

Please note this is not shared with the applicants.

If any 3<sup>rd</sup> party information was discussed at panel without the applicants present, this will be removed from the applicants' minutes. A sheet with all the documents provided to the IRM panel will also be enclosed along with an invoice for the Agency contribution fee of £2591.

The Agency's decision maker should make their final decision having taken into account all the information made available during the IRM process and the recommendations of both the original panel and the IRM panel and write to the applicants within 12 working days of receiving the IRM recommendation, with their decision and the reasons for that decision

A copy of the final decision letter sent to the applicants should also be sent to the IRM office.

**Is there any further "appeal" if the applicants are not satisfied with the review panel's recommendation?**

There is no right of appeal. Applicants can use the IRM complaints procedure if they are unhappy about any of the IRM procedures.

If the applicants are unhappy about the final decision of the adoption agency and have complaints about the process, they can use the Agency's own complaints procedure.

The applicants would also have the right to seek their own legal advice.

**What if I want to complain about the IRM?**

There is a formal complaints procedure that is available for you to use if you are unhappy with the IRM process and sets out the steps you should take. A leaflet is available from the IRM office or at [www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk).

If you wish to discuss your complaint first you can contact the office.

**For further guidance and regulations relating to Fostering and the IRM please go to our website:  
[www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk)**

**Contact Details:**

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LS12 6AJ

**Tel: 0845 450 3956 / 0113 202 2080**

**Fax: 0845 450 3957 / 0113 263 7414**

**(0845 numbers charged at local rate)**

**Email: [irm@irm.org.uk](mailto:irm@irm.org.uk)**

**[www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk)**



## Information about the IRM for Adoption Agencies

This leaflet is for Adoption Agency professionals to explain the IRM, its remit and procedures in relation to Adopters.

[www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk)

**What is the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)?**

The IRM is a review process which prospective or existing adopters can use when they do not agree with the Qualifying Determination (QD) sent to them by their Adoption Agency. The review process is conducted by an independent review panel.

**How will the process work?**

Once an application has been accepted by the IRM we will contact you, the Agency, to confirm the details and identify a liaison officer for the case. We will then write to the liaison and request all the information which was provided to the adoption panel and a copy of the QD letter. We may request medical information and we ask the applicants to give their consent to disclose this. We request that the minutes of the adoption panel are not included. We ask that this paperwork is provided in 10 working days.

All the paperwork is reviewed by a legal advisor and the IRM caseworker. We will often require additional information and this will be requested in writing. Applicants can also provide additional information for the review panel to consider. We will advise you of a panel date, time and location.

It may be considered helpful to the IRM Panel to request a medical report by an IRM medical advisor. The medical advisor may seek additional information to assist them with their report and, where necessary, will be present at the panel meeting. A legal report from the IRM legal advisor will also be provided to Panel. Please note these two reports will not be shared with the applicants or Agency.

Two weeks prior to the review panel we will send a pack containing a copy of the review papers to you and the applicants. Confidential 3rd party information will not be sent to the applicants where it has been decided that it cannot be shared. The review panel will then consider all this information prior to the panel day.

**How long will this process take?**

We aim to complete cases from acceptance to recommendation within a four month period.

**Where will the review panel be held?**

The panel will be held in one of 3 locations: Birmingham, Leeds and London. We will identify the nearest panel that can hear the case, this may depend on other cases needing to be heard, but we will endeavour to keep travel to a reasonable distance. No travel or subsistence costs will be paid by the IRM to either the Agency or applicants.

**Who will be on the review panel?**

The review panel will consist of between 5 and 8 voting members. There will be a Chair and Vice Chair with experience in family placement work, at least one social worker with experience of adoption and childcare, and lay members with personal and/or professional experience relevant to adoption. The panel may also include a medical advisor.

Alongside these panel members, a panel advisor and secretary will be present to assist the panel but are non-voting members.

A list of the review panel members will be included with the panel papers that are sent to you prior to panel.

If you believe there may be a possible conflict please contact the office to discuss this. A panel member profile booklet will be available to view in the waiting room at panel giving a brief overview of each panel member.

**Who should attend from your Agency?**

We invite you to send up to two representatives. We would advise that wherever possible the social worker who is responsible for the case attends, accompanied by the line manager. It is important that the representatives bring the relevant case files.

Please let us know if a worker requires any special assistance such as wheelchair access, a hearing loop etc. as soon as possible so we can ensure the panel venue meets the requirements.

**Will the applicants be attending?**

The applicants are invited to attend the review panel to support their application. However, the review panel can go ahead without the applicants in attendance. Applicants may be accompanied by a supporter. The role of the supporter is to provide the applicant with moral support. They cannot address the panel directly.

Where applicants do not speak English as their first language the IRM will need to consider whether an interpreter is required for panel members.

**How does the review panel work?**

It is anticipated that the representatives will need to be available for up to 2 hours but each case is different and all times are estimated.

Applicants and agency workers have separate waiting rooms. The Panel Chair or Professional Advisor will meet with

both the applicants and agency to explain the process on the day. The applicants and agency representatives will then be invited together into the panel meeting.

The panel will introduce themselves and then commence the review. The applicants will be asked a number of questions by panel members and then the agency will be asked questions. Both parties are asked not to interrupt each other during questions; there is an opportunity at the end to provide brief comments. We will not inform either party of the questions in advance.

If the panel has questions about 3rd party confidential information they will invite the agency representatives into the panel without the applicants being present whilst this is being discussed. The applicants will be advised that this is taking place.

The panel will then ask both parties to return to the waiting room whilst they consider whether they have any additional questions for either party. If they do have additional questions they will invite them both back into the panel. Once the panel has decided there are no further questions both parties are asked to leave. The panel will conclude their deliberations and reach a recommendation.

**What happens after Panel?**

The minutes and recommendation of the panel will be sent to the agency's liaison officer and the applicants 12 working days after panel. The liaison will also receive a feedback sheet from the panel which comments on policy, practice and procedures.