



Adoption Panel
Annual Activity Report
April 2022 – March 2023

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Panel Chair Summary

The Northern Trust Adoption panel continues to make positive progress. The Panel continues to meet monthly however additional panels have been established as demand requires, affording flexibility and responsiveness to need.

The accountability of the panel is enhanced by the oversight of an adoption panel learning group. This group meets quarterly and is attended by Heads of Service from Corporate Parenting. The group considers areas of good practice and improvements that arise from monthly panel meetings. Matters that need to be escalated from this group are tabled at the Fostering and Adoption Governance and Improvement Group, chaired by the decision maker, Mrs Julie Patterson (Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting).

There has continued to be noted improvements in the quality of reports presented to panel throughout this reporting period. The full use of the CORAM BAAF, Adoption and Fostering Academy assessment reports remains. The feedback from applicants has been overwhelmingly positive with prospective adopters describing in panel how the questions powerfully bring the role of becoming a carer to life.

The period April 2022- March 2023 has been a busy period for Adoption Panel; panel membership has a strong balance of skill and experience representing a diverse range of disciplines, service users by expert and independent representatives. The Panel displays a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm to the work, and applies an appropriate level of scrutiny to assessments with the focus always being on meeting the needs of children and safeguarding their welfare.

The Panel further recognises the responsibility it has in balancing this with a need to ensure that applicants feel welcome and respected by the Adoption Panel, this experience has been enhanced with a full return to face to face meetings for all prospective adoptive carers.

The Adoption Panel will continue to evolve to accommodate changes in policy, procedure, guidance and legislation. To support panel members they will be provided with training and development opportunities, plus panel specific training.

The Adoption Panel Learning Group provides the opportunity to direct feedback on the quality of reports presented, to highlight any issues, concerns, themes and acknowledgments of outstanding practice, which are addressed via the panel chair and Trust decision maker.

The quality of reports presented to Adoption panel continues to be strengthened along with the quality assurance role of Team Leaders and Social Work Service managers, prior to the reports being submitted to panel. The Panel's Professional Advisors provide panel with the consistent quality assurance and advice that panels require in order to make recommendations. The Panel Chair and panel members all reported significant improvements in the quality of reports being presented to the adoption panel.

The Panel Chair (Mr Lee Wilson) is required to produce this annual performance report, The above chairs summary and analysis laid out below provides the following assurance.

- Adoption reports are of an increasingly good standard including some that are outstanding
- Trust Decision Maker timescales are being met
- The Trust continues to provide child centred adoption services to children and carers
- There is a good summary and analysis for matching children with adopters
- There are continued improvements in timescales for adoption assessments
- Professional Advisors continue to guide the panel with consistent advice and quality assurance
- A learning group has been established with Heads of Service to address needs and share good practice identified by panel members. This group meets quarterly and the panel chair and professional advisors are invited to this meeting, this is a useful group to drive continued improvements in panel business.

Overall, the Trust's arrangements for Adoption panel continues to work well and the Corporate Parenting Service is working towards ensuring continuous improvements to the panel and the processes of panel.

The following is statistical information detailing the activity of the panel, in line with the directed statutory functions that are legislated under the Northern Ireland Adoption Order (1987).



Mr Lee Wilson. BSc Hons. BSW. Pg. Dip

Assistant Director, Social Work Governance, Workforce Development and Training
Children and Young People's Division
Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Adoption Panel Membership

Lee Wilson

Assistant Director for Social Work Governance,
Workforce Development and Training

Mary Doherty

Social Work Service Manager

Michael Robinson

Social Work Manager

Patricia Barrett

Adoptive Parent

Nichola Cherry

Adoptive Parent

Lynda Graham

Adoptive Parent/Adoption Counsellor

Dr Feline Small/Dr Yvonne Doherty

Associate Specialists in Community Paediatrics

Gerard McGivern

Non-executive Trust Board Members

Terry Brady

Solicitor with DLS

Deirdre Keenan

Principal Practitioner

Catriona Brown

Principal Practitioner

Collette Campbell

Chair Person

Social Work Representative

Social Work Representative

Independent Member

Independent Member

Independent Member

Medical Advisors

Northern Trust Board Representative

**Legal Advisor
(non-attending, non-voting)**

**Professional Advisor
(non-voting)**

**Professional Advisor
(non-voting)**

Panel Administrator

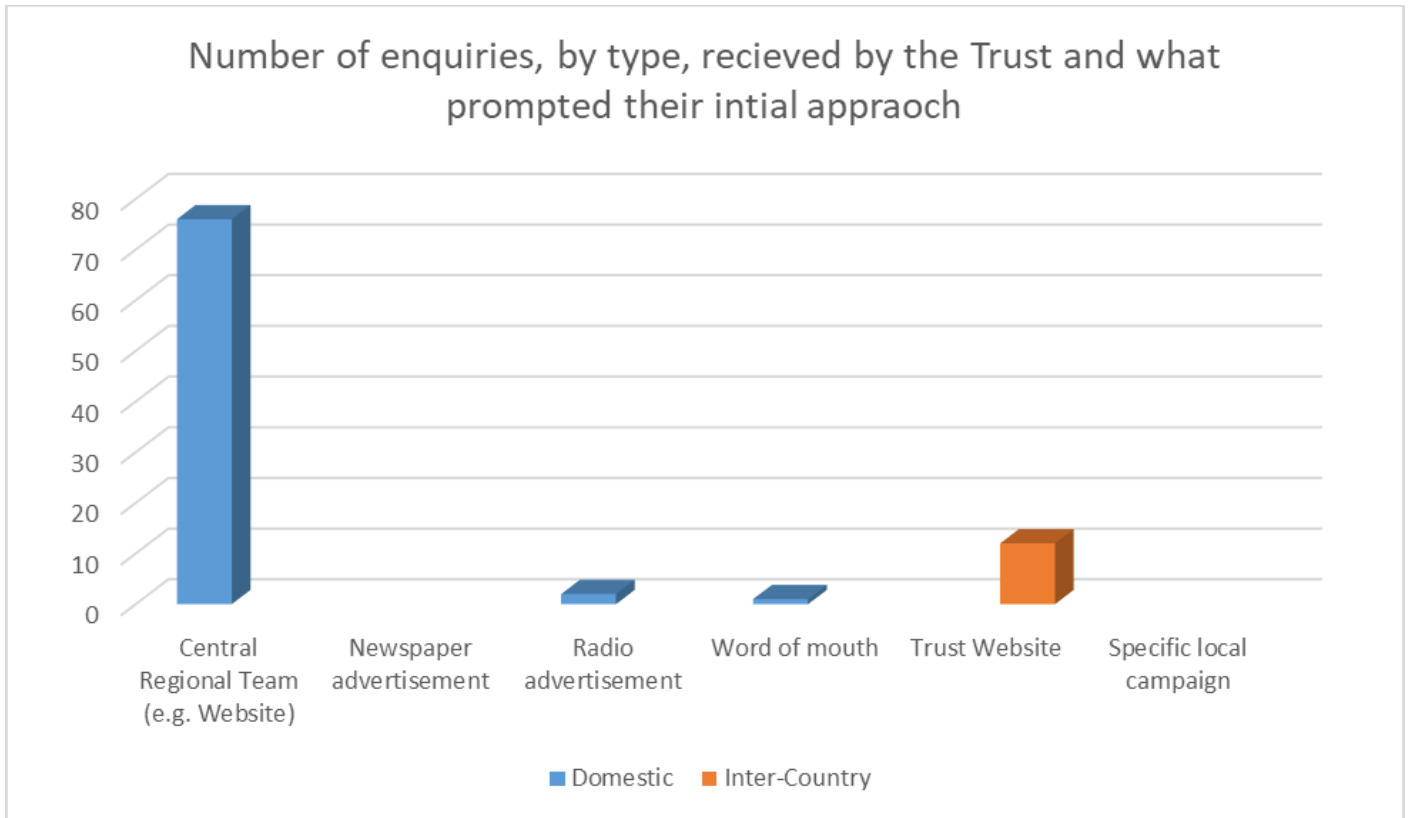
Ms Graham and Ms Cherry attend alternate panels. Mrs Brown and Mrs Kennan provide the panel with professional advice by attending alternate panels.

Summary of Panel Activity during April 2022- March 2023

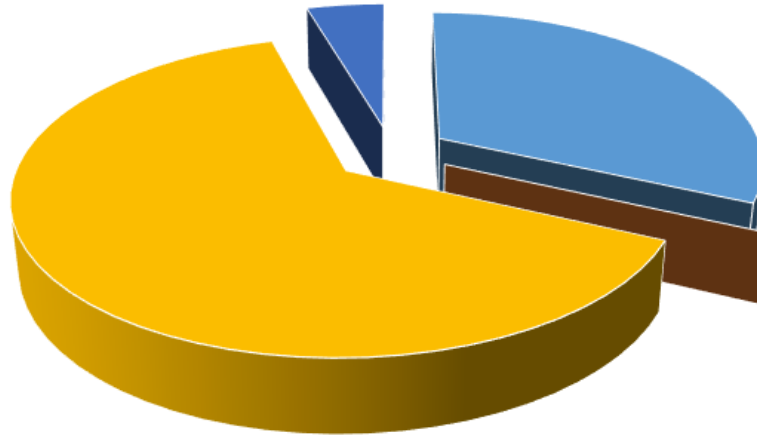
	2022/23	(2021/22)
• Best Interest for Adoption recommendations:	13	(17)
• Children adopted:	14	(11)
• Freeing Orders granted:	22	(25)
• Matching recommendations made:	12	(7)
• Domestic adoption applications recommended for approval:	13	(14)
• Intercountry adoption applications recommended for approval:	2	(1)
• Approvals to adopt rescinded:	0	(0)
• Best Interest Decisions rescinded	2	(0)
• Best Interest Decision reaffirmed	0	(0)
• Placement Disruption reports	0	(0)
• Adoption reviews:	43	(32)

13 full panel meetings took place.

The Northern Trust received 79 domestic and 12 intercountry adoption enquiries during the reporting period.



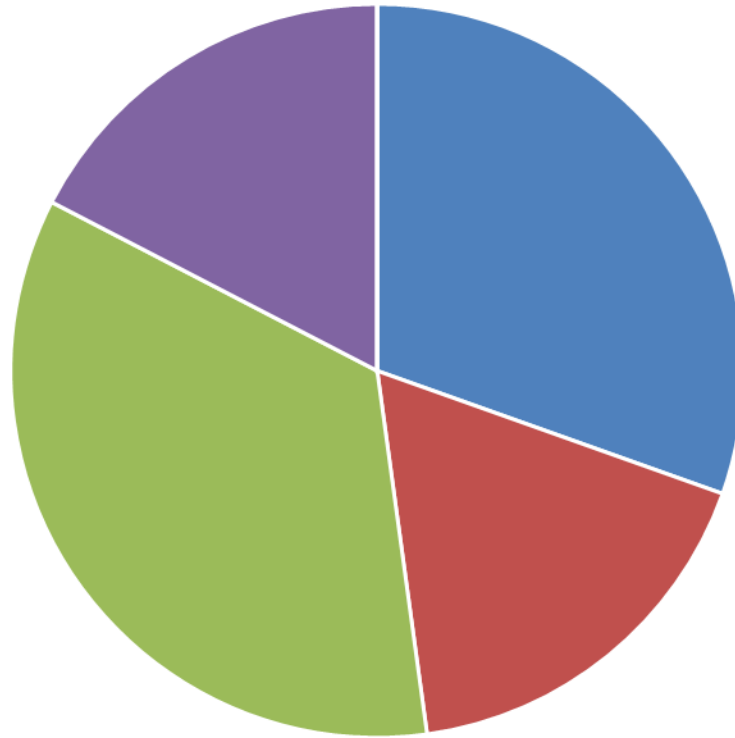
Outcomes of all Adoption Assessments April 2022 - March 2023



- Counselling out in Assessment Process
- Went to Panel and Refused
- Households approved as Adoptive carers
- Households approved as Dual carers/Concurrent Carers
- Households where previous Foster Carers have been approved as Adoptive carers for their LAC

Activity under the Adoption (NI) Order 1987 during the reporting period														
<i>Adoption Orders Article 12 (1)</i>	The number of Orders made during the reporting period.													
Type of Order	<1		1-2		3-4		5-9		10-15		16+ years		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Adoption Orders Article 12 (1)														
Previously Looked After* See note below	0	0	5	1	5	7	2	4	0	0	0	0	12	12
Step Parent													0	0
Inter-country													0	0
Other													0	0
Total	0	0	5	1	5	7	2	4	0	0	0	0	12	12

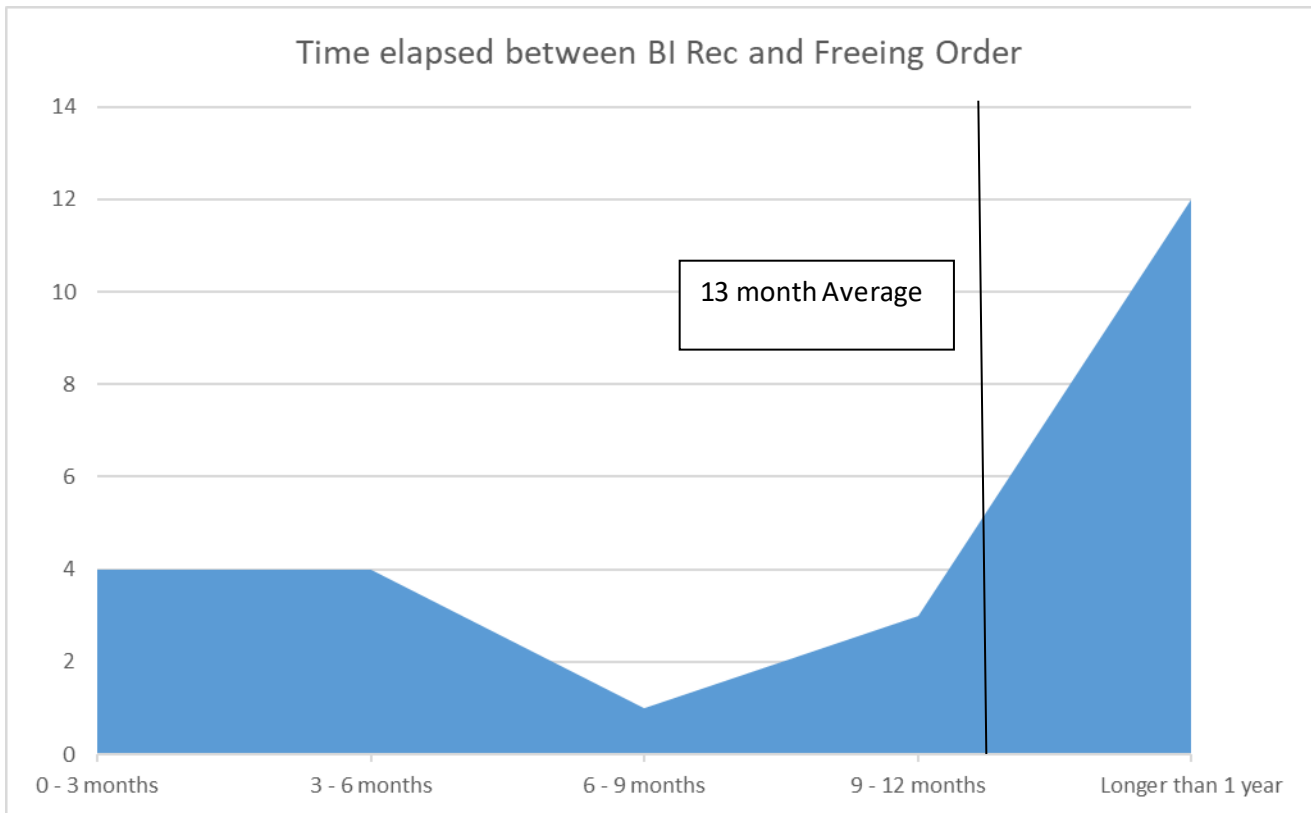
Length of time for children from becoming looked after to going to live with the family who adopted them



■ 0-6 Months ■ 6months - <1 year ■ 1-<2 years ■ 2-<3 years ■ 3-<5 years ■ 5+ years

The number of children in receipt of adoption allowance at 31.3.23														
	<1		1-2		3-4		5-9		10-15		16+ years		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Adoption Allowances														
No. of Adoption Allowances paid in respect of children at 31st March 2023.	0	0	4	0	10	5	47	20	47	53	26	47	134	125
The number of adoption allowances commenced during the reporting period														
	<1		1-2		3-4		5-9		10-15		16+ years		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
No. of Adoption allowances reported above, that commenced during the period.	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0

Length of Time Between BI Recommendation and Freeing Order Being Granted



* Timeframe dependent on judiciary processes.


Our Vision

**We provide compassionate care
with our community, in our community.**

If you would like to give feedback on
any of our services please contact:

Email: user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9442 4655

 Northern Health and Social Care Trust

 @NHSCTrust

www.northerntrust.hscni.net

