

THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW MECHANISM (IRM)



The IRM is a review process, which prospective or existing foster carers can use when they do not agree with a qualifying determination given to them by their fostering service provider. A 'qualifying determination' is a determination by the fostering service provider that it does not propose to approve a person as suitable to foster or proposes to terminate or change the terms of approval of an existing carer. A prospective foster carer or existing foster carer can ask their fostering service provider to reconsider their case or apply to the IRM for a review, but cannot do both.

The fostering service provider must give their reasons for intending to not approve or withdrawing approval, in writing. The foster carer then has 28 days from the date of the letter to make an application to either the local authority for reconsideration or to the IRM for a review.

The IRM is a review process, not an appeals process. As such it cannot overturn the fostering service provider's determination. It can make a fresh recommendation to the provider on the suitability to foster and/or the terms of your approval. The provider must take the IRM panel's recommendation into consideration when making its final decision.

The review process is conducted by a review panel, which is entirely independent of the fostering service provider. The review panel is constituted in the same way as a fostering panel and has a mixture of lay people and professionals, all of whom will have knowledge or experience of fostering. Wherever possible at least two members of the panel will be or have recently been foster carers.

There are four IRM Panels, two in London, one in Birmingham and one in Leeds. Foster carers will be invited to attend a panel that is most convenient for them. Representatives from the fostering service provider will also be invited to attend. The cost of the review panel will be met by the fostering service provider.

The IRM does not deal with complaints against a fostering service provider or any member of their staff. These must be dealt with through the fostering service provider's own complaints procedure.

The IRM is operated on behalf of the Department for Education by BAAF.

Full information can be obtained from:

**The Contract Manager
IRM
Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley
Leeds LS12 6AJ**

Tel: 0870 034 6420

or

E-mail: irm@baaf.org.uk

Web: www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

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