



Bromley Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose

2014/15



CONTENTS

1. Mission, Values and Aims of the Local Authority in relation to the Adoption Service
2. Procedures for recruitment, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective Foster Carers
- 3 Matching and Support
- 4 Summary of Complaints Procedure
- 5 Miscellaneous

APPENDIX 1: STAFFING AND STRUCTURE

APPENDIX 2: QUALITY ASSURANCE



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, Department of Education (Ofsted) and members of the public.

1. Mission, Values and Aims of the Local Authority in relation to the Adoption Service

1.1 Mission Statement

We believe that every child has the right to a permanent, secure and loving family which embraces their individual needs and differences and promotes their culture and identity. 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. Our involvement continues beyond the making of an Adoption Order and to all parties affected by adoption.

1.2 Values

Our Adoption Service shares the values and principles that underpin the National Minimum Standards for Adoption.

Values – Children



- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.

- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, inter country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

Values - Adopted Adults and Birth Relatives

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved - adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

The Welfare Checklist

Section 1 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 provides that whenever a court or adoption agency is coming to a decision relating to the adoption of a child, it must have regard to the following matters (among others)

- a. The child's ascertainable wishes and feelings regarding the decision (considered in the light of the child's age and understanding),
- b. The child's particular needs
- c. The likely effect on the child (throughout his life) of having ceased to be a member of the original family and become an adopted person
- d. The child's age, sex, background and any of the child's characteristics which the court or agency considers relevant,
- e. Any harm (within the meaning of the Children Act 1989) which the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering,

- f. The relationship which the child has with relatives and with any other person in relation to whom the court or agency considers the relationship to be relevant, including -
- i. The likelihood of any such relationship continuing and the value to the child of its doing so,
 - ii. The ability and willingness of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, to provide the child with a secure environment in which the child can develop, and otherwise to meet the child's needs
 - iii. The wishes and feelings of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, regarding the child.

1.3 Aims

The Service will aim to:

- provide a high quality adoption recruitment, assessment and support 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
- provide a comprehensive adoption recruitment, assessment and 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 recruitment, assessment and 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 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
- provide a pool of good quality adopters, reflecting the diverse needs of children who need adoptive families
- offer a comprehensive recruitment, training and support package to adopters
- provide a service that ensures the safety and well being of Looked After Children
- minimise potential risks by ensuring appropriate checks and reviews are in place and quality assurance is monitored through a comprehensive complaints process
- ensure that decisions are made with the 'best interests' of the child being paramount

- ensure that the welfare of children placed for adoption is promoted in relation to the need for stability and to ensure that health and education needs are met
- ensure that prospective adopters have access to all relevant information about the child and their history
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1.4 Objectives

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

Acts:

- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008;
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Children Act 2004;
- The Children Act 2008;
- The 1976 Adoption Act - Section 14;
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- Data Protection Act 1998;
- Freedom of Information Act.

Statutory Instruments:

- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005; 2011, 2012, 2013
- The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005;
- The Suitability of Adopters Regulations 2005;
- The Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005;
- The Independent Review of Determination (Adoption) Regulations 2005;
- The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- The Local Authority (Adoption) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2005;
- The Family Procedure (Adoption Rules) 2005;
- The Adopted Children and Adoption Contact Registers Regulations 2005;

- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005;
- The Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005;
- The 1983 Adoption Agencies Regulations - Section 15;
- The Adoption and Children (miscellaneous amendments) Regulations 2005;
- The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003;
- The Adoptions with a Foreign Element Regulations 2005;
- The Adoption (Bringing Child(ren) into the United Kingdom) Regulations 2003;
- The Registration of Foreign Adoptions Regulations 2003;
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;
- The Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Regulations 2003;
- National Care Standards Commission Regulations 2003 - England;
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Government Guidance

- Adoption Guidance 2011; 2014
- IRO Handbook: Statutory Guidance 2011;
- Practice Guidance - Preparing and Assessing Prospective Adopters (2006);
- Practice Guidance on Assessing the Support Needs of Adoptive Families (2008);
- Practice Guidance on Adoption: Access to Information and Intermediary Services;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (and associated child protection guidance);
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010;
- Family Procedure (Adoption) Rules 2005;
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 Practice Directions;
- The Court Rules, Domestic Adoption and Placement for Adoption 2002;
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families;
- Care Matters - Time for Change 2007.

Standards:

- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011;

- Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

1.5 Facilities of the Adoption Service

1.5.1. The Adoption Service is provided through qualified staff from within the Adoption and Fostering Service, Education and Care Services Department. The Safeguarding and Looked after Children teams are based on the same floor, at St. Blaise building, Civic Centre in Bromley

1.5.2. The Adoption Service has access to the Authority's Medical Adviser and the Senior Solicitor within Legal, Democratic & Customer Services whose responsibilities include advising the Adoption and Fostering Panels and offering advice and consultation to social work staff, other professionals, adopters and foster carers

The Adoption Team makes use of other Council Departments, as required, to support planning and delivery of services.

1.5.3. The Adoption Service works in partnership with the South East Adoption Consortium members and regularly consults and canvasses their views to ensure that the service to adopters remains effective and responsive, with professional working relationships in place between staff and adopters.

1.5.4. The Department holds membership of the Adoption UK, British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), Inter-Country Adoption Centre, London Region Adoption & Fostering Officers Group, The South East Adoption Consortium

1.6 Purpose of the Adoption team

The Adoption Team is responsible for all the adoption recruitment, assessment and 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.

1.7 Services provided

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

- Advice and general information on domestic, inter-country, step-parent adoption and non-agency adoption and adoption support which is provided through a duty system
- Monthly information meetings for people interested in domestic adoption; sessions are run in conjunction with our Consortium partners
- 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 adopters
- 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 activities 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 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;
- 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
- adoption support and training – series of training workshops; social events including an annual adoptive families picnic and a 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)
- 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.

2 Procedures for Recruiting, Preparing, Assessing and Approving Prospective Adopters

2.1 Recruitment

2.1.1. From 1st July 2013, there is a change to the adoption process. There will be a new, shorter two stage approval process for prospective adopters. The aim of this process is to enable prospective adopters to learn about adoption within the first stage and then move through the approval process. The new approval process will be 6 months in total with Stage 1 taking 2 months and Stage 2 taking 4 months. There is also a new fast track process for some previous adopters and approved foster carers.

2.1. 2. Prospective applicants can make enquiries by phone or by an initial enquiry form from the web; or by emailing the Department, The adoption Team, via dedicated duty time, aims to respond to all enquiries within two working days either by sending them an Information Pack or by contacting them on the phone and inviting them to an Information event.

2.1. 3. To meet the new tighter timescales in responding to adoption enquiries, our agency run monthly Adoption Information Events together with two of our South East Adoption Consortium partners (London Borough of Bexley and Medway Council). These meetings provide participants with an opportunity of hearing from social workers and adopters about the needs of the children being placed for adoption, what is involved in the adoption process and timescales.

Following the information meeting, if enquirers wish to continue the adoption process they will send their Registration of Interest form to their chosen adoption agency.

2.1. 4. Our website is under construction to reflect the changes to the adoption process and to attract new prospective adopters

2.2 Assessment Stage 1 – Initial Preparation/Training

2.2.1. Stage 1 begins when our agency accepts a prospective adopter's Registration of Interest; this stage should take no longer than 2 months. At Stage 1 we will enter onto an agreement with the prospective adopter (Stage 1 Plan) which sets out the responsibilities of us both.

2.2.2. Within Stage 1 The Adoption team will undertake police and health checks. The prospective adopter will need to give the agency the names of three referees, two of whom cannot be related to them. The agency will interview each referee and make a written report of the interviews with them.

2.2.3. Our adoption team will also explore with the prospective adopter the preparation most appropriate for them. We will inform the prospective adopter of their decision at the end of Stage 1 and explain that they must tell us if they wish to proceed to Stage 2 within six months of the decision. A prospective adopter is also able to take a break of up to six months between Stage 1 and 2.

2.3 Assessment Stage 2

2.3.1 Stage 2 of the adoption process will not begin until the a prospective adopter has completed Stage 1 and have notified the adoption team of their wish to proceed to Stage 2.

2.3.2. Stage 2 should take four months and is about intensive training and assessment. The adoption team and the prospective adopter will set up and an assessment plan; this would detail for example assessment process, dates of meetings/visits and agreed training.

2.3.3. Our agency will guide and support the prospective adopters through this process. They will be allocated a social worker to undertake home visits and find out more about their family background, lifestyle, health needs, support network and their strengths and vulnerabilities as a prospective adopter.

2.3.4. A comprehensive adoption assessment is undertaken using BAAF Prospective Adopter Report (PAR). All members of the household are seen individually as well as in a family group. Personal and family references are sought; ex-partners are contacted in relation to an applicant's capacity to parent, DBS, employer, medical, education and local authority checks are also undertaken.

2.3.5. The PAR- Prospective Adopter Report is shared with the applicant(s) so that they can make factual corrections and observations on the report prior to it being submitted to Panel.

2.3.6. The assessing social worker receives regular supervision throughout the assessment

2.3.9. If at any time during Stage Two, there are concerns about the competence of participants, then a brief report will be presented to Panel. If the Panel and the Agency Decision Manager confirm that the candidates are unsuitable, the candidates have the right to make representations to the Panel or to use the Independent Review Mechanism if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

2.4 Approval

2.4.1. The assessing social worker prepares the applicant(s) for attending the Bromley Adoption Panel. A leaflet and evaluation form are being designed to assist in this preparation

2.4.2. The Assessment Report, together with any written observations or representations, is submitted by the assessing social worker to the Panel.

2.4.3. The Panel's recommendations are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker to make the agency decision. The performance standard here is to make the decision within seven working days of the panel.

2.4.4. The decision is sent to the adopters within seven working days of it being made.

2.4.5. If the Agency Decision Maker is not minded to provide Agency approval, the applicants are notified in writing, including that they have 28 days to make representations to the Panel or use the Independent Review Mechanism.

3. Matching and Support

3.1. The Adoption Social Worker will continue to work with the adopters post-approval with a view to identify a link with a child.

After a period of 3 months, providing no match has been made, an

application to the Adoption Register is completed. This can occur before the 3 months if it is appropriate.

3.2. At the point of matching Adoption Support assessments are 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.

3.3. The match is presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation and then a decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker within seven working days.

3.4. Following approval of match all adopters will have an allocated Adoption Social Worker from the Adoption Team who will visit regularly through the entire process from matching to the Adoption Order being made.

When a child is placed for adoption that child will have an allocated Looked after Children Social Worker who will offer support to the child and to the adopter(s) in caring for the child.

Adopters will also have access to the Emergency Out of Hours social work team.

3.5. 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'.

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.

3.6. 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.

3.7. Requests for financial assessment for an on-going allowance or significant lump sum payments will be subject to a financial assessment of means conducted by the Department.

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

3.9. Bromley has a **Head Teacher of a virtual school for Looked After Children** who is responsible for supporting schools in the education of Looked After Children, promoting their opportunities, monitoring their performance, preventing exclusion and enabling a smooth transition between schools, to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes, and to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children are a priority in every school.

3.10. 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.

4 Complaints Procedure

4.1. Complaints Officer: CSC Complaints, 3rd Floor, Stockwell Building, Bromley, BR1 3UH Tel: 020 8461 7644

Email: cypsocailcarecomplaints@bromley.gov.uk

4.2. All enquirers and adopters are given a copy of the Department's Complaints and Compliments leaflet should they feel they have been treated unfairly and wish to make a complaint. However, we endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants before it becomes necessary to make a complaint.

4.3. Applicants being assessed under Stage Two and who are subsequently not considered suitable as adopters may make representations to Panel or access the Independent Review Mechanism

4.4. If complainants feel we have not addressed their complaint, they are informed of their right to complain further to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.

5. Miscellaneous

5.1. The Children's Guide has been updated by the Living in Care Council.

5.2. An Information Leaflet for adopters attending the Adoption Panel is being designed with a view to help prepare them for attendance. As well as an evaluation form for their comments on their experience of attending Panel.

APPENDIX 1 – STAFFING AND STRUCTURE

Responsibility for the management of the adoption service is held by the **Group Manager of the Adoption and Fostering Service**

Susan Noonan,

St Blaise Building,

Civic Centre,

Bromley, BR1 3UH

Telephone: 020 8313 3083

Fax: 020 8313 4400

Email: Susan.Noonan@bromley.gov.uk

Relevant Qualifications: Dip SW, CQSE, PQ1, CMS, DMS

Permanent Staff employed in the Adoption Service

Sue Noonan, Group Manager (1fte), Dip SW, CQSE, PQ1, CMS, DMS

Ana Parr, Deputy Group Manager Recruitment and Assessment (1fte), Dip SW, MS, PQ Child Care Award

Deputy Group Manager Adoption Support (0.6fte), Vacant

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)

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

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

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

Hayley Peet, (Senior Practitioner)

Elizabeth Joseph (Business Support Assistant)

Nicole Molloy (Letter Box Coordinator)

Jody Malley, Business Analyst

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

Organisation of Structure of the Adoption Service

Bromley Education and Care Services is part of Bromley Council and is managed by the Executive Director of Education and Care Services, Terry Parkin.

The Children's Social Care Division, as part of ECS, is responsible for the delivery of the Fostering Service.

Within the Children's Social Care Division, there are specialist teams dealing with Referral and Assessment (area teams), Safeguarding and Care Planning (area teams), Quality Assurance, Looked After Children, Leaving Care, Adoption, Fostering, Commissioning, Youth Offending and Teenage and Parent Support.

Social Workers for children requiring an adoption placement for a child are located in the area teams. The Adoption Team is part of the Adoption and Fostering Service and sits within the Care and Resources Service, thereby maintaining close links with the Safeguarding Team, The Fostering team the Looked After Children's team, as well as the Commissioning team.

The Bromley Adoption Service is responsible for establishing, maintaining and servicing the Bromley Adoption Panel. The Panel, in carrying out its regulatory functions, makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker, (Kay Weiss — Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care Division).

The work and performance of the Adoption Panel is included in the report on Adoption Activity submitted to the Care Services Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Parenting Executive.

Adoption of the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose of the Adoption Service is contained and expanded within the Adoption Policies and Procedures.

The Policies and Procedures and the Statement of Purpose contained have been placed before Council members and fully endorsed and supported.

The Statement of Purpose will accompany the Annual Report of the Adoption Service and will be presented to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services.

APPENDIX 2 – QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Group Manager is currently responsible for ensuring the supervision of all permanent staff in the Adoption and Fostering Team. Social workers are supervised by the deputy group manager on a three-weekly basis and all other staff are seen four-weekly. Supervision and line management practice follows the Divisional Supervision Policy and Management Standards.

Copies of the signed supervision notes are placed on the relevant paper or electronic file with any agreed action noted.

A quality assurance file audit will be undertaken on a regular basis as has been recently introduced in other teams. A new audit form is being produced for this purpose.

The Deputy Group Manager [Adoption] is delegated to be the Professional Adviser to the Adoption Panel and in this capacity reads all PAR, the child permanency records and matching reports on adopters and children and provides an important quality assurance role prior to presentation of reports at Panel.

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, together with advice from medical, legal and other advisors to Panel.

The Group Manager is supervised on a regular, three-weekly basis by the Head of Service, Care and Resources.

An annual report on adoption activity is produced and submitted to both the Care Services Portfolio Holder and the Adoption Panel annually.

In line with requirements, the Adoption Service will be inspected by Inspectors appointed by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act 2000.