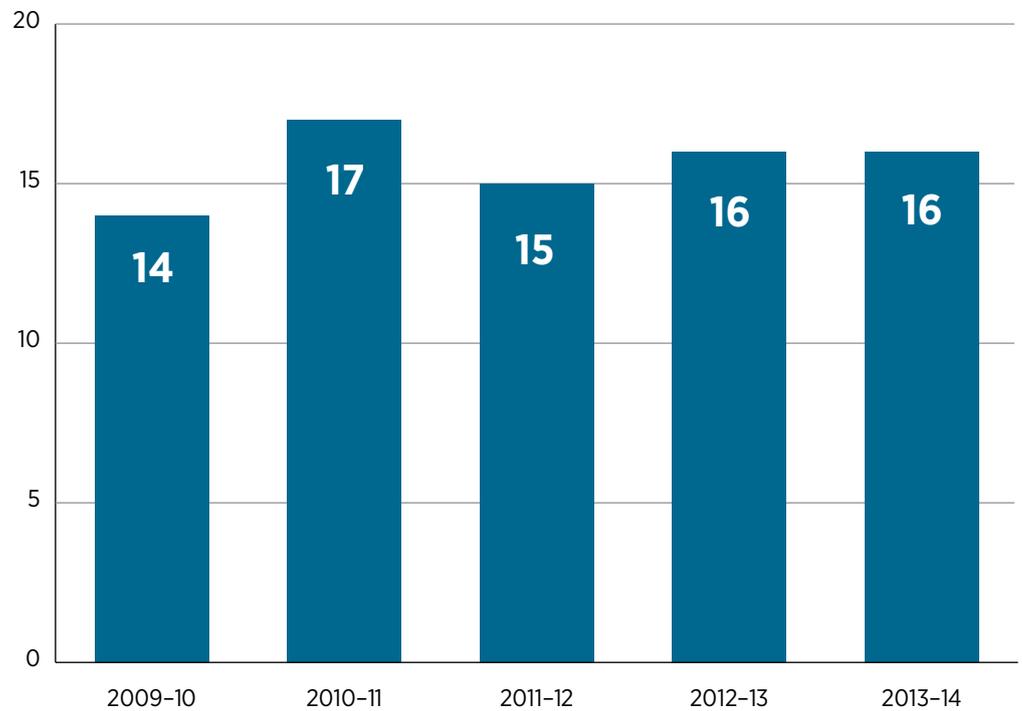
OVERVIEW OF SERVICE SINCE 1 APRIL 2009

(These figures relate to cases accepted since 1 April 2009. Please note that the year runs from 1 April to 31 March.)

Adoption cases

The IRM received 14 adoption cases in 2009/10, 17 cases in 2010/11, 15 cases in 2011/12, 16 cases in 2012/13 and 16 cases in 2013/14.

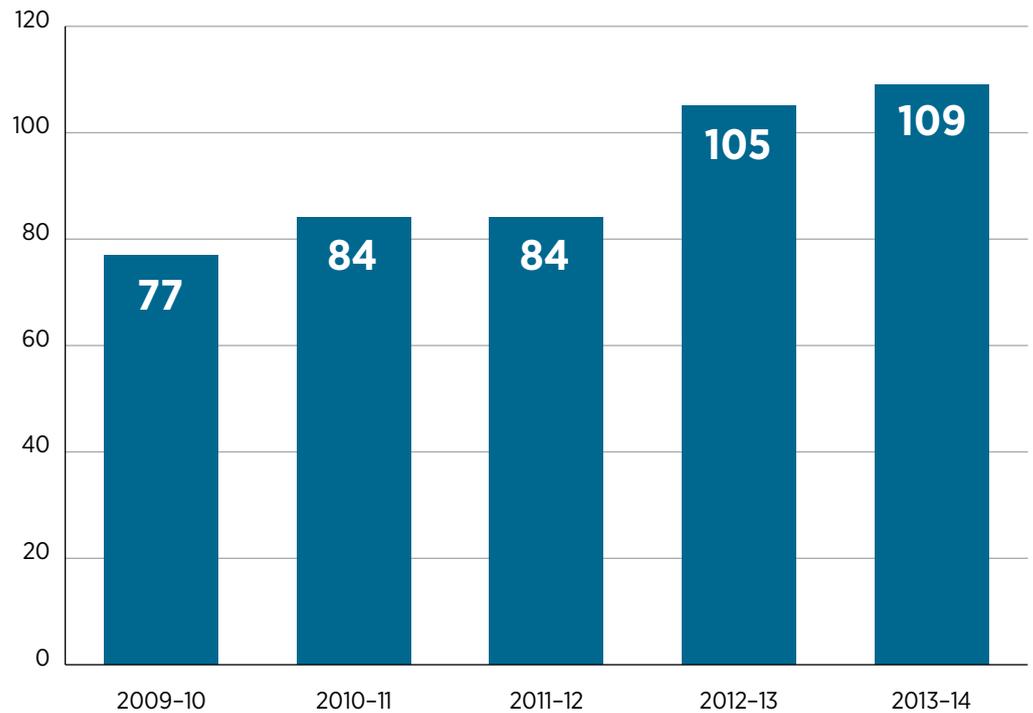
Figure 3: Adoption cases accepted since 2009



Fostering cases

We received 77 fostering cases in 2009/10, 84 cases in 2010/11, 84 cases in 2011/12, 105 cases in 2012/13 and 109 cases in 2013/14.

Figure 4: Fostering cases accepted since 2009

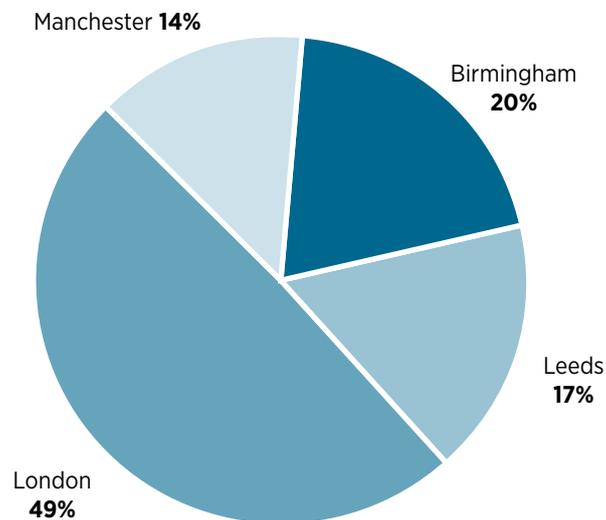


Panel locations

IRM panels are held at four locations in England, and each panel can hear up to two cases per day. The breakdown of the panels and cases heard in each location are as follows:

- Birmingham: 12 panels held, hearing 22 cases in total
- Leeds: 11 panels held, hearing 19 cases in total
- London: 29 panels held, hearing 54 cases in total
- Manchester: 10 panels held, hearing 16 cases in total

Figure 5: Cases heard in each panel location



CONTACT DETAILS

The IRM Contract Manager undertakes a number of presentations at key stakeholder events during the year to discuss issues related to practice and learning from the IRM.

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