

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Briefing for Children and Young People Portfolio Holder 18 October 2011

ANNUAL REPORT OF ADOPTION ACTIVITY 2010 - 2011

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Adoption Agency Regulations (2005) require that all Adoption Agencies provide an annual report of their key functions, the year's activity and the key objectives for the following year together with the Adoption Agency's updated '*Statement of Purpose*'. There is an expectation that the report is presented to Members for consideration and approval.

2. **THE BRIEFING**

- 2.1 The Adoption Agency Regulations (2005) require that all Adoption Agencies provide an annual report of their key functions, the year's activity and the key objectives for the following year together with the Adoption Agency's updated '*Statement of Purpose*'.
- 2.2 This report provides an account of the work of Bromley Adoption Agency during the financial year 2010/11.
- 2.3 The Bromley Adoption Agency carries out its work through the Adoption Panel and the Safeguarding and Social Care Division, and in particular the Adoption Team, who provide a borough wide service within the Social Care Division of the Children and Young People Service. The Agency has well-developed links with other borough wide services and key stakeholders. The work of the Adoption Team contributes to improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough and is in line with the priorities outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 2.4 The work of the Bromley Adoption Agency is governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 [ACA 2002] which was fully implemented in December 2005.

- 2.5 The Adoption Team undertakes a number of core duties. These include:
- adoption and post adoption support services;
 - locating prospective adoptive families for Bromley's children, where adoption is the plan;
 - recruitment and preparation of prospective adopters;
 - provision of advice and guidance to prospective adopters and social workers from Safeguarding and Social Care;
 - provision of birth records counselling;
 - intercountry and step parent adoption;
 - independent support to birth families affected by adoption;
 - attending meetings of the South East Adoption consortium, British Agencies of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and London Councils adoption and fostering agencies.
- 2.6 Adoption and post adoption support continues to be an area of work to develop and expand in order to meet the needs of adopters, children who have been adopted and the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- 2.7 The service is continually reviewing the recruitment of adopters to ensure that it reflects the profile of children that need to be placed for adoption. With consortium colleagues the service will maintain a focus on the need to recruit more BME adopters, adopters for older children, large sibling groups and children with complex needs. There will also continue to be a focus on the need to have sufficient numbers of adopters for children outside of the Bromley borough. These priorities reflect the profile of children coming through for adoption and the current profile of approved adopters.
- 2.8 Appendix 1 provides Members with the Annual Adoption Report 2010/2011. The report reviews progress and work around the approval of new adopters, of children placed for adoption and also details the development of adoption and post adoption support services.
- 2.9 During 2010/11 there were 18 (unit) adopters and 25 children presented to adoption panel for approval. 7 children were placed for adoption during 2010/11.
- 2.10 Appendix 2 is the updated Bromley Adoption agency's '*Statement of Purpose*', September 2011.
- 2.11 The Annual Report is a statutory requirement under Adoption Agency Regulations 2005.
- 2.12 The Adoption Minimum Standards were revised in 2011. The Practice Guidance on the Adoption and Children Act 2002 was revised in February 2011.

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES

**ANNUAL REPORT ON ADOPTION ACTIVITY
2010-2011**



ANNUAL REPORT ON ADOPTION ACTIVITY 2010-2011

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1. BROMLEY ADOPTION AGENCY

- 1.1 The Adoption Agency Regulations (2005) require that all Adoption Agencies provide an annual report of their key functions, the year's activity and the key objectives for the following year.
- 1.2 The Bromley Adoption Agency carries out its work through the Adoption Panel and the Safeguarding and Social Care Division, and in particular the Adoption Team. Full details of the services provided are detailed in the Adoption Agency's 'Statement of Purpose' This report will provide detail of the adoption work undertaken from April 2010–March 2011, including information on adoption activity and compliance with the national adoption standards.
- 1.3 The work of Bromley Adoption Agency is governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 [ACA 2002] which was fully implemented in December 2005.

2. BROMLEY ADOPTION TEAM

- 2.1 The Bromley Adoption Service is a borough wide service managed within the Social Care Division of the Children and Young People Service. It has developed close links with other borough wide services and key stakeholders. The work of the Adoption Service contributes to improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough and reflects the priorities outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 2.2 The Adoption Team is responsible for all the adoption work undertaken within the Department. This involves domestic, inter-country and step-parent adoption; birth parent counselling; post placement and post adoption support and a range of intermediary services.
- 2.3 The Adoption Team, managed by the Group Manager, sits within the Care and Resources service area. The Adoption Team has a total of 9.0 FTE managerial and social work staff. Additionally the team has 2.0 FTE administrative staff who administer the Adoption Panel, letterbox contact arrangements, and archiving of files.
- 2.4 The managerial and social work staff within the Adoption Team take lead responsibility for different aspects of the service, namely adoption support services, family finding, and the recruitment and preparation of prospective adopters. The team provides a duty service for prospective adopters and to social workers from Safeguarding and Social Care. Team members take lead roles in providing other services such as birth records counselling, adoption support work and inter-country and step-parent adoption. The Group Manager acts as the Agency Adoption Adviser and directly manages staff that have a dedicated role in providing post adoption support services including letterbox, support to direct contact arrangements and independent support to birth families affected by adoption. The Deputy Manager, directly manages the staff involved in family finding for children and adopter recruitment. One of the two adoption support senior practitioners is the nominated Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA).
- 2.5 The Adoption Agency Advisor plays a key role in ensuring the effective running of the Adoption Panel, providing a quality assurance role in relation to reports being prepared for panel and for providing specialist advice to staff within Safeguarding and Social Care in relation to adoption work.
- 2.6 Bromley continues to be a member of the South East Adoption Consortium. The Group Manager attends the quarterly meetings of the Consortium Managers as well as representing Bromley at the British Agencies of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and London Councils quarterly meetings of London adoption and fostering agencies.

3. CHILDREN APPROVED FOR ADOPTION

3.1 In 2010/11 there were 25 children presented to the Adoption Panel compared to 14 in 2009/10. The higher figure reflects the steady increase in the number of panel bookings for children in 2010/11. The likely increase of children needing adoption needs to be seen in the context of the overall increase in the numbers of looked after children in Bromley.

4. CHILDREN MADE SUBJECT TO ADOPTION ORDERS

4.1 Twelve children were made subject to Adoption Orders in 2010/11.

5. CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION IN 2010/11

5.1 There were seven children placed with prospective adopters during the year. Five of the children placed with adopters were White British; one dual heritage and one black child. Four of the children were placed with in-house adopters, two with other local authority adoption agencies and one with a voluntary adoption agency.

5.2 The Team continues to strive towards recruiting more BME adopters and adopters for older children and sibling groups. These two areas again remain priority recruitment target areas for 2010/11 in terms of putting more energy into focusing on current children waiting for adoptive families and children who are in the early stages of the adoption planning process. We have therefore increased the number of workshops/preparation groups from 2 to 3 per year. We continue to recruit families who live outside of the borough to reduce the possibility of parents establishing the whereabouts of their birth children. Demand for placements for white babies aged between 0-2 years continues to be low and as a consequence they are not a priority area for recruitment. By focusing on these specific areas of recruitment, the Adoption Team ensures that any purchase of inter-agency placements is targeted on the 'harder to place' child.

6. PROFILE OF ADOPTERS

6.1 The number of prospective adopters approved during the year was 18 units which is above the team's performance target of 15.

6.2 The ethnicity of the 18 units of adopters was predominantly White/British (28); and 5 were from BME backgrounds.

6.3 There were 7 new initial step-parent adoption enquires in 2010/11.

7. NATIONAL ADOPTION STANDARDS TIMESCALES

7.1 The Adoption Agency is required to monitor its performance against a range of timescales. The timescales relate to the decision to place a child for adoption, assessing and approving prospective adopters and the proposal to place a child with particular adopters.

7.2 Of the 7 children placed with prospective adopters, as outlined in paragraph 4.1, 6 were placed within the required statutory timescale of 12 months from the approval of the plan for adoption. The reason for one child being placed outside of the 12 month timescale (within 13 months) was because of health concerns regarding the birth parents.

7.3 All completed Child Permanence, Prospective Adopter and Adoption Placement reports were presented to Panel within the required timescale; all agency decisions and notifications were also made as required.

- 7.4 The agency met the timescale in relation to sending out an information pack to inquirers within 5 working days in 90% of cases and in 98.5% of cases inviting prospective adopters to an information session.

8. THE ADOPTION CONSORTIUM

- 8.1 The South East Adoption Consortium comprises Bexley, Medway, Bromley, Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and Kent. The consortium aims to maximise placement choice for children and to minimise delay in family finding across the consortium authorities by sharing prospective adopters.
- 8.2 The quarterly management meetings attended by the Adoption Group Manager are used to clarify and develop policy and practice issues across the consortium. The sharing of local practice guidance and procedures facilitates good working relationships and avoids duplication of work across the consortium. A key theme of the discussions during 2010/11 has been the need to increase the recruitment of adopters for older children and Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] adopters across the whole of the consortium.
- 8.3 Approved adopters are added to the consortium database every 20 days after their approval thus ensuring that family finding workers have access to a wider pool of adopters for the children they are finding families for.
- 8.4 There have been 5 practitioner meetings during 2010/11 where social workers meet to discuss issues related to adoption practice. One of the meetings held in Bromley was a very useful discussion around confidentiality and the impact of social networking sites on adoption.
- 8.5 The Adoption Support Services Advisors across the consortium also meet regularly to ensure that adopters within the consortium receive a good and consistent standard of service from each of the 6 authorities.

9. RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION OF ADOPTERS

- 9.1 The Adoption Service received 170 enquiries to the duty service throughout the year. Six information sessions were held throughout the year. These events receive considerable support from Bromley's experienced adopters who attend to ensure that all prospective adopters have the opportunity for individual discussion not only with a member of staff but also with experienced adopters.
- 9.2 The Adoption Team held two sets of preparation groups during 2010/11. The groups comprise an initial workshop entitled '*Adoption : Is this the Right Journey for Me?*' followed four weeks later by three preparation group sessions looking at all aspects of the adoption process. The preparation groups provide advice, information and individual counselling where necessary to ensure that people can make an informed decision on whether to make a formal application to adopt a child.
- 9.3 The recruitment strategy for the service is based on the profile of the children in care in Bromley and in the Consortium that need to be placed for adoption and also takes account of the number of approved adopters waiting for a placement. Most enquiries are from adopters that are interested in adopting a child under 6 years, often younger and from childless individuals or couples. Priority in relation to recruitment would be given to BME applicants, or applicants that are interested in child aged over six years, in sibling groups of three or more children or children with complex needs.

10. INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

- 10.1 The Adoption Team is responsible for providing a service to people living within the borough that wish to consider intercountry adoption. Through membership of the Intercountry Adoption Centre (IAC) additional information on intercountry adoption; preparation groups for first and second time adopters and training is provided.
- 10.2 During 2010/11 there were 10 initial inquiries about intercountry adoption which resulted in three initial interviews. There was one intercountry assessment completed during this period.

11. ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

- 11.1 Since the implementation of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 there has been a legal duty on the local authority to provide adoption support services to both adoptive families, adopted children and birth families.
- 11.2 There has been an ongoing increase in the demand for such services, as well as an increase in the complexity of such cases. The past 12 months have seen a number of well established adoptive families in crisis, leading to 2 children from 2 adoptive families becoming looked after.
- 11.3 There have been additional stresses placed on the adoption and post adoption support services due to a lack of capacity within the local CAMHS services to meet therapeutic needs.
- 11.4 A consequence of the increased demand for worker's time in relation to adoption support, means there has been an increase in waiting times for allocation and completion of adoption support assessments, access to information, intermediary services and assessment times for new adopter assessments.
- 11.5 All the staff within the Adoption Team is involved in some way with adoption support. At the end of March 2011 there were 41 active open adoption support cases that were allocated within the team [this excludes contact work, work with adopted adults and adoption support undertaken by assessing social workers].
- 11.6 The service also provides a duty service to respond to enquiries from adoptive families. These may be from Bromley adopters, adopters from other agencies living in the borough or adopters that have relocated into the borough. Some enquiries involve signposting to other services whilst others involve a more intensive assessment of adoption support services.

12. SUPPORT GROUPS

- 12.1 The service is currently running drop-in support groups in the day time for approved adopters with or without children. The service links with other support groups including the support for BME adopters run by BAAF in London. The service ran two very successful social events for adoptive families during the year.

13. EDUCATION SUPPORT

- 13.1 Support to adopters around education comes from the Safeguarding and Social Division extending the service from the LAC Education team and from Bromley's Parent Partnership worker.

14. POST ADOPTION CONTACT

- 14.1 Almost all children being placed for adoption retain some form of contact with their birth families and the Adoption & Children Act 2002 emphasises the importance of supporting such arrangements. This area of work continues to be a significant pressure for the service and one which merits a high level of input as contact managed well can be a critical factor in the successful placement and emotional well-being of the adopted child. It is clear that arrangements for contact have to be kept under review and may need to change and adapt as the child gets older or if there are significant changes within the birth family network.
- 14.2 At the end of March 2011, 176 letterbox contact arrangements were in place. The letterbox coordinator provides the initial point of contact for information, advice and support to all those involved in this indirect contact between adopted child and their birth families. If counselling or intensive support is required they will refer onto the ASSA.
- 14.3 The service is working with 31 children in adoptive families where direct contact arrangements with birth families are in place. The contact is mostly with siblings, but there is an increase in the number of direct contact arrangements involving both birth parents and grandparents.

15. WORK WITH BIRTH FAMILIES

- 15.1 Under the National Adoption Standards it is the responsibility of local authority adoption agencies to ensure that birth families affected by adoption have access to independent advice, information and support when the plan for the child becomes adoption. This is provided in Bromley through the Independent Adoption Development Worker for Birth Families. During 2010/11, 28 new referrals were received and ongoing services were being received by a total of 51 individuals or families. A very successful birth parent's support group continued to meet on a monthly basis.
- 15.2 The take up of this service is increasing slowly and this reflects the fact that birth families are often still in dispute with the local authority about the plans for adoption at the time they are referred. The number of referrals increased in 2010/11. The Adoption Development worker is continuing to promote her role with social workers in the children social work teams so that she can support more birth families. Birth families are also provided with details of agencies who can offer support other than the local authority but experience suggests that some birth family members only feel able to take up this type of support sometimes years after the adoption has concluded.
- 15.3 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced the provision of an access to information and intermediary service for birth relatives of adopted adults (to complement that existing for adult adoptees) which would trace the adoptee and seek their views on contact. The Adoption Team have limited resources to meet the needs of this service.
- 15.4 Any birth relative who requests an intermediary service is provided with support and advice and their details are added to the waiting list. They are also given the details of intermediary services offered by NORCAP. Bromley Adoption Service pays an annual subscription to NORCAP, a voluntary organisation which helps adults affected by adoption.

16. BIRTH RECORDS COUNSELLING

- 16.1 The local authority has a legal responsibility to provide a birth records counselling service. There were 20 new referrals from adopted adults during 2010/11. There is a waiting time of up to 12 months for this service although people adopted before 1975 are given priority because of the possible age of their birth parents if they wish to locate them. In total at the end of March 2011 there were 18 active birth records cases. The adoption support senior practitioners take the lead role in providing this service.

17. ADOPTION ALLOWANCES

17.1 The total Adoption Team Budget is £745,230 for 2010/11. Expenditure on Adoption Allowances during 2010/11 was approximately £285,600. This was primarily to pay regular adoption allowance payments in relation to 42 children. There were in addition a number of one off payments made towards the costs of introductions and settling in expenses.

18. TRAINING

18.1 Most staff within the service are involved in delivering preparation groups for prospective adopters or input into support groups or post adoption training. Follow up training for newly approved adopters on attachment, contact, and explaining adoption to children was also delivered by team members. Specific training has been provided to area team staff on the preparation of child's permanence reports.

18.2 All Adoption Team members have access to relevant training in order to maintain and update knowledge and skills.

19. ADOPTION PANEL

19.1 It is the responsibility of the service to ensure the effective running of the Panels and the Agency Advisor is responsible for effective operation of the Adoption Panel, agenda setting, the quality assurance of panel papers and takes a lead in the recruitment of panel members. Panel contributes significantly to the positive work of the Safeguarding and Social Care Division in planning for children and providing a key quality assurance role. The Adoption Panel has met 15 times throughout 2010/11. The Panels have met as planned and have been quorate. Panel training took place on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and children on the autistic spectrum. This was joint training with the Adoption Team. Panel is kept up to date with practice and legal developments by the advisors to Panel.

19.2 During 2010/11 the service has ensured that Panel members' records are maintained to National Minimum Standards, and that all members of the panel have been subject to an annual review and that their CRB check is current.

20. DISRUPTIONS

20.1 During 2010/11 there were no disruptions of Bromley children placed for adoption. There were 2 adoption breakdowns of established adoptions where orders were obtained years previously. One of which related to a child placed by another local authority with adopters living in Bromley and where the Bromley Adoption Team were providing adoption support services.

21. COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS/ALLEGATIONS

21.1 There were three new complaints received by the Adoption Team in 2010/11. There were seven compliments about the Adoption service and individual members of staff received during the year.

22. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

22.1 Adoption and post adoption support continues to be an area of work to develop and expand as most adopters continue to maintain a link with the service post adoption.

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES**

BROMLEY ADOPTION AGENCY

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

September 2011



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1. Aims and objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the adoption and adoption support service

1.1 Mission Statement

We believe that every child should be able to experience a secure and happy family life, being parented by a loving adult or adults. We strive to achieve this through providing a responsive and effective service to individuals and families from all backgrounds, involved in and affected by adoption. We also believe that our responsibility does not end at the point of adoption.

1.2 Aims

1.2.1 The Department will aim to:

- provide a high quality adoption and adoption service where all people making contact with the service are responded to promptly and treated courteously and fairly and be given equal consideration in line with the policy and principles set out in the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement. The Department aims to provide a comprehensive adoption and adoption support service in co-operation with other Council Departments; The South East Adoption Consortium (SEAC) Partner Agencies; Voluntary Adoption Agencies; local Adoption Support Agencies; the local Health Authorities; other key stakeholders and service users and to ensure there is a coherent local service to meet identified needs;
- achieve positive outcomes connected to the '*Every Child Matters*' agenda primarily for children, and also for other service users in its adoption and adoption support services;
- provide a comprehensive adoption and adoption support service to meet the needs of children, birth families, adoptive parents and adopted adults which will be planned and delivered in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders and service users, as identified at 1.2.1;
- ensure that the needs, wishes and safety of the looked after/adopted child/adopted adult are at the centre of the adoption process;
- as far as is reasonably possible, to provide practical support and services which will enable the child to return to, or remain with his/her family of origin where this is being requested, except in those circumstances where it is considered that it would be detrimental to the child's welfare due to issues of significant harm.

1.2.2 In making plans for the permanent placement of looked after children the Department's first aims will be:-

- (a) to ensure the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted throughout their childhood and
- (b) to ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood.

1.2.3 The Department will aim to:

- ensure that people interested in becoming adoptive parents will be welcomed without prejudice, responded to promptly and given clear information about the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval process. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process;
- match children with approved adopters who can meet their identified individual needs and offer them a stable and permanent home. Information, advice, support, and where appropriate financial assistance, will be provided to achieve positive outcomes for the service user and most particularly for children in terms of a successful and lasting placement;
- provide birth parents and birth family members affected by adoption with a service that recognises the lifelong implications of adoption and to ensure that they are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process;
- recruit suitably qualified and experienced people to deliver the adoption and adoption support service, act as members of the Adoption Panel and provide service as consultants and advisers and will ensure compliance with all required safety checks;
- ensure that the adoption and adoption support service is resourced to meet the above aims and that the premises from which the adoption and adoption support service operates are fit for their purpose.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 The Department will ensure that the above aims are met through compliance with the specific objectives stated in:

- (a) National Minimum Standards in Adoption 2011
- (b) Addendum to the National Minimum Standards 2005;
- (c) National Minimum Standards for Adoption Support Agencies 2005;

1.4 Facilities of the Adoption Service

- 1.4.1 The adoption and adoption support service is provided through staff from within the Department's Safeguarding and Social Care Division Social Work Teams, and in particular staff within the Adoption Team. The District Social Work teams are based in the Old Town Hall; the Looked After Team, Children's with Disabilities Team and Adoption Team are based in the Civic Centre in Bromley.
- 1.4.2 The offices of the Adoption Team are located at the Civic Centre where there is access to interview, meeting and training rooms.
- 1.4.3 Plans are in place for the Adoption Service to transfer onto CARE FIRST, the main customer data base and information system, in Autumn 2011.
- 1.4.4 The Adoption Agency has formally appointed Agency Medical and Legal Advisors whose responsibilities include advising the Adoption Panel and offering advice and consultation to social work staff, other professionals and adopters.
- 1.4.5 The adoption and adoption support service makes use of other Council Departments, as required, to support planning and delivery of services.
- 1.4.6 The Department is a member of The South East Adoption Consortium (SEAC) where the six local authority members actively work together to improve adoption practice and through sharing resources reduce delays for children requiring adoption.
- 1.4.7 The Department holds membership of the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), the Intercountry Adoption Centre and Adoption UK. The Department through the Adoption and Fostering teams is an active member of the London Council's group on Adoption and Fostering and London Region Adoption & Fostering Officers Group.

1.5 Purpose of the Adoption Team

The Adoption Team is responsible for all the adoption and adoption support work undertaken with adopted children and adults, adopters and birth family members affected by adoption within the Department. This involves domestic, inter-country and step-parent adoption; the provision of intermediary services including birth record counselling work; adoption support including the provision of an independent service to birth parents and birth family members affected by adoption.

2. Adoption of Statement of Purpose

- 2.1 The Statement of Purpose was placed before the Children and Young People Portfolio Holder on 7 September 2010 for formal approval.

- 2.2 The Children and Young People Portfolio Holder will, at least annually, consider and review the Statement of Purpose to ensure that it continues to meet all requirements of the adoption service making any necessary updates and modifications as required.
- 2.3 The Statement of Purpose will normally accompany the Annual Adoption Agency Report presented to the Portfolio Holder.

3. Services provided by the Agency

- 3.1 A summary of the services provided by the Department's adoption service is listed below:
- Advice and information on domestic, inter-country, step-parent adoption and non-agency adoption, including duty appointments for residents of LB Bromley.
 - Bi-monthly information meetings for people interested in domestic adoption.
 - Initial home visits by an adoption social worker experienced in inter-country adoption work for those people wanting to adopt from abroad.
 - Comprehensive preparation and assessment for prospective domestic and inter-country adopters (assessments completed by Adoption Team staff or Family Placement Staff Bank Social Workers).
 - Undertaking the Court Reports and social work visits in step-parent, inter-country adoption and non-agency adoption applications.
 - Individual adoption support Social Workers who work in partnership with the allocated Social Worker for the child(ren) from the point of adopter approval to after the making of the adoption order and the ending of statutory adoption support where this is the responsibility of the Agency.
 - Allocated Social Worker from the adoption team to family find for individual or sibling groups of children.
 - Planned general and specific recruitment programmes for adopters, individual and specific groups of children.
 - Advice, information and the provision of intermediary services (including birth record counselling, tracing and facilitating reunion) to adopted adults seeking information about their adoption and birth families and to birth family members affected by adoption seeking to make contact with a family member who has been adopted.
 - The provision of intermediary services will be limited to adopted adults who live in the borough.
 - The provision of intermediary services will be limited to birth family members affected by adoption through residence in the borough.

- The provision of an independent adoption service to birth parents and birth families affected by adoption including information, advice, support, assistance with maintaining indirect contact, counselling where it is planned that a child is placed for adoption and the provision of a regular support group to birth parents whose child has been placed for adoption or adopted.
- Post placement and post adoption support through:
 - management of the confidential letter box service;
 - individual social work support to adoptive families;
 - therapeutic support to children and their adopters through use of 'Theraplay'; referral local CAMHS service; or where assessed as appropriate purchase of individual packages of therapeutic support;
 - providing advice and information signposting service for adoption support services via the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA);
 - adoption support and training – adopters support group meets bi-monthly; series of workshops on attachment held annually, social events including an annual adoptive families picnic; and a series of training workshops;
 - individual work with children placed for adoption or adopted and the development of groups for adopted children and young people;
 - financial support in the form of single payments and on-going, regular payments (adoption allowances)
 - newsletters.
- Bromley Adoption Panel which fulfils statutory functions as required and offers advice and consultation to social work staff on adoption matters.
- Services of Medical and Legal Advisers for advice, information and consultation in addition to their specific roles and functions.
- Membership of The South East Adoption Consortium (SEAC), British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), Adoption UK; Intercountry Adoption Centre; ALG adoption and fostering group; London Region Adoption & Fostering Officers Group and South East Post Adoption Network (SEPAN).

4. Details of the Manager of the Adoption Service

- 4.1 Name: Marcia Brown
- 4.2 Address: Adoption Team, Joseph Lancaster Hall, Civic Centre,
Rafford Way, Bromley, BR1 3UH
- 4.3 Telephone: 020 8313 4185
- 4.4 Fax: 020 8313 4086
- 4.5 Email: marcia.brown@bromley.gov.uk
- 4.6 Relevant Qualifications: BA (Hons), CQSW Trent University 1991, DMS
Croydon College 2006
- 4.7 Relevant Experience: Extensive experience of recruiting and supporting
foster carers and adopters. Most recently managed a team of social workers
in an adoption agency.

**5. Any conditions in force in relation to registration under Part 2 of
the Care Standards Act 2000 of the registered provider and, if
applicable, the registered manager**

There are no conditions in force.

6. Details of the Permanent Staff employed in the Adoption Service

PERMANENT STAFF

Please list all staff employed permanently in the adoption service

Position or Role in the Agency	Hours Per Week	Name	Year of Appointment	Qualifications
Group Manager, Adoption	36	Ms Marcia Brown	2010	BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies, CQSW, DMS
Deputy Manager	36	Ms Dawn Gardner	2005	CQSW; Accredited fieldwork practice teacher
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	27	Ms Jenny Parkinson	2000	MSc; CQSW; PQ1, PQ Child Care Award
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	36	Ms Joy Bullen	2001	CSS (child care component), PQ1
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	18	Ms Caroline Smith	2001	MSc in Social Studies; CQSW; Practice Teacher Award: PQ1
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	36	Mr Barry Miller	2005	CQSW; Certificate in Counselling; D32/D33 NVQ Assessor Award. PQ1
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	30	Ms Enitan Kuti	2008	Dip SW and BA (Hons) in Social Work; PQ1 and Post Qualifying Award in Child Care.
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	36	Ms Anne Johnson	2005	BA: CQSW; PQ1; Currently completed first year of two post-qualifying course on adoption and attachment at Family Futures
Senior Practitioner, Adoption Support and Adoption Support Services Adviser	18	Ms Amuda Oko-Osi	2008	BA (Hons) and CQSW; PQ1

Position or Role in the Agency	Hours Per Week	Name	Year of Appointment	Qualifications
Senior Practitioner, Adoption	21	Ms Alison Lewis	2000	CQSW and Diploma in Social Studies, 1990; PQ1
Senior Practitioner, Adoption Support	36	Ms Elaine Barrett	2003	Dip SW; BA; PQ1 and PQ Child Care Award; Theraplay Award (Introduction & Intermediate); Post graduate Child Focused Systemic Child Psychotherapy
Independent Adoption Development Worker (birth Families)	36	Ms Anna Stokes	2005	NNEB; Ante-Natal Teaching certificate (groupwork); Basic Counselling Skills Certificate; BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Developing Counselling Skills
Clerical Officer, Adoption	36	Ms Elizabeth Joseph	2008	NVQ II Computing
Letterbox Administrator	36	Ms Nicole Molloy (maternity cover)	2011	BA (Hons) Politics and Sociology

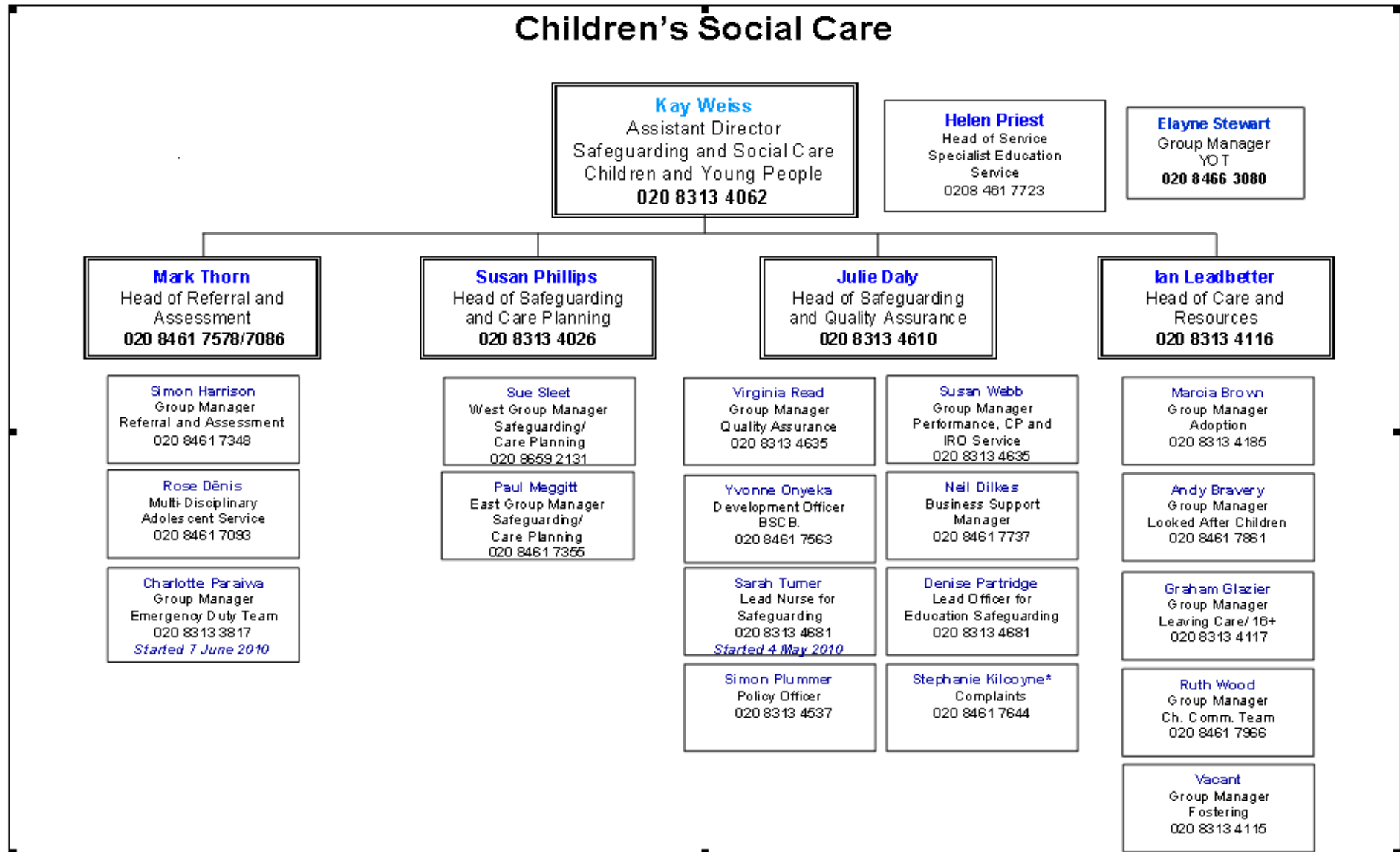
Name and position of person completing this return Ian Leadbetter, Head of Social Care, Care and Resources

Date updated: 13.09.20

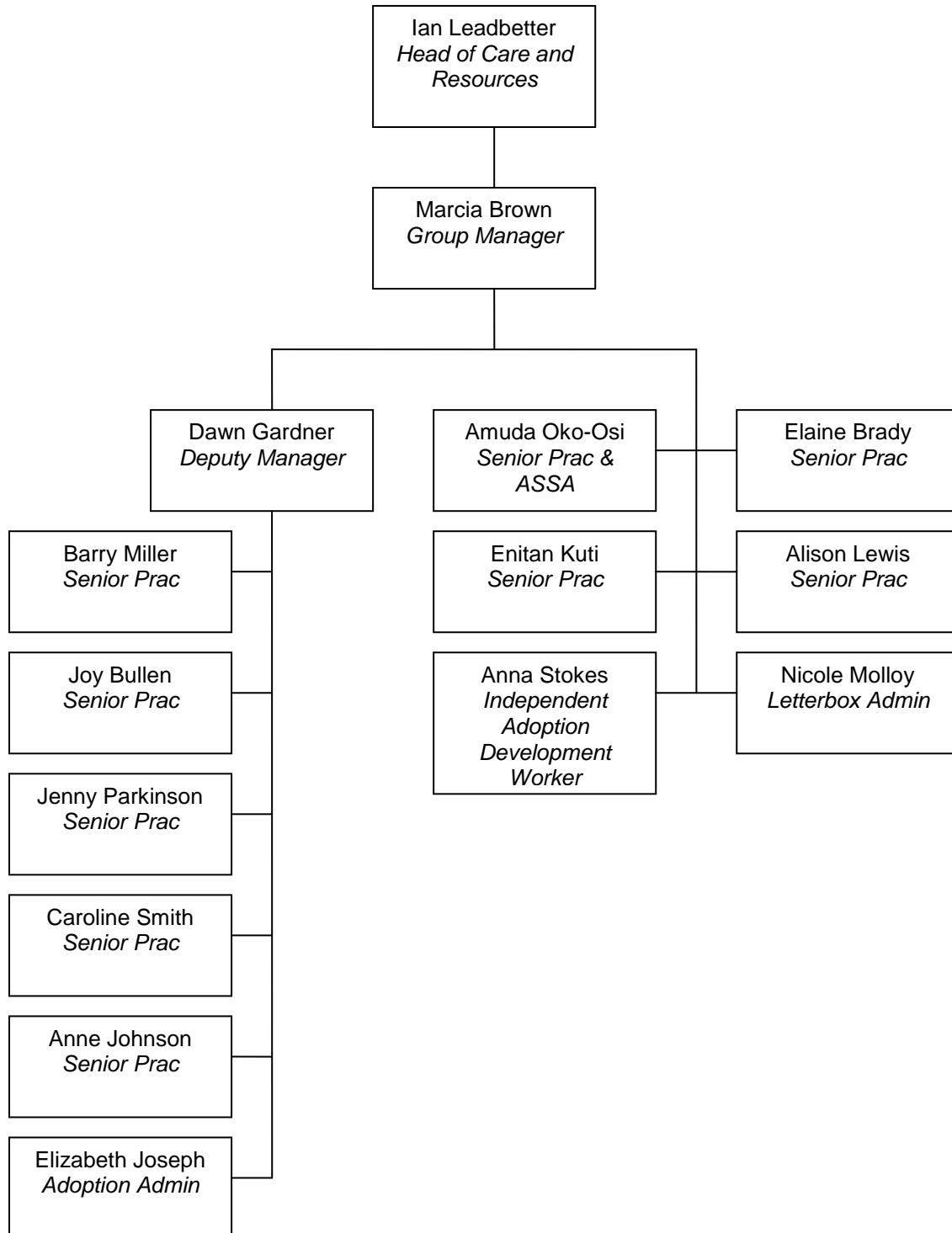
7. Organisational Structure of the Adoption and Adoption Support Service

- 7.1 Bromley Children and Young People Services is one of the main Departments of Bromley Council and is divided into four Divisions – Safeguarding and Social Care; Commissioning & Children’s Education; Standards & Effectiveness in Schools and Strategic Planning, Performance & Communication.
- 7.2 The Care and Resources Section of the Safeguarding and Social Care Division is responsible for the delivery of the Bromley Adoption Service. A structure chart for the Safeguarding and Social Care Division is found at 7.6. Within Safeguarding and Social Care there are four sub-divisions – Referral and Assessment; Safeguarding - East and West; Care and Resources; and Quality Assurance and Safeguarding.
- 7.3 Social Workers for children requiring adoption or placed with adopters would mainly come from the two Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams, the Looked-After Children’s Team or the Children’s Disability Team. The Adoption Team is part of the Care and Resources Sub-Division thereby maintaining close links with the Fostering Team, the Looked after Children’s Team and 16+ Leaving Care Team. A structure chart for the Adoption Team is found at 7.6.
- 7.4 Bromley Adoption Team combines adoption and adoption support work in one team. The management structure and staff in post in adoption and adoption support is set out at 7.7.
- 7.5 The Bromley Adoption Agency is responsible for the establishing, maintaining and servicing of the Bromley Adoption Panel. The Panel in carrying out its statutory functions makes recommendations to the Agency delegated decision maker (Kay Weiss, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Social Care). The work and performance of the Adoption Panel is included in the Annual Adoption Agency Report submitted to Children and Young People Portfolio Holder normally in September of each year.

7.6 Organisational Structure chart of the Children's Social Care Division



7.6 Organisational Structure of the Adoption Team



8. Quality Assurance of the Adoption Service

- 8.1 The Group Manager is currently responsible for the overall management of the Adoption Team and direct management of the adoption support service, the Deputy Manager, and administrative staff. The Deputy Manager is directly responsible for the social work staff conducting adopter assessments and family finding. Social Workers are seen in supervision on a three weekly basis and all other staff are seen four weekly. Supervision and line management practice follows the Departmental Supervision Policy and Management Standards.
- 8.2 Family Placement Staff Bank Social Workers are provided with supervision by either the Group Manager, Deputy Manager or experienced Senior Practitioners in the Adoption Team under the terms of their agreement for service and follow the same supervision practice as referred to in 8.1.
- 8.3 Copies of the signed supervision notes are placed on the relevant adopters'; child's family finding or adoption support file with any agreed action noted.
- 8.4 Files are seen, read and agreed for closure by the Group Manager, Adoption or the Deputy Group Manager.
- 8.5 The Group Manager for Adoption holds additional responsibility for advice to the Adoption Panel and in this capacity reads all reports on children and adopters and provides an important quality assurance role prior to presentation of reports at Panel including confirmation that all statutory checks of references and medical records are undertaken.
- 8.6 The Adoption Panel provides a quality assurance function which is exercised through individual recommendations on cases presented and recorded in the Panel minutes and Panel decision sheet; advice from the Medical, Legal and Panel Advisors to Panel. The production and circulation of practice points arising from the work of the Adoption Panel to Safeguarding and Social Care Staff improves practice and contributes to positive outcomes for children and their families.
- 8.7 The Group Manager, Adoption is supervised on a regular, three weekly basis by the Head of Service, Care & Resources.
- 8.8 An Annual Adoption Agency Report is produced and submitted to the Children and Young People Portfolio Holder in addition to the performance monitoring reports also received on looked after children.
- 8.9 A Permanency Monitoring Group with representation across Safeguarding and Social Care meets on a regular basis to monitor the progress of permanency planning for individual children and take ameliorative action as appropriate.
- 8.10 The Adoption Service had its last three year adoption inspection in August 2009.

9. Procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters

- 9.1 The information provided in this section is a summary of the procedures on the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters and the support provided to adopters post approval.

9.2 Recruitment

The overall recruitment strategy for adopters is broadly divided into two strands. Firstly there is on-going general recruitment for adopters who will be able to meet the needs of children in Bromley and in The South East Adoption Consortium (SEAC) requiring adoption now and in the medium term (next 6-18 months). By increasing the number of approved adopters in the 'general pool' it is likely to reduce the delay in placing children for adoption. Secondly, when there are no suitable approved 'in-house' or Consortium adopters available for a child(ren), specific recruitment for that child(ren) is undertaken.

The Adoption Team, via dedicated duty time, aims to respond to all people inquiring about adoption and send them the relevant Information Pack within five working days. This information pack contains the eligibility criteria. The Duty Social Worker puts details of the initial inquiry onto CHARMS (adoption information system) and passes a copy of the initial referral to the Clerical Officer, Adoption to input onto CARE FIRST (Division's client record system).

All people inquiring about adoption are invited to the next bi-monthly Information Meeting. However depending on the priority given to recruiting particular types of adopters (for Black and Minority Ethnic children; older children; large sibling groups of children) people putting themselves forward for such children would receive a initial home visit from an adoption Social Worker – designed to encourage the inquirers to maintain their interest in adopting with Bromley.

Information meetings are held bi-monthly on a weekday evening in the Civic Centre in Bromley. Members of the Adoption Team and Bromley Adopters provide comprehensive information on adopting a child and on the adoption process. A detailed Information Pack is available.

If people want to proceed with their inquiry they are asked to complete and return a short questionnaire by a specified date. Everyone taking forward their inquiry has an initial home visit by an Adoption Social Worker. The adoption process is explained in detail along with information about children needing adoption and how people are selected and given priority for the workshop and preparation groups and adoption home study assessment. All inquirers must be able to demonstrate that they meet or have the potential to meet the eligibility criteria.

If there are concerns/issues about a person's health at this stage medical advice would be sought. Following regulatory requirements if any information (health or otherwise) is revealed which is likely to prejudice the outcome of an application advice will be sought from the Adoption Panel prior to commencement of an adoption home study assessment.

9.3 Preparation

- 9.3.1 The Adoption Workshop and Preparation Groups are run 2-3 times a year and have spaces for up to eight units (individuals or couples). Preparation Groups are held during the day, on the same day over three consecutive weeks. People are selected onto the workshop after initial interview, following discussion in a formal meeting of the Adoption Team on the basis of how they match with children waiting now or in the medium term; numbers of approved adopters waiting in similar categories, length of waiting time. The Workshop is held first four weeks before the Preparation Groups and will be followed up by a home visit to ensure adoption is right for the individual/couple if considered necessary. All individuals/couples who the Adoption Team consider should be invited to make a formal application will be sent a set of application and statutory check forms. Where the Adoption Team does not consider an individual/couple

suitable or ready to commence Preparation Groups they will be seen by two of the social workers who facilitated the Workshop and will be provided with with the reasons for not proceeding further with them in writing.

- 9.3.2 The date of receiving the completed and signed application forms is taken as the date of their formal application to adopt.
- 9.3.3 At least two Adoption Social Workers take responsibility for facilitating each set of workshop/preparation groups and follow an agreed programme, which is evaluated annually. Outside speakers (adopters, adopted people, other team members (post adoption workers) are fitted into the programme which has some formal teaching and is also experiential. Comprehensive written information is provided to prospective adopters on all aspects of adoption.
- 9.3.4 At the end of the groups prospective adopters are asked to complete feedback forms and confirm that they wish to proceed with their adoption application and return within one week together with their completed Criminal Record Bureau and statutory check forms.
- 9.3.5 If there are issues/concerns raised through the groups that the workers need first to discuss with the prospective adopters prior to them being allocated for a home study assessment, a joint home visit will be arranged without delay. These workers will make a recommendation to the Deputy Manager, Adoption, on whether to proceed to allocate for a home study assessment or whether a 'brief adopter report' should be written and presented to the Adoption Panel recommending that they are not suitable to be an adoptive parent(s).

9.4 Assessment

- 9.4.1 The Deputy Manager allocates applicants for the adoption home study assessment to both Adoption Team Social Workers and Family Placement Staff Bank Social Worker according to their availability and on occasion the need for a particular allocated worker. Any delays in allocation are monitored by the Group Manager, Adoption and applicants are kept informed. The adopter file is made up and statutory checks started and written personal references sought.
- 9.4.2 The performance standard for completion of the assessment is eight months from the date of the formal application to presentation at Panel.
- 9.4.3 The allocated Social Worker undertaking the assessment checks the applicant's identity, and gets the CRB checks and the applicant's medicals (costs met by applicants) under way on the first visit, in addition to mapping out the assessment visits.
- 9.4.4 Comprehensive adopter assessments are undertaken using BAAF Prospective Adopter's Report form. All members of the household are seen together and individually. Two personal referees and at least one family member are visited together with anyone else considered relevant by the Social Worker (e.g. if child in household – their school teacher). In addition significant previous partners or previous partners with children are seen. A second opinion Social Worker visit is conducted with the assessing Social Worker following the draft report being seen and commented upon by the Assistant Team Manager and/or Group Manager.
- 9.4.5 The applicants are sent a copy of the final report 10 days before the deadline for receipt of Panel papers and may make observations on the report prior to it being submitted to Panel. If the assessing Social Worker is from Staff Bank, the Deputy Manager will allocate a Social

Worker from the Adoption Team to become their Adoption Support Social Worker following Panel.

- 9.4.6 The assessing Social Worker will receive regular supervision throughout the assessment.
- 9.4.7 If the assessing Social Worker has concerns about the competence of the applicants these will be addressed and may necessitate a joint visit with their supervisor or on rare occasions early presentation through a brief report to the Adoption Panel. Where the majority of the assessment has been completed and the assessing Social Worker and their supervisor are not recommending approval, the applicant(s) will always be offered the opportunity of the assessment being completed and presented to the Adoption Panel rather than a brief report being presented to Panel.

9.5 Approval

- 9.5.1 The assessing Social Worker will prepare the applicant(s) for attending the Bromley Adoption Panel using the Panel Information Leaflet. The assessment will be booked into Panel in advance by the assessing Social Worker, as agreed with their supervisor and the applicant/adopter(s).
- 9.5.2 The assessment report, together with any written observations or representations will be submitted by the assessing Social Worker by the due closing date and will be passed to the Group Manager, Adoption who acts as Panel Adviser to the Adoption Panel.
- 9.5.3 The Panel Agenda is drawn up by the Panel Adviser and the agenda time provided to the assessing Social Worker who informs the adopter(s).
- 9.5.4 Reports are circulated to Adoption Panel Members six days prior to Panel along with a copy of the Panel papers to the Agency decision maker. Panel meet with the assessing Social Worker and the applicant/adopter(s) and would always ask them to leave while the Panel comes to a recommendation. Social Worker and applicant/adopter(s) are then invited back into Panel for the recommendation.
- 9.5.5 Following Panel the Panel Secretary writes up the Panel recommendations and advice on the Panel 'Decision Sheet' and the Panel minutes, which are passed to the Legal and Panel Advisors and Panel Chair for checking. The Panel Adviser passes the 'Decision Sheet' and the Panel minutes, to the 'Agency Decision-Maker' to make the Agency decision. The performance standard is to make the decision within seven working days of Panel.
- 9.5.6 The signed 'Decision Sheet' is passed back to the Group Manager, Adoption in order that the decision can be communicated in writing to the adopter(s) within seven working days of the decision being made. A copy of the 'decision' and the individual Panel minutes will be placed on the adopter(s) file.
- 9.5.7 If the Agency decision maker is not minded to provide Agency approval the applicant(s)/adopter(s) are notified in writing that they have 40 working days in which to make representations to the Agency or to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for an independent review panel. If representations are made they will be offered an interview with the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor prior to refer back to Panel. If after further consideration by the Adoption Panel and Agency the applicant(s) are still not in agreement with the Agency decision they will be advised to make a formal complaint under the Council's Representation and Complaint's Procedure.

9.6 Support

- 9.6.1 Following approval all adopters will have an allocated adoption support Social Worker from the Adoption Team. Social Workers will visit at least two monthly and be in contact at least on a monthly basis until adopters are linked with a child. From this point, contact will be determined through the Adoption Support Plan although there are minimum levels of contact maintained.
- 9.6.2 Where an adopter(s) is matched with an older child(ren) or a child(ren) with complex needs a 'Life Appreciation Day' will always be held following the Matching Panel and before the meeting to plan the introductions. This enables the adopter(s) to listen to and meet all the key people involved in the child's life. When a child is placed for adoption that child will have an allocated Social Worker who will offer support to the child and to the adopter(s) in caring for the child. A range of adoption support services is made available to adopters (see 3.1 above).
- 9.6.3 Should an adoption placement disrupt between the placement of the child and the making of the adoption order a 'Disruption Meeting' will always be held in order to gain a full understanding of the issues involved and assist in future planning for the child and the adopters.

10. **Procedures for assessing the needs of those requesting adoption support services from the Agency**

- 10.1 All adopters and social workers involved in placing a child for adoption will receive a copy of the Adoption Support Services Information leaflet. Information for children about adoption support services is contained in the Children's Guide to Adoption.
- 10.2 Adoption Support needs will have been evaluated by Social Workers in connection with preparing plans for adoption for a child; approving adopters; and matching and placing children for adoption. These plans, including contact arrangements, for the child, adopters and their and birth parents and birth family members will be recorded in the Adoption Support Plan and the adoption Placement Plan and are the responsibility of the named worker to action.
- 10.3 All adopted adults and birth family members affected by adoption will receive the Information Leaflet for People Affected by Adoption. Birth families affected by adoption will also receive 'About Adoption : Information for Birth Families'.
- 10.4 Where a formal request is made for an assessment of adoption support need, an adoption support referral will be completed and the referral acknowledged. The referral will be passed to the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA) for consideration of priority for allocation and whether a full adoption support assessment, is required.
- 10.5 Where the request for assessment relates to a particular adoption support service or if it appears that the service user's needs can be adequately assessed by reference to one particular adoption support service a full adoption support assessment will not be undertaken. In these cases eligibility for the particular service will be assessed in relation to the service user's needs and circumstances.
- 10.6 Requests for financial assessment for an on-going allowance or significant lump sum payments will be subject to a financial assessment of means. All requests for an on-going allowance are made to the Adoption Panel for recommendation and then to the Agency decision-maker for the agency decision. Requests for lump sum payments will be decided within respective manager's financial authorisation levels.

- 10.7 It is expected that all adoption support assessments for adoption support services are undertaken and completed within 40 working days of allocation and that during this period assistance, support and direct work is provided where required.
- 10.8 A draft of the assessment report will be sent to the service user and other agencies involved with 28 days for comment. At the end of this period the Agency will write to the service user and other agencies involved setting out how it is proposed to meet the identified and assessed needs. Where appropriate this will be set out in the form of an Adoption Support Plan.
- 10.9 Where adoption support services are being provided they will be reviewed on an annual basis.

11. Summary of the Complaints Procedure

- 11.1 The information set out below at 11.2 on 'Compliments, Concerns and Complaints' is provided to people attending an Information Meeting in the comprehensive Information Pack.
- 11.2 The service that you receive from the Bromley Adoption Team is based upon:-
- providing accurate and clear information about the service(s) provided
 - doing what we say
 - setting out timescales for the service(s)
 - acting fairly and without prejudice in all dealings with service users
- 11.2 If you consider that we have surpassed these intentions in our dealings with you then please let us know. **Compliments** support staff in their work and assist in the planning and delivery of effective services.
- 11.3 Where you have a **concern(s)** about an aspect of the service you have or are receiving it is important that you first raise this with the person who has been dealing with you. If it is not clear who this is then please contact the Adoption Team Duty Social Worker (☎ 020 8313 4193) in the first instance. Such open and direct communication often leads to a speedy and positive resolution of the concern(s).
- 11.4 Finally you may consider that the service you have received from the Bromley Adoption Team has been poor or your **concern(s)** has not been addressed or resolved. In such circumstances please direct your **complaint** (by letter, email, phone or through direct in-person contact) to the Group Manager, Adoption. They will respond within five working days and will endeavour to 'problem-solve' your complaint with you to achieve a mutually agreed outcome. If this is not possible they will explain the Council's Complaints Procedure, '*Getting it Right*', and provide you with the written details of how to take forward your complaint to the next stage.
- 11.5 The Children's Guide to Adoption produced so that there is information in the booklet for children and young people in terms of raising concerns or complaints or making representations about their care or the service they are receiving.
- 11.6 The Information Leaflet for People attending the Adoption Panel provides details on how people can make a complaint about this aspect of the service as well as a response form for people to complete and return on the service they have received.

12. **Address and telephone number of OFSTED**

Main Office

OFSTED

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404045

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Office of Lead Inspector (Margaret Lynes)

OFSTED

London Region
Area 7, Team 4
Alexandra House
33, Kingsway
London WC2 6SE

Tel: 08456 404045

**OFSTED Telephone line for raising concerns and complaints:
08456 014772**