



<b>Paper No. SET/30/21</b>	
	<b>Tick One ✓</b>
For discussion	
For approval	X
For information/noting	

**Date of Trust Board Meeting:** 26 May 2021

**Confidential or Public Agenda:**  
Public

**Agenda item: SET Adoption  
Panel Annual Report 1<sup>st</sup> April  
2019- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

**1.0**

**2.0 Background information**

The Adoption panel’s aim has remained the provision of a contemporary Adoption panel that is capable of providing a high quality service to both children and prospective adoptive parents. The Adoption panel will normally have a set agenda of three cases per panel, an additional slot is available to address urgent matters, or for seeking panel’s advice. The fourth slot is regularly used and additional panel days are required during the year to meet demand.

The Adoption Panel has three primary functions;

To consider and make a recommendation to the adoption agency on;

- Whether adoption is in the “Best Interests” of a particular child and if so, the most appropriate legal route by which this can be achieved.
- Whether an applicant is suitable to be an adoptive parent.
- The suitability of a proposed placement for adoption of a child with approved adopter/s.

Additionally, the Adoption panel has responsibility for;

- Providing an opinion on the suitability of a proposed placement of a child for whom the care plan is adoption, with prospective adopters on a foster care basis.
- Providing a consultation service to the Trust on adoption issues.

- Making recommendations in respect of the payment of adoption allowances.

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

The Adoption Panel continues to have a high volume of work being presented, which has been managed within the panel timetable. All panel members have become fully integrated into their roles on the Adoption Panel and independent members have received an appraisal to assist the development of reflection, learning and identification of training needs.

- 3.1 The number of best interest recommendations made by the panel has increased significantly this year from eighteen to twenty nine. This was the highest number in the seven years of the Adoption panel in South Eastern Trust and the highest number across the five trusts for the year
- 3.2 There was an increase in the number of adopters recommended for approval by the adoption panel in this period from eleven in the previous year to twenty four from 2019-2020. This was the highest number of approvals across the region. Fourteen new approvals were for dually approved or concurrent placements. This will provide greater choice in the matching process in the incoming period and will benefit children by optimising their matching considerations at pre linking panel.
- 3.3 Numbers of adopters wishing to be considered for concurrent placements has remained steady at four. The adoption team continues to promote and educate prospective adopters on this type of placement
- 3.4 Matching recommendations by the adoption panel remained high at twenty seven. Eleven children were informally matched and sixteen formal matches were recommended by Adoption panel.
- 3.5 The number of former foster carers who are assessed and approved to adopt a child in their care remains high at ten. Three of the children had been placed with concurrent carers before coming to adoption panel for a best interest recommendation. Therefore those young children had experienced emotional permanence and attachment formation from an earlier stage
- 3.6 Four children had their best interest recommendation rescinded at adoption panel in this reporting period.
- 3.7 Freeing orders granted remained relatively constant at fifteen, one less than the previous year 2018-19.

The number of Adoption orders on South Eastern Trust children was slightly higher this year. Twelve children were made subject to Orders

compared to nine the year 2018-19.

3.8 Adoption panel time was utilised more effectively in this reporting period with four additional panels having to be scheduled to meet demand and avoid delay and less gaps in panel schedules occurring due to case readiness and more forward planning with the adoption panel advisor, adoption panel admin manager and social work teams.

3.9 There were five training opportunities in the course of the period including signs of safety, PPANI, legal training on the use of balanced analysis of care planning options within Looked after children review where the care plan changes to permanence via adoption, regional training on adoption panel and “Beyond together or apart” regarding siblings.

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

**ADOPTION PANEL SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS**

There are a number of areas of service developments relating to adoption panel business to be progress in the coming year.

- Continuity of adoption panel incorporating the adaptations that have been necessary due to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Communication to adoptive applicants regarding the use of Zoom and the functioning of panel.
- Development of feedback from adoption panel attendees to assist learning and development.
- Guidance leaflets for prospective adopters and social work staff on procedures following adoption panel.
- Contingency arrangements for the production of minutes when these are impacted by annual leave or sick leave. Training for panel members regarding impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, the impact of Trauma on Children and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

**Lead Director:** Barbara Campbell

**Designation:** Director of Children’s Service and Social Work

**Date:** 26 May  
2021