

Welcome to the
**Independent Review
Mechanism**

Complaints Procedure for Applicants

Contact details for making a complaint

Stage 1 and 2 complaints should be addressed to

IRM Contract Manager
Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)
Unit 4
Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley
LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Tel: 0845 450 3956
Fax: 0845 450 3957
(charged at local rates)
E-Mail: irm@baaf.org.uk
www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

NB If the complaint is relating to the Contract
Manager, the complaint should be addressed to
The Executive Director, BAAF, at the address below.

Independent appeals should be addressed to

The Chief Executive
BAAF
Saffron House
6–10 Kirby Street
London EC1N 8TS

Tel. 020 7421 2600
Fax: 020 7421 2601

The IRM is operated by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

We are committed to providing a high quality of service and welcome feedback about the operation of both the IRM office and the Review Panels. We believe that positive and negative comments from those using the service will help us to evaluate and improve the service.

We have a clear complaints procedure which can be used by applicants. However, you should be aware that this complaints procedure cannot be used if you are unhappy with the actual recommendation made by the review panel. In that situation, you should seek legal advice.

We have set out below what you should do if you are not happy with any aspect of your involvement with the IRM.

You need to contact the IRM office initially by phone or in writing and tell us what the problem is as we may be able to sort things out immediately. We hope you would do this within one month of the issue arising so we can deal with it effectively. We will then confirm with you if you wish to make a complaint and check with you the details of your complaint.

If it appears that your complaint relates to an aspect of the service not covered by the IRM, e.g. it may relate to actions of the adoption agency, we will advise you of this and discuss with you whether you would like your

complaint forwarded to the relevant agency.

If you need help in pursuing your complaint, we can provide an interpreter or advocate at your request. We will also try to ensure that, if you feel you have been disadvantaged because you are a member of a minority group, any investigation is carried out by a manager or independent investigator from that group.

We will try to resolve all complaints quickly and to everyone's satisfaction, and our complaints procedure has two stages to ensure this can be achieved and an external appeal if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

Stage 1

All complaints will be dealt with by the IRM Contract Manager who will try to resolve the issue with you and confirm in writing the outcome of your complaint. This will be dealt with within 7 days of your complaint being received.

Stage 2

If you are not happy with the outcome, you need to write to the IRM Contract Manager within 7 days giving your reasons for being unhappy with the Stage 1 response and telling us how you would like the matter to be resolved. Your complaint will then be passed to the Executive Director of BAAF who will either investigate the issue or arrange for a senior manager in BAAF to investigate it.

You will be contacted as part of the investigation and a report will be prepared, which will decide whether the complaint is upheld and set out any actions required by the IRM as a result of the investigation. This will be carried out within 14 days wherever possible. If we consider that a longer period will be needed, we will inform you of this. You will then receive a letter from the Contract Manager telling you the outcome of the investigation.

Independent appeal

If you still feel the issue has not been resolved, you will need to write to the Chief Executive of BAAF giving your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of Stage 2 within 14 days.

The Chief Executive will consider whether you have provided fresh information or arguments relating to the complaint, which would qualify for an independent appeal.

If the matter does not qualify for an independent appeal, the IRM will inform you of this and give you information on how to approach the Parliamentary Ombudsman for external scrutiny of the issue. If you have raised new issues, then this will be considered as a new complaint and we will start at the beginning of the process.

If the Chief Executive feels that there are further grounds for investigation, he or she will appoint an independent person with relevant experience to further investigate your complaint.

You will be contacted during the investigation to meet the investigator. The investigation will be carried out within 28 working days wherever possible and a report will be prepared which will decide whether the complaint is upheld and will provide recommendations.

The Chief Executive will then consider the report and write to you with a copy of the report and a final decision on how the matter is resolved. You will also be given details of how to refer your case to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

All stages of the complaints procedure will be completed within a 3 month period.