

Bromley Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose 2012 – 2013

Bromley Adoption Service – Statement of Purpose

Why does Bromley provide a Statement of Purpose?

The National Minimum Standards for Adoption set out the requirement for adoption agencies to compile a statement detailing what services are provided, the governing principles and who manages and provides the services. The statement of purpose is for:

- Children and young people
- Birth relatives
- Prospective and approved adoptive families
- Social workers working within Bromley and other authorities
- Councillors
- Adoption Panel members
- Office for Standards in Children's Services, Education and Skills (Ofsted)
- Members of the public

Our aims and objectives

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.

The Service 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;
- 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;
- ensure that the needs, wishes and safety of the looked

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- 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.
- National Minimum Standards 2011

In making plans for the permanent placement of looked after children the Service first aims will be:-

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

Objectives

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

- Children Act 1989
- Adoption and Children Act 2002

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.

Services provided by the Agency

A summary of the services provided by the Adoption Service is as follows:

- Advice and information on domestic, inter-country, step-parent adoption and non-agency adoption, including duty appointments for residents of LB Bromley.
- Two monthly information meetings for people interested in domestic adoption.
- Initial home visits by an adoption social worker experienced in inter-country

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- 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 following approval who work in partnership with the allocated Social Worker for the child(ren) to after making of 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 or who request access to their file and are willing to travel to the borough for access.
- 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

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- 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)
- regular newsletter.
- 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.

Management of the Service

Responsibility for the management of the adoption service is held by:

Charmaine Miller, BA, DipSW
(Acting Group Manager)

Charmaine has extensive experience as a practitioner and manager in Local Authority Children's Services

Other members of the team are:

Barry Miller, CQSW, Certificate in Counselling, PQ1, D32/D33 NVQ Assessor Award.
(Senior Practitioner)

Jenny Parkinson, MSc, CQSW, PQ1, PQ Child Care Award
(Senior Practitioner)

Joy Bullen, CSS, PQ1
(Senior Practitioner)

Caroline Smith, MSc, CQSW, Practice Teacher Award, PQ1
(Senior Practitioner)

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Anne Johnson, BA, CQSW, PQ1
(Senior Practitioner)

Amuda Oko-Osi, BA, CQSW, PQ1
Alison Lewis, CQSW, Dip Social
Studies, PQ1
(Senior Practitioner & Adoption
Support Services Adviser)

Elaine Barrett, BA, DipSW, PQ1, PQ
Child Care Award, Theraplay Award,
PG Child Focussed Systemic Child
Psychotherapy
(Senior Practitioner)

Alison Lewis, CQSW, Dip Social
Studies, PQ1
(Senior Practitioner)

Anna Stokes, NNEB, Cert Counselling
Skills, Cert, Anti-Natal Teaching,
BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Counselling
Skills
(Independent Adoption Development
Worker)

Dr Daniel Pointon, MA, BA
(Resource Development Officer)

Elizabeth Joseph
(Business Support Assistant)

Nicole Molloy
(Letter Box Coordinator)

All social workers are registered with
the Health and Care Professions
Council (HCPC)

The Local Authority Decision Maker is
Kay Weiss, Assistant Director,
Safeguarding & Social Care

Organisational Structure of the Adoption and Adoption Support Service

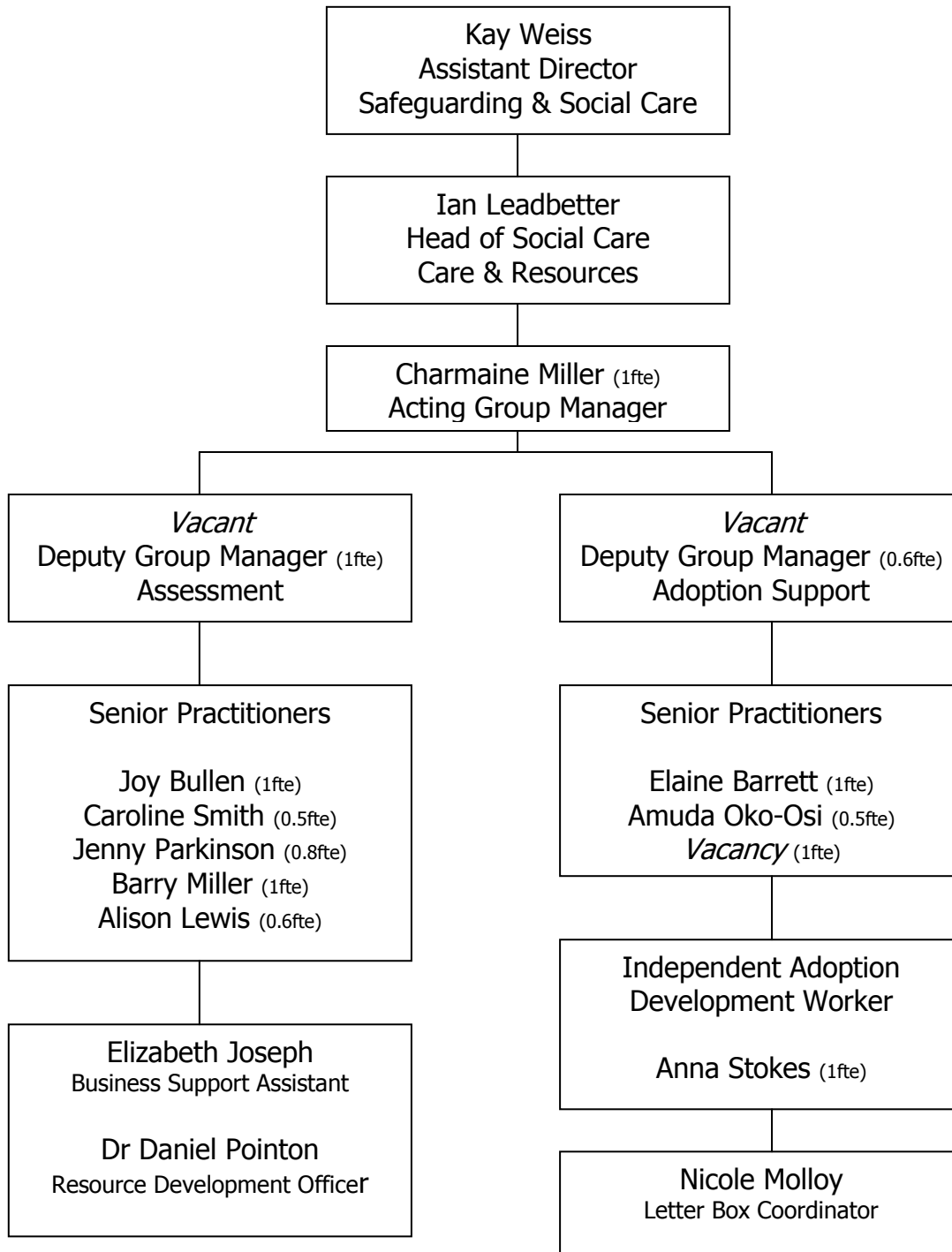
Bromley Education and Care Services
is one of the main Departments of
Bromley Council and is divided into
six Divisions – Safeguarding and
Social Care (Children);
Commissioning, Education; Adult
Social Care, Strategic & Business
Support, Housing Needs.

The Care and Resources Section of
the Safeguarding and Social Care
Division is responsible for the
delivery of the Bromley Adoption
Service.. Within Safeguarding and
Social Care there are five sub-
divisions – Referral, Assessment &
Early Intervention, Safeguarding &
Care Planning; Care and Resources;
Quality Assurance and Child
Protection., Targeted Youth Support

A copy of the structure chart for the
adoption service is overleaf.

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Organisational Structure Chart of the Adoption Service



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Quality Assurance of the Adoption Service

The Group Manager is currently responsible for the overall management of the Adoption Team. They are supported by two deputy group managers for assessment and adoption support staff. 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.

Family Placement Staff Bank Social Workers are provided with supervision by either the Group Manager, Deputy Manager (Assessment) or experienced Senior Practitioners in the Adoption Team under the terms of their agreement for service and follow the same supervision practice as above.

The Group Manager for Adoption holds additional responsibility Agency Adoption 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.

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.

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

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.

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

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recruitment for that child(ren) is undertaken.

The Bromley Adoption Team produces an annual recruitment plan and works with the Resource Development Officer to effect that plan together with the Deputy Manager, who leads on adopter recruitment.

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.

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 brief 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 which could lead to a requirement to undertake a full medical at this early point. 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.

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Preparation

The Adoption Workshop and Preparation Groups are run twice 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. Completed application forms must be returned prior to the start of the Preparation Groups. 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 in writing with the reasons for not proceeding further with them.

The date of receiving the completed and signed application forms is taken as the date of their formal application to adopt.

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.

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.

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).

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Assessment

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.

The performance standard for completion of the assessment is eight months from the date of the formal application to presentation at Panel.

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.

Comprehensive adopter assessments are undertaken using BAAF Prospective Adopter's report form and the accompanying competencies for adopters. 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 Deputy Group Manager and/or Group Manager.

The draft report is shared with the applicant(s) prior to the second opinion visit and they are provided with an opportunity to make factual corrections. They are sent a copy of the final report 10 days before the deadline for receipt of Panel papers and 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.

The assessing Social Worker will receive regular supervision throughout the assessment.

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 for advice. Where the majority of the assessment has been completed and the assessing Social

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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.

Approval

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).

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 Agency Adoption Adviser to the Adoption Panel.

The Panel Agenda is drawn up by the Agency Adoption Adviser and the agenda time provided to the assessing Social Worker who informs the adopter(s).

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.

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.

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.

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. Chair and Panel Advisor prior to refer back to Panel.

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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. If representations are made they will be offered an interview with the Panel.

Support

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Adoption Support assessments will have been undertaken 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.

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

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receive 'About Adoption : Information for Birth Families'.

Where a formal request is made for an adoption support assessment 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, following the 'Assessment Framework', is required.

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.

Requests for financial assessment for an on-going allowance or significant lump sum payments will be subject to a financial assessment of means conducted through the Council's finance section. 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.

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.

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.

Where adoption support services are being provided they will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Summary of the Complaints Procedure

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

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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.

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).

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** to the CSC Complaints Officer, 3rd Floor Stockwell Building, Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH who will arrange for your concerns to be investigated.

Alternatively, you can contact the complaints officer by ☎ 020 8461 7644 or email: cypsocialecomplaints@bromley.gov.uk

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 o

complaints or making representations about their care or the service they are receiving.

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.

Regulation and Inspection

Responsibility for the regulation and inspection of adoption agencies is undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education (known as Ofsted).

Concerns, complaints and allegations about registered services including adoption agencies can be directed to Ofsted particularly where it is not possible for them to be resolved directly with the agency.

For advice and information on how Ofsted can help, they can be contacted at:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M12WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Or via the website at www.ofsted.gov.uk