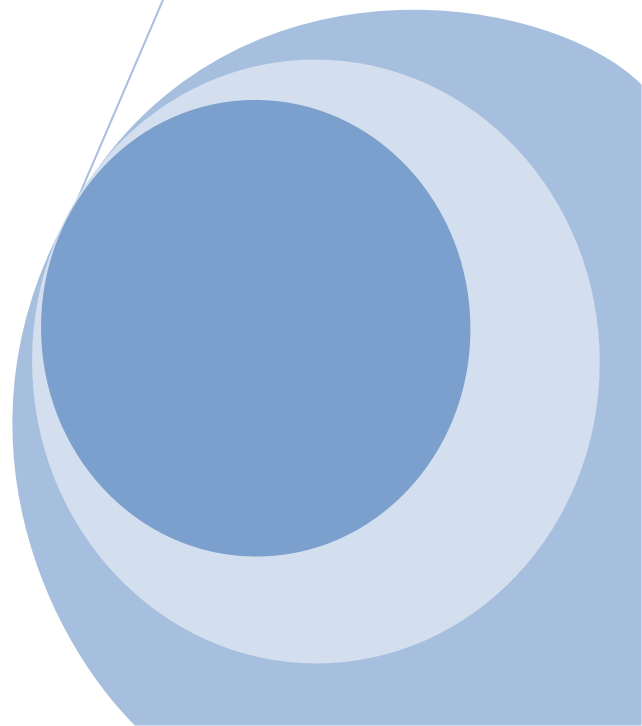
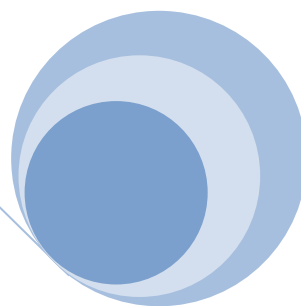
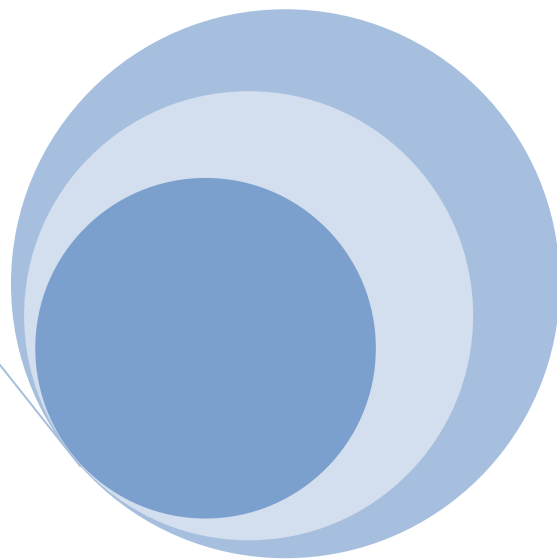


**Wirral  
Adoption  
Panel  
Annual  
Report  
2009**



## **1 Introduction**

This is the third adoption panel report written by the members of the Adoption Panel since it was formed in accordance with the regulations which came into force on 30 December 2005.

Previous reports were for the following periods:

- February 06 to December 07
- January 08 to December 09

Plus a 3 years review was completed in December 2009

## **2 Panel Membership**

There have not been any changes to the panel membership; however there has been a change of agency adviser.

### **2.1 Membership in December 2009**

- Dorothy Lewis – chairperson
- Sue Jamieson-Quinn – vice chair & independent member
- Colleen McNamara - social work representative
- Ann Downes- social work representative
- George Bragan- social work representative
- Martin Lyon - independent member
- Caryn Lock- independent member
- Christine Comer – medical adviser
- Sheila Clarke – councillor

Advisers to the panel:

- Vicki Shaw – legal adviser
- Simon Garner – agency adviser

Plus Debi Kenyon as panel administrator

### **2.2 Observers**

Sue Leedham, Adoption Team Manager, has been an observer at most panel meetings during 2009 with the exception when she acted as the agency adviser. Also there were other observers at 50% of panel meetings: these ranged from trainees [social work & psychology] to a new member of adoption team.

### **2.3 Quoracy**

There was only one occasion when quoracy was an issue in relation to having a social work representative present; however this was resolved by two of the social work representatives each attending part of the panel.

### **2.4 Succession planning**

There is a need to put in place succession planning as some members terms will finish in 2011, also this will ensure there is a proactive approach to having full membership.

## **3 Meetings and attendance**

Panel planned and met 14 times during 2009.

Members are required to attend at least 75% of the meetings and this has been achieved except for one member and that related to a period of illness. The majority of non attendances have arisen from members taking holidays and, in some cases for the social workers, work matters such as attending court.

#### **4 Panel Workload**

During 2009 panel has concentrated on dealing with the cases presented and, as required, discussed some specific issues.

The number of cases presented to panel totalled 68; this has averaged 5 cases per panel although this has varied from 1 to 7 cases. Panel members agreed in 2007 that the maximum number of cases presented at any panel must not exceed 8.

Of the 68 cases presented formally to panel a couple of cases have been presented to panel on more than one occasion as they were previously deferred.

Of these 68 cases the following information has been collated:

*[refer to annex 1 for greater details]*

##### **4.1 Children**

22 cases were presented consisting of 34 children:

Panel:

- recommended that 28 children should be placed for adoption – 2 of these children had already been recommended as should be placed for adoption but were required by the court to reconsider [panel's original recommendation was not changed]
- did not support the proposed change of care plan from adoption to long term foster care for 1 child
- deferred 5 [2 individual children & sibling group of 3]

The children presented were:

- 12 individual children
- 8 sibling groups of 2
- 2 sibling groups of 3

##### **4.2 Adopters**

22 cases were presented consisting of 17 couples applicants; 3 single applicants; an approved couple for deregistration and a review of an approved couple.

Panel recommended that:

- 16 couples be suitable to be adopters
- 1 couple were not suitable to be adopters
- 3 single applicants be suitable to adopt
- 1 couple be deregistered
- 1 couple continue as approved adopters

##### **4.3 Matching of adopters and children**

24 cases presented consisting of 29 children with 17 couples and 6 single adopters plus a rescinding of a proposed match. Of the 24 cases represented

1 proposed match with a single adopter was deferred and reconsidered at a later date.

Panel recommended that all the children presented be matched and the rescinding of a previous agreed match.

## **5 Policies, procedures and practices**

Panel has continued to consider a number of issues throughout the year; for details refer to annex 2.

The key issues were:

- completion of panel's 3 years review
- implementation within the agency of the new children permanence report developed by the panel
- increase of documents to be read by panel members
- complaint by panel to CAFCASS
- agreement for adopters to attend panel for matches [commenced 2010]
- possible change of venue
- possible need for new members

## **6 Panel development and training**

In 2009 members planned initially to have 3 training and development days, these were to be in January, June and October. However, as one of the key topics was subsequently booked to take place in April 2010, only 2 development days took place; these were held on 30 January and 25 September. The January day was jointly held with and delivered by the members of the Adoption Team.

### **January development day**

- Work of the adoption team from preparation group to post adoption support to matching considerations.

### **October development day**

- Post adoption support and child attachment

## **7 Feedback to panel**

Panel members recognise that it is important to continually develop and improve and try to ensure that those attending panel experience it as positively as possible irrespective of the recommendations being made. Therefore feedback from those who present or attend panels is very important. Unfortunately no formal feedback has been sought during 2009. It has been agreed that a robust system needs to be in place for 2010.

## **8] Summary about Panel's performance**

In comparison to previous years panel has had a period of relatively stability in so much as panel membership has not changed; there has not been any changes to regulations, guidances or agency's policies that could have impacted on the working practices of the panel. This stability has given the members greater opportunities to get to know each other better and become more consistent in approach to considering matters.

### **8.1 Commitment**

Panel members continue to develop individually and together and consider the performance of panel in fulfilling it's responsibilities.

The requirement for panel members to have access to and hence read all independent expert witnesses reports for children being considered for 'should be placed for adoption' has increased the time required. This additional expectation has been accepted by all panel members without complaint, again demonstrating continued commitment.

Panel members continue to ensure that those attending panel experience it as positively as possible irrespective of the recommendations being made whilst at the same time recognising that any recommendation made has to be child centred and is life changing for the child and adults.

### **8.2 Future issues**

In 2010 panel will be dealing with the following:

- attendance of proposed adopters when being considered for a match with a child/ren panel
- the new National Minimum Standards due to be produced in 2010 and any impact for panel
- attachment style interviews as part of the assessments of adults.

Although panel fulfils all the tasks requested of it there remains a number of tasks not yet presented to panel on a consistent basis, these are:

- children who are the subject of a placement order and not placed within the first 6 months review [nine months from placement order being made]
- information about disruptions from which panel can learn and fully participate in the child's future planning

In addition a 'business session' needs to be established on a regular basis that deals with the following:

- 6 monthly presentation on statistical information including children who are placed or are waiting a placement; adopters who have had children placed or awaiting placement
- agency adoption report is to be presented to panel for comments / information prior to scrutiny committee
- new information i.e. regional approaches developed through Adoption22

The use of the 'any other business' session at the end of each panel will continue to capture other information and development issues.

Other matters that remain outstanding are:

- production of the leaflet that includes panel members
- confirmation of remuneration for independent members

- commitment to a robust feedback system

## **9] Aspirations for the following year**

The aspirations for 2010 continue to be those expressed last year:

*'We as panel members want to continue to improve and ensure that the role we fulfil in participating in the lives of children and adults is of the highest standard'.*

### ***The Adoption Panel members January 2010***

## **10] Adoption agency's comments about panel's performance**

During 2009 the Wirral Adoption Panel has continued to go from strength to strength in its commitment to meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable children, who need to achieve permanence through adoption.

The significant commitment to continuously improve the quality of Child Permanence Reports, the timeliness of adoption placements and the approval of adopters from diverse backgrounds to meet Wirral children's needs has been impressive.

It has been a busy year, during which there has been considerable commitment by all Panel members to attend meetings regularly, participate in training and development and to rigorously challenge, enquire and understand children and families in a thoughtful and professional manner. This has led to many children being placed within families, providing nurturing environments within which children can flourish and achieve their full potential.

The Panel has high aspirations for improving further, through addressing the future issues identified at the end of this report. This will support the continued journey to achieve the aspirations of the Panel for 2010.

Julia Hassall

Head of Branch  
Children's Social Care  
May 2010.



**Appendix 1**

<b>Panel dates</b>	<b>SHOPA</b>	<b>Adopter[s]</b>	<b>Matches</b>	<b>Other presented cases &amp; information about cases</b>	<b>Total number of cases considered</b>
7 January	2 Siblings 2 siblings 1 child	1 couple 1 single adopter			5
11 February	None	3 couples [1 same sex] 2 single adopters	1 child with a couple 1 child with a couple	disruption discussion	7
11 March	2 Siblings deferred 1 child	1 couple [same sex]	1 child with single adopter 2 siblings with a couple 1 child with a couple		6
8 April	3 separate children 2 siblings	none	1 child with a couple 1 child with a couple [same sex]	<i>Reconsidered, as requested by guardian, 2 siblings [twins] – panel had previously recommended they should be placed for adoption &amp; did not change their recommendation. Informed that a panel recommendation for approval of adopter had been deferred by ADM pending further considerations.</i>	7
6 May			2 Siblings with a couple	<i>Panel considered rescinding the matching of a child with a couple and recommended that the match not proceed. Panel informed that a case presented may have given panel misleading information – matter to be represented to panel in July</i>	2
3 June	none	none	1 child with a couple 1 child with a couple 1 child & single adopter 1 child & single		4



			adopter - deferred		
1 July	1 child	2 couples	1 child & single adopter	<i>Deregistration of a couple approved as adopters. Presentation on reasons why there had been a change of care plan for a child following the recommendation of panel and the decision by the ADM. The matter will need to be represented to panel if the change of care plan is supported by the court.</i>	5
15 July	1 child deferred 3 siblings	none	1 child with a couple 2 siblings with a couple [same sex]	<i>12 months update on approved couple – panel supported that they be considered for another child</i>	5
26 August	1 child		1 child with single adopter		2
9 September		1 couple			1
30 September	2 siblings 1 child	3 couples – 1 couple not recommended	1 child with a couple		6
21 October	none	1 couple	2 siblings with a couple 1 child with a couple 1 child with a single adopter		4
18 November	2 siblings 1 child	3 couples	1 child with a couple	<i>Panel considered change of plan for a child from adoption to long term care – panel did not concur with change of plan &amp; recommendation adoption as continuing to be in the child's best interest</i>	7
16 December	2 siblings 1 child 3 siblings - deferred	2 couples	1 child with a couple 2 siblings with a couple	ADM's reasons for disagreeing with panel's recommendation not to approve a couple as adopters shared.	7
					<b>68</b>

## Appendix 2

Panel date	Issues considered under any other business	Update
7 January	<b>Development day 30 January : the programme is on the work of the Adoption Team</b>	The programme was well received by Adoption Panel members- was very informative and facilitated an opportunity for the panel and team members to quality time together. Propose to have joint development day annually. The positive comments by the ADM about the panel and the team were much appreciated.
	<b>The Adoption Panel Annual Report 2008 with</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 3 Years Review</li> <li>• Individual annual reviews issues papers</li> </ul>	Report completed and submitted to the agency. The ADM added comments to the annual report- both were presented to the LA Scrutiny Committee
	<b>New CPR</b>	Was initially piloted and has been adopted by the agency.
	<b>Inclusion of all assessments</b>	These has been addressed by the agency and all expert assessments included in the panel members' papers
11 February	<b>Leaflet for those attending panel</b>	Draft agreed but as yet has not been produced
	<b>Proposed development of replacement form for assessing adopters</b>	Informed by Adoption22 that national ICS programme will standardise BAAF new PAR form. Panel no longer to pursue developing new form.
	<b>April development day – programme was to be replacement form for assessing adopters; appropriateness of item no longer valid</b>	Day deferred to June 09
11 March	<b>Meeting of Adoption Panel chairs &amp; Judge De Haas</b>	Brief resume of content offered and that future meetings are planned.

	<p><b>Planning development days:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26th June 2009- topic: parenting capacity, with &amp; without children.</li> <li>• 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009 – topic: attachment styles for both adults and children.</li> </ul>	Days cancelled: attachment style to following agency training in 2010
	<b>Panel members' annual reviews:</b> November dates agreed	Most annual reviews completed in November: 2 deferred to January 2010
8 April	<b>Panel chair's meeting with Head of Service /ADM</b>	Brief resume of content shared with panel members
	<b>Panel's formal complaint to CAFCASS</b>	Complaint letter agreed by panel members-chair to act on panel's behalf.
3 June	<b>Complaint letter to CAFCASS</b> – update following meeting with the CAFCASS manager and panel chair. further information identified to be shared with CAFCASS.	No formal response received following the complaint letter and subsequent information.
1 July	<b>Development day</b> September 2009.	
	<b>Panel Observer</b> Simon Garner, Strategic Service Manager	Comments from Simon well received by panel members
	<b>Agency Adviser</b> Matter raised with Julia Hassall with a number of other issues.	Simon acknowledged the issues
15 July	<b>Development day</b> Confirmation 25 September – topic: post adoption support and child attachment. To be facilitated by Sue L & Martin L.	
	<p><b>Chair's meeting with Head of Service /ADM</b></p> <p>Brief resume of content of discussions given especially issue of agency advisor and new Service Manager not able to cover this role.</p> <p>Annual meetings will consist of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> – review of annual report etc and review of chair's activity for previous year;</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> - joint meeting chair &amp; vice chair to discuss general issues relating to panel &amp; agency's performance;</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> - chair's annual review.</li> </ul>	Agency adviser is Simon Garner; Sue Leedham is deputy. Dorothy confirmed that Julia is pleased with the work of the Panel.
26 August	<b>Development day – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009:</b> agreed Julia Hassall and Katharine Radclyffe to be invited.	

	<b>Development on attachment style</b> is planned for 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	
	<b>Panel members</b> Acknowledge that changes within the agency will mean new social representative[s] needed for panel membership.	Yet to be concluded
	<b>Appointment Agency Adviser</b> Simon Garner appointed as Agency Adviser to the Panel. Sue Leedham will act as deputy agency adviser.	
9 September	<b>New Agency Adviser</b> welcomed to panel	
30 September	<b>Rota for panel observers to be created</b> Agreed maximum of 1 observer per panel	Yet to be completed
21 October	<b>Annual reviews</b> Confirmation of times, dates and self evaluation forms .	Most completed
	<b>Timing of Panel items</b> Proposed new time allocations for presentation at panel: matches to be 30 minute slot; approval to adopt be 45 minutes.	In place
	<b>Frequency of panels</b> Agreed to place on December agenda for 2010 - specific periods in the year when the volume of cases to be presented increases.	Increase in panels in autumn period
18 November	<b>Change of Panel venue</b> Discussed requirements of a new venue for 2010.	Agency continuing to seek suitable venue
	<b>Panel members' personnel files</b> Stock take of files to be undertaken by Dorothy prior to annual reviews.	Requirements identified for agency to follow up.
	<b>Draft Adoption National Minimum Standards</b> – circulated to members for information- consultation period to December 09.	Awaiting agency's feedback on comments.
	<b>End of calendar year</b> panel members to consider : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual review</li> <li>• development programme for 2010</li> </ul>	
16 December	<b>Draft panel member's annual reviews</b> Circulated for amendments and agreement	Amendments etc for January 10 panel
	<b>Adopters to panel for matching</b>	Invites to commence January 2010
	<b>New venue for panel</b>	Searches continue

