

CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY		
Report Title	ADOPTION PANEL CHANGES	
Key Decision	N/A	
Ward	All	
Contributors	Head of Law	
Class	Part 1	Date 15 November 2011

1. Summary

This report sets out new provisions in relation to the Council's Adoption Panel.

2. Purpose

To ensure that the Constitution reflects existing statutory provisions and practice.

3. Recommendations

To recommend that the Council approve the amended provisions relating to the Adoption Panel appearing in this report at para 5 below for inclusion in the Constitution.

4. Background

The Council's Adoption and Permanence Panel has a heavy workload. It is required by law to make recommendations and give advice to the adoption agency (the Council) about whether children should be placed for adoption, whether prospective adopters are suitable, and whether to make applications for placement orders, cease parental contact and / or restrict parental responsibility. The meetings are lengthy and frequent. Nationally it has been recognised that the burden on members of the Adoption Panel can be a very heavy and time consuming commitment. To alleviate this pressure, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 were amended by the Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011, which came into force in April 2011. These allow for adoption panels to consist of members drawn from a central list as opposed to having a fixed membership.

It is therefore suggested that the Constitution be amended to reflect these new provisions as set out in paragraph 5 below.

5. Amendments to Adoption Panel provisions

In accordance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (as amended) Lewisham will maintain a list of persons who are considered by it to be suitable to be members of an adoption panel ("the central list"), including:-

- (a) one or more social workers who have at least three years' relevant post-qualifying experience, and
- (b) at least one medical advisor
- (c) a person able to fulfill the role of independent chair
- (d) one or two persons capable of fulfilling the role of chair in the absence of the chair (vice – chairs)
- (e) an Agency Advisor

A person who is included in the central list may at any time ask to be removed from the central list by giving one month's notice in writing.

Where the adoption agency is of the opinion that a person included in the central list is unsuitable or unable to remain in the list the agency may remove that person's name from the list by giving them one month's notice in writing with reasons.

5.1 Quorum

From the list, to conduct business, one or more Adoption Panels may be constituted, to include as a minimum:-

1. An independent Chair OR
2. A vice chair
3. One or more social workers with at least 3 years relevant post-qualifying experience
4. Three other members and where the Chair is not present and the Vice chair is not an independent person, at least one other Panel member must be an independent person.

5.2 Frequency of Meetings

Panels must meet frequently, at least once a month, and on short notice if necessary.

5.3 Elected members

There is no requirement to have an elected member, but the Council may appoint an elected member to sit on the Panel to represent the Corporate Parent.

5.4 Experience and expertise

The adoption agency must ensure that an adoption panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary to effectively discharge the functions of the panel.

5.6 Terms of reference

Remain unchanged.

6. Legal and financial implications

The legal implications are set out in the report and there are no financial implications as the amended version simply reflects Lewisham's current practice.

7. Background papers

There are none.

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