

How does the Adoption Panel operate?

The panel normally meets once a month.

By the time adoptive parent applicants are being considered by the Panel, they will have attended adoption preparation training sessions and have been assessed by their social worker.

The social worker will have completed a home study report, which will be submitted to the panel. Adoptive parent applicants will have seen the report written by the social worker and will have had the opportunity to make any further comments should they so wish.

The panel will consider the reports and contributions made by the applicants, and make a recommendation to the department about the suitability of the adoptive parent applicants.

It is the responsibility of the department to make the final decision.



May applicants attend the Adoption Panel meeting?

YES. The panel welcomes the opportunity to meet applicants. However, attendance is not compulsory and will not affect the outcome of the application.

The reports written by the social worker will remain the main source of information on which the panel makes its recommendations.

Attendance by applicants is an opportunity for them to ask questions of the Panel and to see who is making recommendations about their application.

What will happen at the meeting?

Applicants will be asked to attend for part of the discussion and will meet the Chair of the Panel prior to being brought into the meeting.

Applicants are present when their social worker is asked questions about their application and may choose to ask any questions they may have about the Panel process.

Following a further private discussion, the panel will make a recommendation.

Applicants will usually be told about the panel's recommendation immediately by their social worker. The final decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker, who is the Assistant Director of Child Care.

What will happen if the application is not successful?

If the department decides that an applicant should not be approved as an adoptive carer, the applicant has twenty-eight days from the date of that decision in which to notify the department that they wish their application to be reconsidered.

OR they can choose to refer the matter to the Independent Review Mechanism (see leaflet) for a qualifying decision.

For further information, please contact your Adoption and Fostering Team Social Worker, or the Team Manager, on 01275 888 888.

This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

Please contact 01275 888 999



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Adoption Panel Guide

A brief guide to the North Somerset adoption panel for adoptive parent applicants



posed by models

What is the purpose of the Adoption Panel?

The North Somerset Adoption Panel provides independent recommendations to the Housing and Social Services Department about whether:

- ◆ Adoption is in the best interests of the children;
- ◆ People who have applied to be adoptive parents are suitable to undertake the task of adoption;
- ◆ The child's best interests are served by linking the child to an identified and approved adoptive parent.



What does the Adoption Panel do?

In addition to the recommendations about adoption for a child, the suitability of adoptive parent applicants and the linking or matching of children with approved adoptive families, the Panel also advises the department about the legal steps that may need to be taken with particular children.

Who is on the Adoption Panel?

The Panel consists of 10 people. It is chaired by an independent person and has a vice-chair, who is also independent. The Panel also has:

- ◆ An experienced social worker from the department's Adoption Team and a Deputy Team Manager in Child Care;
- ◆ A medical adviser;
- ◆ An elected member from the council's Social Services Committee;
- ◆ Four other people, both professional and lay people, two of whom have direct experience of fostering or adoption.

The panel also has a legal adviser and social work adviser, who are not members of the panel.

The panel has an administrator who is responsible for taking minutes at the meetings and circulating the relevant documents to panel members.

It is important that the panel is representative of the community it serves. To this end we seek to include on the panel:

- ◆ members of ethnic minorities;
- ◆ a balance of men and women;
- ◆ people who have direct experience of fostering and adoption.

North Somerset Council Adoption Panel members

Derek Symes
Chair and Independent Member

Marilyn Hayward
Vice Chair, Lay Member – Adopter

Diane Scarborough
Lay Member – Adviser on Disabilities

Sue Davies
Lay Member – Adoptee

Kim Graham
Senior Adoption Worker, Catholic Children's Society

Cllr Ann Harley
District Councillor

Dr Deborah Barff
Medical Adviser

Jane Routledge
Manager, Special Education Needs, Education Department

Ros Thomson
Deputy Team Manager, Child Care

Jean Cartmell
Adoption Social Worker, Adoption and Fostering Team

North Somerset Council Adoption Panel also in attendance

Lorraine Sherman or Trish Woods
Legal Advisers

Susan Nicholls
Social Work Adviser and Service Manager, Child Care Provider Services

Becky Farler
Panel Administrator

