

# Independent Review Mechanism

(Adoption and Fostering)

ANNUAL REPORT  
**2011-12**



Department  
for Education

**irm** | independent  
review  
ENGLAND | mechanism

**BAAF**  
ADOPTION  
& FOSTERING

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# Introduction

The Independent Review Mechanism for Fostering and Adoption (IRM) is managed by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. Its remit is to review qualifying determinations (referred to hereafter as QDs) made by a fostering service provider 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 third year of providing applicants with an independent review of their suitability to foster. For prospective adopters, the service has been in place for eight years. It has been a year that has included amendments to the statutory framework for foster care and adoption and this has inevitably impacted on the work of the IRM.

# Executive summary

- Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 the IRM accepted 99 cases (84 fostering cases and 15 adoption cases) from a total of 155 people (including couples) (compared to 101 in the previous year). The IRM received noticeably fewer applications (18% in 2011-2012 against 27% in 2010-2011) in this reporting period from applicants who identified themselves as from a black, mixed or Asian background.
- Of the 99 accepted cases during this period, 87 cases were heard at IRM panels, comprising 74 fostering cases and 13 adoption cases. It takes 3-4 months for an accepted case to be completed. Five accepted applications were subsequently withdrawn. We are still awaiting the final decision in the remaining cases.
- The most common reasons for the QD in prospective adopters being considered unsuitable to adopt were: issues relating to the ability to prioritise a child's needs; questioning of motivation and commitment; and concerns about openness/communication.
- The most common reasons for the QD in fostering cases were: ability to meet the emotional needs of looked after children; ability to work with professionals; safeguarding and safe caring issues; and concerns about openness/communication.
- The IRM made a positive recommendation in terms of suitability in six of the 12 adoption cases heard, so the applicants in 50% of adoption suitability cases were recommended as suitable to adopt or to continue to a full assessment. The adoption agency's decision maker agreed in two-thirds of these cases. Therefore, a third of the total adoption suitability cases presented to the IRM resulted in a positive outcome from the decisions known to date.
- Of the adoption cases, similar numbers were presented at each of the possible three stages to consider the suitability of an adopter: Brief Report, full completed Prospective Adopters' Report, or Annual Review stage.
- The IRM made a positive recommendation of suitability in 38 of the 74 (51%) fostering cases heard. In 21 of the fostering cases where the IRM recommended the applicant/s were suitable to foster, the Fostering Service Provider (FSP) agreed with the recommendation (55%). In 46 cases where the IRM recommended that the applicant/s were not suitable, the FSP agreed with the recommendation.
- A total of 57 fostering cases presented to the IRM related to termination of approval (68% of cases) with only 7% of cases relating to suitability following a full assessment.

# Section 1

## Learning from the work of the IRM

*The agency representatives were knowledgeable about the case and answered all questions clearly in a balanced manner. (IRM panel member)*

*The social work report was of an excellent standard and encapsulated the issues clearly. (IRM panel member)*

### The experience of the IRM

The role and position of the IRM in England affords it a unique opportunity to offer a valued service to agencies, existing and prospective foster carers and adopters. The IRM also provides a helpful overview to aspects of current practice. Inevitably the IRM sees some poor practice and there is a risk that the service could therefore experience a negatively skewed view of current adoption and fostering practice. Some significant practice concerns and dilemmas have arisen consistently over the preceding two years in the history of the IRM offering a fostering and adoption service, and a number of these remain evident in the third year.

However, the IRM also observes excellent practice and the skill and reflective consideration of many agencies as they undertake this complex work on behalf of vulnerable looked after children.

IRM panel hearings are made up from a selection of 88 skilled people on a central list. In addition to the recommendation, they give advice to agencies and providers on their policy and practice as noted within the case papers and at the IRM panel hearing. Feedback and advice is provided, together with minutes of the IRM panel, in brief written form.

### Accepted applications

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 a total of 99 cases were accepted by the IRM, 84 fostering cases and 15 adoption cases. Five of these accepted cases have since been withdrawn.

The remit of the IRM allows it to look at any aspect of the suitability of an applicant and not be restricted to the reasons given in the QD issued that led to the application. It is therefore helpful to look in detail at the reasons given in QDs and the issues of concern as raised by the IRM.

The following tables highlight the course of accepted IRM applications in 2011-12, separately for adoption and fostering. They depict the areas of concern and detail which broad areas led to a recommendation of suitable or not suitable by the IRM.

**Table showing concerns from agency and IRM in adoption cases**

<b>(i) Reason for concern as stated in QD or IRM</b>	<b>(ii) QD in cases not recommended by IRM</b>	<b>(iii) IRM concerns</b>	<b>(iv) QD in cases with an IRM recommendation of suitable</b>
Allegation of abuse against applicant or family members/conviction that might preclude an applicant	0	0	1
Ability to change/reflect/learn	3	2	2
Ability to manage stress	1	0	0
Ability to parent a looked after child/meet child's emotional needs	1	1	3
Ability to prioritise children's needs above one's own/one's family	4	3	1
Ability to understand role of adopter/maintain professional boundaries	1	0	2
Inability to understand the needs of a looked after child	2	4	3
Ability to trust or work with the agency/professionals	2	1	2
Lack of childcare experience	1	0	0
Lack of emotional resilience/emotional capacity to parent a looked after child	1	2	2
Motivation/commitment to adopt	3	1	0
Relationship concerns including stability/permanence	0	1	0
Safeguarding issues, potential risk factors, including inability to provide safe caring	1	0	3
Standard of care issues	1	0	1
Support networks	1	1	3
Unwillingness to train	1	0	0
Withholding, honesty or refusal to discuss information/issues regarding communication/disclosure of information	4	2	0

**Key** (i) This column refers to an amalgamation of the range of reasons given for concerns expressed by agencies in their QDs and concerns raised by the IRM. In the QD letters, some agencies provide a clear single reason, a list of clear reasons, reasons that are unclear or none at all (although giving reasons is a requirement). This column attempts to group where possible the range of reasons to reflect themes but also to protect confidentiality.

(ii) This column shows where the IRM has made a recommendation that the adopter is not suitable and the reason given in the QD.

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

(iv) This column shows where the IRM has recommended the adopter as suitable and the reason given in the QD. It would also show where there has been a "positive" recommendation in favour of the adopter in relation to issues involving proposed changes to terms of approval.

**Table showing concerns from providers and IRM in fostering cases**

<b>(i) Reason for concern as stated in QD or IRM</b>	<b>(ii) QD in cases not recommended by IRM</b>	<b>(iii) IRM concerns</b>	<b>(iv) QD in cases with an IRM recommendation of suitable</b>
Accommodation issues	5	1	6
Allegation of abuse against applicant or family member/conviction that might preclude an applicant or serious misconduct issues	6	1	8
Financial concerns	0	0	3
Impact on existing child/family	2	4	3
Inability to accurately record information	1	1	2
Ability to change/reflect/learn	7	13	6
Ability to manage stress	0	4	2
Ability to parent a looked after child/meet a child's emotional needs	11	12	9
Ability to prioritise children's needs above one's own/one's family	4	5	2
Ability to understand role of foster carer/maintain professional boundaries	4	7	2
Inability to understand the needs of a looked after child	3	9	2
Ability to trust or work with FSP/professionals	12	9	17
Lack of childcare experience	2	0	0
Lack of emotional resilience/Emotional capacity to parent a looked after child	1	3	0
Lifestyle issues - drinking, smoking, etc	2	0	4
Medical issues of applicant/s	4	3	4
Motivation/commitment to foster	1	3	1
No pre-existing relationship (kinship)	0	1	0
References	3	0	0
Relationship concerns including stability/permanence	0	0	2
Safeguarding issues, potential risk factors, including inability to provide safe caring	13	17	15
Standard of care issues	8	1	13
Support networks	3	2	1
Unable to advocate for a child	0	2	0
Unwillingness to train	4	3	1
Use of corporal punishment/restraint/discipline issues/emotional abuse	1	1	2

(i) Reason for concern as stated in QD or IRM	(ii) QD in cases not recommended by IRM	(iii) IRM concerns	(iv) QD in cases with an IRM recommendation of suitable
Withholding, honesty or refusal to discuss information/issues regarding communication	14	7	11
Work commitments	1	0	0

### Key

As above.

### Type of agency or provider

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012, the IRM heard 87 cases comprising 74 fostering cases and 13 adoption cases. The breakdown in relation to the local authority adoption agencies or voluntary adoption agencies and local authority fostering services and independent fostering providers is as follows:

- Eleven of the adoption cases heard involved local authorities; the others involved voluntary adoption agencies.
- Sixty-one of the fostering cases heard involved local authorities.
- Thirteen involved independent fostering providers.

## OUTCOMES

### IRM recommendations

#### Adoption<sup>1</sup>

- In six cases the IRM recommended the applicant/s were suitable to adopt or in the case of a brief report that the agency should complete the assessment.
- In six cases the IRM recommended the applicant/s were not suitable to adopt and in the case of a brief report that the agency should not complete the assessment.
- The IRM recommendation was unanimous in eight of the 12 cases heard.

#### Fostering

- In 38 cases the IRM recommended the applicant/s were suitable to foster.
- In 36 cases the IRM recommended the applicant/s were not suitable to foster.
- The IRM recommendation was unanimous in 52 of the 74 cases heard.

### Final decisions

#### Adoption

- In four of the adoption cases where the IRM recommended the applicant/s were suitable to adopt or should proceed to a full assessment, the agency agreed with the recommendation.
- In seven of the adoption cases where the IRM recommended the applicant/s were not suitable, the agency agreed with the recommendation.
- We are still awaiting the final decision in one case as of 30 April 2012.

#### Fostering

- In 21 of the fostering cases where the IRM recommended the applicant/s were suitable to foster, the FSP agreed with the recommendation.
- In 46 of the fostering cases where the IRM recommended the applicant/s were not suitable, the FSP agreed with the recommendation.
- We are still awaiting the final decision in seven cases as of 30 April 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to confidentiality, information on one case has not been included in these figures.

## Enquiries

In addition to the accepted applications, the IRM team run a small but busy office and respond to a large number of general requests for advice and information. In 2011-2012, 82 significant enquiries were made to the IRM team with 39 of these being from prospective applicants (existing or prospective adopters or foster carers). The remaining 43 enquiries were from professionals such as social workers, solicitors, court officials and researchers and included a small number of anonymous calls. This demonstrates the value placed on the IRM team by the range of people involved in this process.

## Applications not accepted

Eight applications received by the IRM were not accepted; of these, six related to fostering and two were adoption cases. In each of these cases the IRM Contract Manager advised and assisted, including liaising directly with the agency as appropriate. These cases were not accepted due to being out of timescale, the agency and the applicant deciding on a different course of action or because an applicant had simultaneously also made representations to their agency or provider (applicants can either make representations to their agency/provider or apply to the IRM but not both).

## Section 2

# The experience of the IRM for applicants and agencies

*Once again, first class excellent service from your organisation. We feel safe in the knowledge any future problems will be dealt with with the same degree of excellence.*

*We were extremely impressed by the panel's questions.*

The comments in this section apply to both adoption and fostering cases. Becoming an approved adopter or foster carer is a highly significant event for the individuals concerned and for the children who may be placed with those families. Being refused approval or losing existing approval will have a major impact on their lives and the process can be an emotionally charged and stressful one.

Applying to the IRM represents an independent and often final opportunity for consideration about suitability to adopt or foster to be reviewed. For many applicants it is the process itself, as well as the outcome, which is important. The IRM regularly receives feedback from applicants who say being heard and treated with respect has been very helpful for them regardless of the outcome of the panel.

### Feedback from agencies

Questionnaires were provided to all agencies within the 87 cases heard. Out of this number, 51 agencies responded and 36 did not.

Agencies provided feedback about their contact with IRM office staff and the information received about the IRM role, process and panel members. They also fed back their views about the paperwork provided and the practical arrangements for the review panel itself and the way in which it was conducted. The feedback is summarised below.

Fifty out of the 51 agencies stated that they were satisfied with their contact with the IRM office staff; one did not answer the question. Fourteen agencies provided an additional comment; where given, these were positive with comments about the office staff being 'helpful and informative' and 'professional'. Three agencies spoke of not having any direct contact with the IRM.

Fifty agencies were satisfied with the information they received about the role and process of the review panel; one agency did not answer this question. Twelve additional comments were provided which were deemed as positive as agencies felt the information provided was 'useful', 'helpful', 'clear' and 'informative'. Two agencies commented that the meeting with the chair and panel adviser before panel was very useful.

Agencies were broadly satisfied with the information provided in the profile about the members of the review panel and the panel process although one agency commented that they were: 'Surprised about the number of lay members with a professional qualification and the lack of members with actual adoption experience'.

There were some concerns raised or suggestions as to how the process could be improved. These included:

- being advised beforehand that the case is looked at in its entirety;
- being advised to bring files;
- that it might help if the questions could be received beforehand in order to prepare; or
- to provide an 'explanation of the process'.

The majority of agencies were happy with the paperwork provided and the practical arrangements at the review panel. Forty-four agencies felt they received all of the paperwork within the set timescales, three were unsure as it had not been sent directly to them but to the manager, and one raised concern. In relation to the practical arrangements, 27 out of 46 comments were positive, 10 agencies did not comment and others made comments in relation to parking and room size.

Out of the 49 agencies that responded to this question, 48 felt they were received and treated with respect and understanding by review panel members.

Twenty-two agencies made comments, with the majority of these being positive:

*Felt panel members were sensitive;*

*fair and clear;*

*open and respectful;*

*very welcoming;*

*a fair and unbiased process; and*

*good experience*

A sample of the concerns raised are as follows.

*The emphasis on avoiding debate, whilst understandable, does inevitably affect the flow and continuity of the hearing;*

*I feel this is a drain on public resource when we already have panel in place and in such a difficult financial climate;*

*It will be helpful for either party to be also seen separately by the panel;*

*I was surprised that information given by the applicants was not questioned more and appeared to be taken at face value.*

### **Feedback from applicants**

Overall, applicants considered their experience with the IRM was helpful and that the service offered worked well, both in relation to process and content.

Of the 87 applicants whose cases were heard, 42 responded to the questionnaire provided and 45 did not.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions, with four inviting comments and eight requesting a yes or no response. Of the 42 responses, some did not complete the yes or no section in full (by not answering every question).

Applicants were asked the same broad questions as agencies and their feedback is summarised below.

- Out of the 42 cases, 41 stated that they were satisfied with their contact with the IRM office; one did not provide a response. Twenty cases provided an additional comment and 19 of these were positive with comments being made about the office staff being 'very helpful', 'polite and efficient' and 'very professional'.
- Forty-two cases were satisfied with the information they received about the role and process of the review.
- Thirteen additional comments submitted generally focused on information provided being detailed, helpful, clear, reliable and easily understood.

On arrival at their panel hearing, all attendees are provided with panel profiles giving background information on the individual IRM panel members sitting that day. Forty respondents stated that they were satisfied with the information in the profile of panel members; two did not provide a response to this question. Thirteen further comments were made in relation to this question and 12 of these were deemed as positive.

All 42 respondents stated that they received all of their letters and papers from the IRM within the set timescales. Eleven additional comments were made and the majority of these commented on how efficient the IRM was.

On whether people felt that they were helped by the IRM to prepare for attending the review panel, the vast majority (37 out of 40 responses) responded favourably.

Of the 42 cases, seven felt that their agency helped them prepare for attending the review panel, 34 did not feel this was the case and one did not respond to this question. Some respondents stated that they did not ask their agency for support or had opted to go to a fostering association and it is important to be mindful of this when so many respondents felt they were not supported.

Applicants were generally positive about the practical arrangements with a few suggesting that panels should be held at a more localised venue. Some respondents also felt that the applicants should have the opportunity to ask questions of their agency and that there should be more opportunity during the review for the applicants to raise questions rather than waiting until the end. Additionally, they would have preferred to present or bring more information such as log books, ask questions and have more time.

Forty-one cases felt they were well treated with respect and understanding

*It wasn't as intimidating as I imagined.*

*It gave us the details of members and the huge experience and knowledge they have.*

*Gave a broad spectrum of people.*

*Too much to digest just before going into the meeting.*

*An IRM member of staff was always available when we telephoned with questions about our submissions to the review panel.*

by the review panel members. Twenty-two cases provided comments and a majority were deemed as positive. Comments such as *'I felt the panel listened to me'*, *'felt the panel were non-judgemental (and non) condescending'*, *'I felt very relaxed because of the professionalism'* were provided.

### **Quality assurance in the IRM**

As outlined above, every agency and applicant who attends an IRM panel hearing is invited to provide written feedback that is invaluable for the ongoing quality assurance and development of the service. The feedback is carefully scrutinised and followed up where necessary. An important aspect of the IRM is to afford additional public confidence in the process.

Although a number of applicants expressed dissatisfaction regarding the IRM outcome and recommendation, very few of these applicants lodged a formal complaint or formed a view that the outcome was a reflection on the IRM process. It is difficult to give a precise figure as this ranges from applicants who contact the IRM office after their panel hearing to seek further advice on what other course of action is open to them, to applicants who might phone to thank the IRM for the service but express sadness at the outcome, to applicants who wish to stress they will take their case as far as they can, including seeking legal advice as required or to formally make a complaint against the IRM.

In 2011-12 there were three commendations received and two formal complaints were lodged. The complaints were responded to by the IRM Contract Manager in accordance with the IRM complaints procedure.

## Section 3

# Themes for policy and practice

## ISSUES IN FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

### Assessment issues

There continue to be themes in both fostering and adoption cases of poorly evidenced and poorly analysed assessments. This relates to the original assessments and subsequent reports on suitability to foster/adopt including lack of evidence to support agency decisions.

### Emotional impact on applicants

Any decision or action by an agency or provider in relation to a person's suitability to foster or adopt will have a significant emotional impact on their lives. The emotional effort to then challenge these actions is considerable and the IRM service is aware that many applicants, whilst welcoming the IRM service, find the process of attendance at any panel a daunting one. The IRM is usually offering a service at a point of emotional sensitivity and stress in a person's life. Applicants are not required to attend the IRM panel and their choice to attend or not should not have any bearing on the outcome of their case. However, many applicants do choose to attend and bring a supporter.

In the routine feedback requested from IRM panel members after each panel, some members have said they feel the quality of the discussion is impacted upon by not having the applicants present and being able to speak and represent themselves directly. The attendance of the applicant does assist a more rounded discussion.

### Value of self-awareness and reflection

An issue that has arisen in a number of cases is the lack of ability of both foster carers and adopters to reflect and learn. This could be during an assessment process or whilst actively functioning as a foster carer or adopter. It can also be an issue during discussions about concerns and the need for foster carers and adopters to be open and actively consider their learning and self-development when the agency or provider initially begins any discussion on areas of concern.

This has also been commented on in agency practice and in the agency presentation at the IRM panel. The most helpful agency presentations are where the agency representatives are those who know the case best. It is also helpful when an agency has considered any gaps in its practice or support prior to the panel and is open and non-defensive in their manner at panel.

## Breach of regulations and guidance

The majority of agencies and providers broadly comply with the requirements in relation to the IRM including in the issuing of appropriate QDs. However, significant breaches are seen and some of the issues identified included the following.

- QD letters are often not posted on the day that the QD is made. They are usually not sent by recorded delivery and occasionally are sent by second class post. There is often no record of the date of posting or of receipt.
- Not all letters clearly state that the recipient has 28 **calendar** days (fostering) or 40 **working** days (adoption) in which to apply to the IRM. Any errors in this process could potentially misadvise or deny the applicant the right to access the IRM process.
- A small number of applicants had not been notified of their entitlement to apply to the IRM at all and it was not mentioned in the QD letter.
- On occasion the QD letter did not identify itself as such, although this is clearly what it was.
- Some agencies were unclear as to the requirement to offer the option of the IRM and carers were told, for example, that they were de-registered, without any recourse.
- In some cases individuals contacted the IRM as they had approached an agency and were unclear if their application had been accepted.
- In other cases an adoption assessment might have been started but a brief report not presented to the adoption panel and the applicant left unclear why or if the agency intended to do this.
- It is quite frequently the case that final decision letters from agency decision makers are not compliant with regulations and guidance in that they do not provide reasons, or offer 28 days for the applicant to accept the decision, or they cite inaccurate regulations.

## Adoption-specific issues

In a very small number of cases, approved adopters were reviewed with their suitability being reconsidered due to non-availability of a suitable match. Failure to find a suitable match after a first review would not in itself indicate being unsuitable.

## Fostering-specific issues

As in the previous two years since the IRM accepted fostering cases, some themes remain constant. These broadly include:

- lack of understanding and issues connected with emotional relationships;
- removal of children and how placements end;
- contact;

- how allegations are managed;
- annual reviews and training;
- personal experiences that impact on carers and emotional understanding;
- matching considerations including being “over numbers”, pre-placement risk assessments; and compatibility of need in unrelated children placed together;
- how professionals work together and support for foster carers; and
- appropriate management of kinship placements and approval status including separating out a person’s continued suitability from the placement needs of a specific child.

### **Placement decisions/moving children with proper consideration in foster placements**

There is a serious practice issue relating to how decisions are undertaken to remove children from fostering placements. The duty not to remove children from placement without a LAC Review unless there is ‘immediate risk of significant harm’ (Care Planning, Placement and Planning Review Regulations 2010) was not followed in a number of cases and this raises significant concerns about risk assessment and the value placed on established relationships. There are concerns in relation to this for both the child and the carer and in some cases evidence that foster carers have not been involved in decision making about children they are caring for.

Some providers are regularly placing children outside the terms of approval of the foster carer and there are examples of providers not carrying out annual reviews in line with statutory requirements.

Some foster carers have not been provided with reports which concern them, given the opportunity to comment, invited to panel and have not been given sufficient time to comment.

### **Assessment process and “counselling out”**

During this reporting year the new Fostering Services Regulations 2011 were introduced along with new National Minimum Standards and statutory guidance. This clarified that providers must complete a full assessment once the assessment has commenced, present it to the fostering panel for a recommendation and then to a decision maker for a QD. If an applicant withdraws, this is not required. A number of queries have been raised with the IRM including advice on what constituted an accepted application, a complete assessment and when and if to take it to panel.

### **Terms of approval/specialist schemes**

A number of fostering cases dealing with changes to terms of approval related to the issue of “specialist schemes” and movement or what applicants considered as “demotion” from a specialist scheme to being

a “regular” foster carer. Concerns raised by applicants reflect their belief that the criteria or skill level required was not always clear or fairly or adequately evidenced. This had an impact on the career and income of the carer, particularly if they were not being used whilst this issue was being addressed.

Some agencies and applicants, in unrelated cases, remain unclear that when the IRM panel is asked to consider the issue of a proposed change to terms of approval, it is also within the remit of the IRM to consider overall suitability including being able to recommend that an applicant is not suitable. This information is on the website and in the information given to potential applicants to the IRM.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the IRM is based on the principles of fairness, openness and independent external scrutiny. These principles form the key to all good social work practice, and the IRM offers a valuable addition to the other processes in place for ensuring that safe and suitable placements are provided for looked after children. The existence of the IRM offers some public confidence in the process of approving applicants as suitable to foster or adopt and a reassurance to applicants and agencies in relation to the quality of placements.

The IRM is funded by the Department for Education, although all agencies and providers whose QD is reviewed by the IRM make a contribution towards the cost of the review. At a time of financial cuts, some agencies and providers have questioned the necessity of the IRM, although others, including prospective adopters and foster carers, value the existence of an independent and external review in those cases where difficult decisions need to be made. Time and again applicants seeking an independent review contact the IRM to stress the importance they place on having the opportunity to have their say and be heard, whether or not the outcome is what they hoped for.

The IRM strives to offer a fair, balanced and transparent service that holds the needs of vulnerable children at its core whilst offering a professional responsive service to applicants and agencies.

# Section 4

## Management information

### Statistics

#### Types of applications

##### Adoption cases

TYPE	TOTAL *	%
Full prospective adopter's report		29
Brief prospective adopter's report		21
Review report on adopter		29
Intercountry adoption application		7
Application in relation to a specific child		7
Case - other		7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

\*Figures have been suppressed due to small numbers

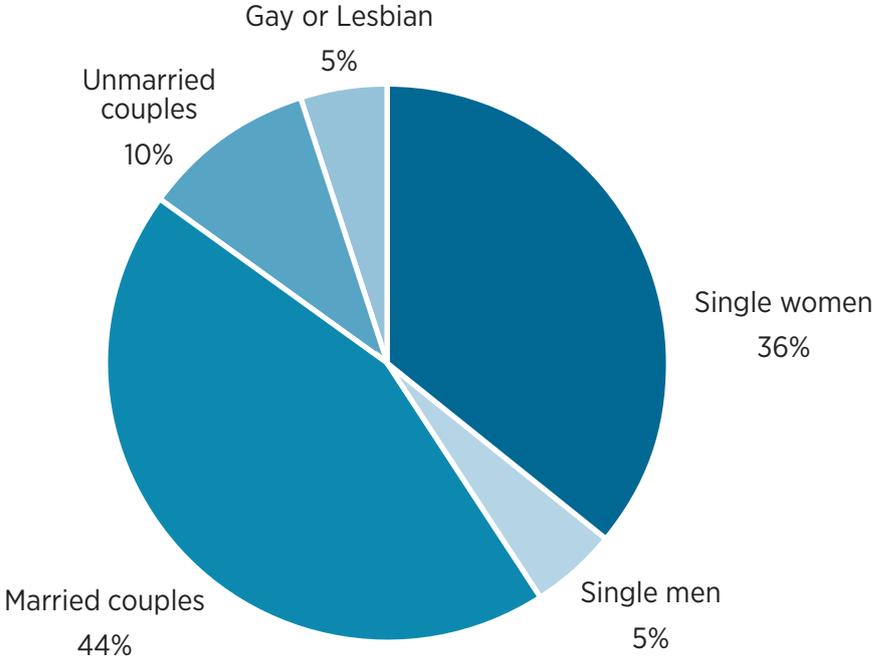
##### Fostering cases

TYPE	TOTAL	%
A prospective foster carer is unsuitable to foster	6	7
A foster carer's approval to foster should be terminated	57	68
Family and friends applications	13	15
Short break foster carer	0	0
Proposed change to a foster carer's terms of approval	8	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Status of applicants

Data available on the status of applicants to the IRM is collated from the information an applicant offers themselves or data that can be extrapolated from the application. We do not therefore have this information on every applicant and some people prefer not to provide it.

Within the 99 cases accepted in 2011-2012, 38 were from single women, a number smaller than five were from single men, 47 were from married couples and 10 were from unmarried couples. A number smaller than five of the single applicants (male and female) identified themselves as gay or lesbian.

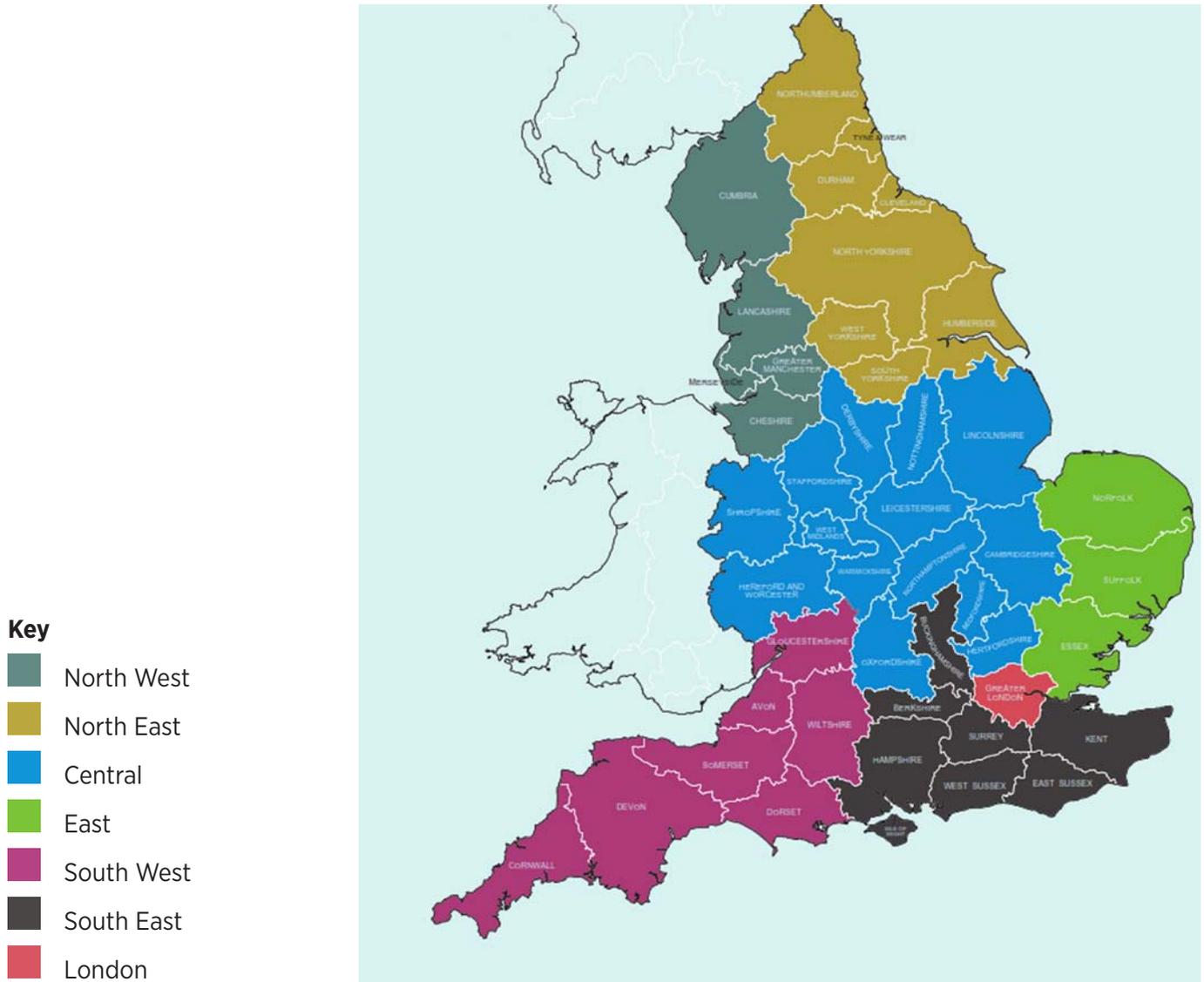


## Ethnicity of applicants

Data available on the ethnicity of applicants to the IRM is collated from the information an applicant offers themselves or data known from their application. We do not therefore have this information on every applicant and some people prefer not to provide it. Where it is provided, it is based on self-definition and the table below reflects this.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total group</b>	<b>%</b>
White – White, White American, White Asian, White European, White Irish, White Other	9	91	59
White British	60		
White English	9		
White UK	13		
Black – Black African, Black African Caribbean, Black Caribbean, Black British	17	17	11
Mixed	Unknown – due to the small number of cases no similar breakdown can be provided		
Asian – Asian, Asian Bangladeshi, Asian British, Asian Indian, Asian Pakistani, British Pakistani	11	11	7
Other	8	8	5
Unknown	28	28	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Geographical locations



### Geographical location of applicant/s

The following is a breakdown of the geographical areas of applicant/s:

- Central - 25
- East - 7
- London - 10
- North East - 17
- North West - 15
- South East - 9
- South West - 3
- Scotland - 1 (FSP based in England)

### **Geographical location of agency/fsp**

The following is a breakdown of the geographical areas of agency/FSP:

- Central - 25
- East - 4
- London - 12
- North East - 17
- North West - 16
- South East - 9
- South West - 4

### **Panel location**

The 87 cases heard by the IRM in 2011-12 were heard over five regular panels (Birmingham, Leeds, London (two panels) and Manchester). IRM panels tend to meet monthly and extra panels are set up as required. During this year, additional IRM panels operated in Derby, Gateshead and London.

The breakdown is as follows:

- Birmingham - 18 cases
- Leeds - 14 cases
- London 1 - 18 cases
- London 2 - 14 cases
- Manchester - 19 cases
- Extra panels four cases (in Derby, Gateshead and London)

## Contact details

Details of the IRM service and team are below.

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.

### Website

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

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