



<b>Paper No. SET/51/18</b>	
	<b>Tick One ✓</b>
For discussion	
For approval	
For information/noting	X

**Date of Trust Board Meeting:** 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018

**Confidential or Public Agenda:** Public

**Agenda item:** Adoption Panel Annual report  
1st April 2017– 31st March 2018

**1.0 Introduction**

This is the 5th Annual Report for the South Eastern H&SC Trust Adoption Panel.

The Panel has continued to sit on the first and third Tuesday of each month and will normally sit for a half day, although it can be extended in time, or additional Panels scheduled if required.

**2.0 Background information**

The Panel has continued to sit on the first and third Tuesday of each month and will normally sit for a half day, although it can be extended in time, or additional Panels scheduled if required.

**3.0 Brief summary of key points contained in the paper/s**

The Adoption Panel continues to have a high volume of work. All new Panel members have received induction training and they have contributed fully and positively to the discussions prior to any recommendation(s) being made.

The attached table gives an overview of the work of the Panel and compares the main business with last year’s statistics. In almost all areas of business there has been an increase in activity.

<b>Panel Business</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>	<b>2016/2017</b>
Best Interest for Adoption Recommendations	<b>Twenty-Two</b>	<b>Thirteen</b>
Children Adopted	<b>Twenty-Two</b>	<b>Seventeen</b>
Freeing Orders Granted	<b>Thirteen</b>	<b>Sixteen</b>
Best Interest for Adoption Recommendations Rescinded	<b>Two</b>	<b>Four</b>
Matching Recommendations Made	<p><b>Twenty-two</b> in total</p> <p>Of these, <b>Eleven</b> were informal matches and <b>Eleven</b> were formal matches – relating to <b>Eighteen</b> children in total - i.e. that some of the children were informally matched, and then formally matched within the 12 month reporting period)</p>	<p><b>Thirty-Two</b> in total</p> <p>Of these, <b>Sixteen</b> were informal matches and <b>Sixteen</b> were formal matches- relating to <b>Twenty-One</b> children in total. - i.e. that some of the children were informally matched, and then formally matched within the 12 month reporting period)</p>

While the concept of informal matching and placement of children with dual approved adopters is seen as being in the 'Best Interests' of the children, that is - enabling children to be placed with adopters at an earlier stage and improving the attachment process, it does however have a detrimental impact on the operation of the Panel. Panel business has increased significantly over the last few years as a recommendation is made in respect of the informal match, and following the granting of a Freeing Order, the same case is required to return to Panel for a second time for consideration of a formal match. This matter is currently being considered as part of amendments to legislation proposed by the Adoption & Children's Bill.

The Trust's Adoption Service has continued to embed a service restructure with post adoption support now being offered by the Permanence Team. This realignment of post adoption support from the Adoption Team was aimed at addressing the need for the Trust to increase the number of adoption assessments being completed. As highlighted within this report, the Trust has doubled the number of assessments of dual approved / concurrent applications. Despite the Adoption Team being impacted by staffing shortages over the last year, an

increase in recruitment and assessment activity has been achieved over the past twelve months by utilising support from the Independent Adoption Agency sector.

The anticipated adoption reform as set out by the Department of Health in the draft Adoption & Children's Bill was issued for consultation in the last reporting period. It is the intention of this Bill to consolidate Adoption Law in Northern Ireland, both Domestic and Intercountry. Part two of the Bill will amend the Children (NI) Order so that the legislation is compatible. This is an on-going process and the Trust continues to remain open and engaged with the Department.

The previous reporting period noted a significant number of changes and adjustments for the Adoption Panel. This year has enabled Panel members to gain experience in their respective roles which will enable training and reflection on Adoption Panel issues in the coming year.

#### **4.0 Recommendation/s for the Trust Board (please state if the paper/s is for information/noting or for approval by Board members)**

For Information

**Lead Director:** Brendan Whittle

**Designation:** Director of Children's Services and Executive Director of Social Work

**Date:** 8/8/18