

The IRM 2004-2020



Establishing the IRM

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- April 2004 – IRM accepts applications
- April 2009 Fostering included.

The IRM organisation

- IRM staff – Contract Manager, 2 senior caseworkers, 2 caseworkers, Administrative team of 3
- Based in Leeds, although 1 caseworker is home based
- Pool of over 70 + review panel members, advisers and secretaries
- Review panels can sit 2 or 3 times monthly on pre-arranged dates at locations across England – Leeds, Birmingham and London.

Cases reviewed by IRM panels

- Prospective adopters or foster carers where Qualifying Determination (QD) is not suitable after full or brief report
- Approved adopters where QD is to withdraw approval
- Existing foster carers where FSP proposes to terminate, or revise the terms of the foster carers approval.
- QD about disclosure of information about an adopted person.



Application Timescales

- Adoption - 40 working days
- Fostering – 28 calendar days
- Establishing grounds for review
- 4 months timescale



Why the IRM?

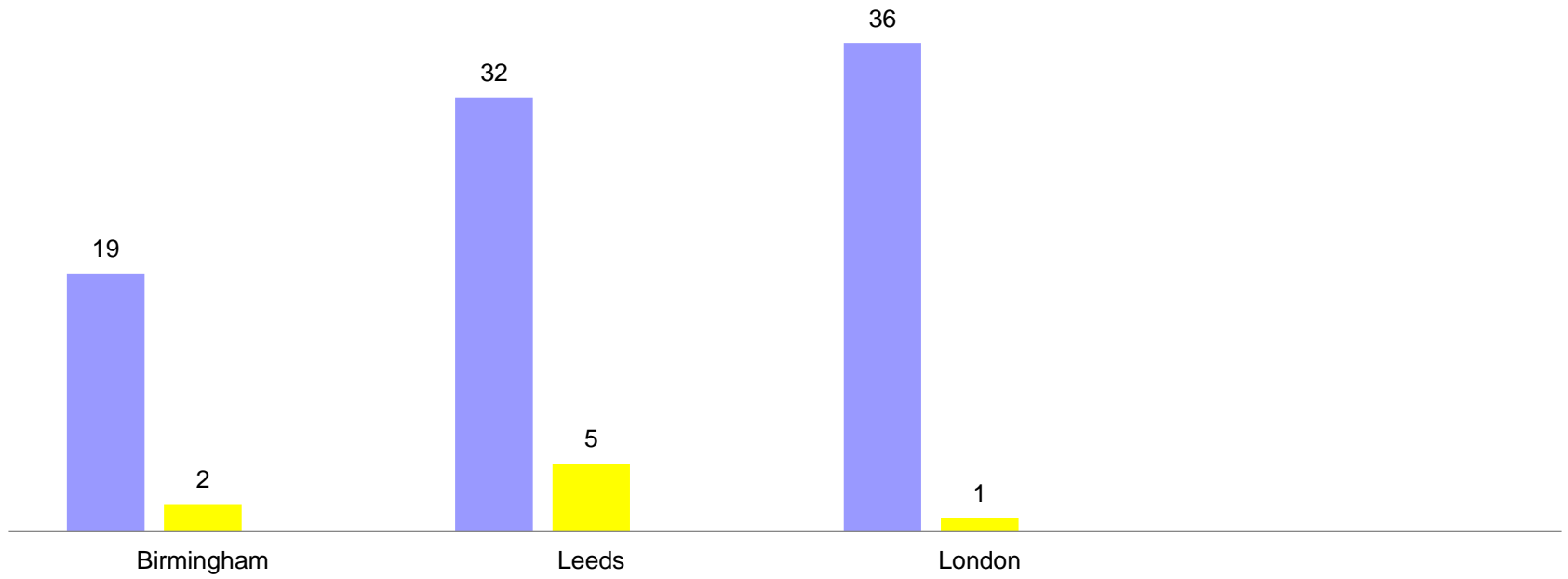
- Independent
- National
- Supporting good practice
- The opportunity of being “heard”

Activity 2018 /2019

- applications (129)
- accepted (121)
- fostering (116)
- adoption (13)
- applications withdrawn subsequently (15)
- cases heard by review panels (95)
- fostering cases (85)
- adoption cases (8)
- concurrent (1)

Cases Reviewed

Fostering Adoption



Types of application

- Fostering applications - suitability to foster
- Terms of Approval
- Full assessments of suitability to foster
- Brief reports
- Connected Persons applications
- Adoption applications - full assessments
- Brief reports
- Reviews of suitability to adopt
- Intercountry adoption applications
- Access to records
- Adoption and Fostering to Adopt



Operation of IRM

Application to Outcome

Role of IRM Caseworker

- Produce overview report
- Decide with Legal Adviser on additional information required
- Decide on whether medical reports are needed
- Liaise with applicants and agency representatives
- Prepare Panel Papers
- Liaise with Panel Chair/Panel Adviser
- Review Panel Minutes for clarity, evidence and outcome

Panel Membership

- Quorate 5 members
- Chair/Social Worker/Independent member
- Most Panels 6 members, excluding panel adviser and secretary.
- Central list – 70+ Panel members.
- Panel membership for access to information cases - 3
- Subject to annual appraisals

Support for Panel

- **Panel Adviser** with at least five years post qualifying social work experience who will have knowledge of both fostering and adoption legislation and practice.
- **Medical Adviser** is a Panel member but may also provide written advice and not attend.
- **Panel Secretary.** Responsible for minutes and logistics on the day works closely with Chair and Professional adviser.
- **Legal Adviser** who will prepare written advice for the panel in all cases and be available for advice by telephone on the day of panel.

Information presented to the Review Panel

- All information which was presented to the original Panel or considered by the Decision Maker
- Medical information - passed to Medical Adviser
- Written representations from applicant - could include, further submissions and supporting documents
- Additional information specifically requested by the IRM
- **NOT ORIGINAL PANEL MINUTES**

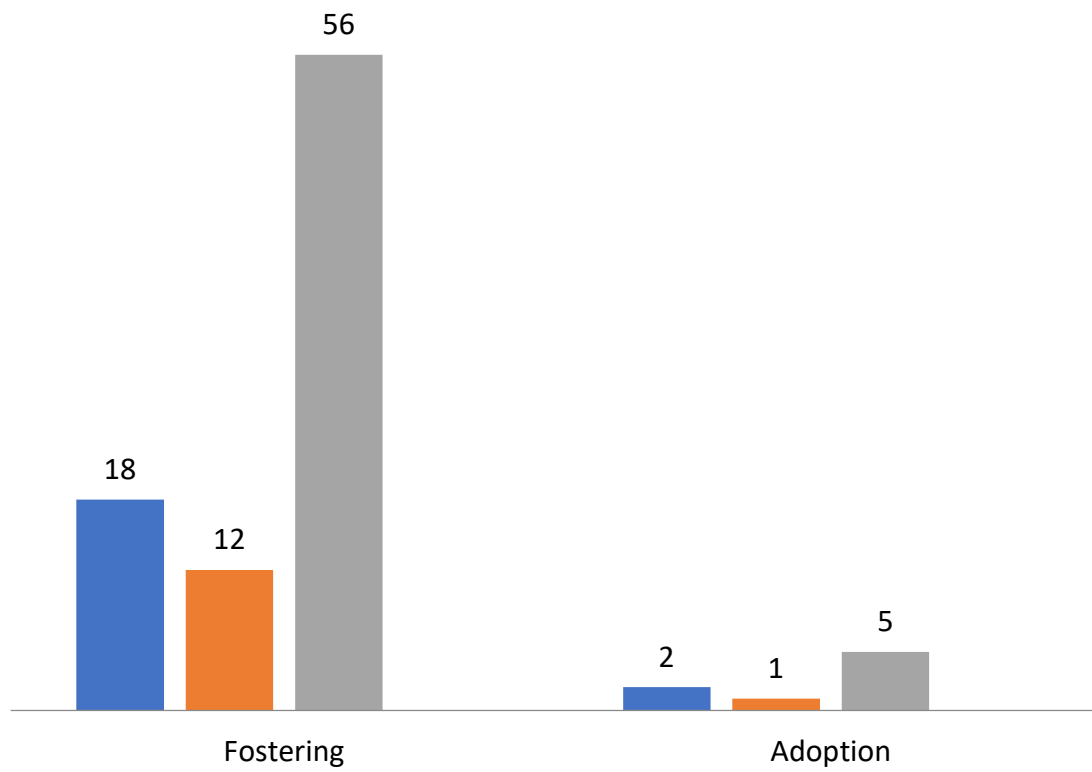
What happens at the Panel?

- Panel profiles
- Panel process – introduction for applicants and agency representatives
- Applicants and agency representatives are given a list of areas covered in their questions
- Strengths of applicant(s) shared
- Questions to both Parties
- Agency representatives can be seen separately if panel has questions about 3rd party confidential information
- Applicant (+ supporter) and agency in panel together
- Opportunity to share thoughts
- Discussions and recommendation

After Panel

- Panel minutes reviewed
- IRM recommendation are sent on 12th working day to both parties
- Agency Decision Maker to make final decision without undue delay
- No right of Appeal against a recommendation
- Judicial Review/ Ombudsman
- IRM Complaints Procedure

■ IRM/ADM Yes ■ IRM Yes/ADM No ■ IRM/ADM No



Issues-Adoption

- Cases relate to assessment and ongoing suitability.
- Inability to meet the needs of LAC
- Impact on existing family members
- Current and historical personal / family issues
- Support networks
- Emotional resilience
- References / 3rd party information



Issues-Fostering

- Majority of cases regarding termination
- Partnership working.
- Importance of good matching
- Safeguarding Issues
- Medical and training issues
- Moving children without due process
- Cultural issues