



Interim Adoption Report January – June 2021

Mission Statements:

Bromley Council's Adoption Service believes that every child has the right to a permanent, secure and loving family which embraces their individual needs and differences, including their culture and identity where this is possible.

Coram's mission is to develop, deliver and promote best practice in the support of vulnerable children and young people. Our vision is that every child has the best possible chance to lead a fulfilling life.



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1. Introduction

This report details the work of Bromley Adoption Service from 1st of January to end of June 2021. The main purpose of this document is to report on the activity of Bromley Adoption Service, for the past 6 months.

Coram Ambitious for Adoption is the first port of call for adoption enquiries on behalf of Bromley Council and provides access to adoption support for all of its adoptive families. Coram is judged Outstanding by Ofsted and has more than 40 years' experience in finding vulnerable children permanent loving families.

In addition to Bromley Council, Coram Ambitious for Adoption also provides adoption services for Hillingdon, Waltham Forest, Harrow, Redbridge, Bi-Borough and The City of London and Slough since April 2021.

The services provide through the Regional Adoption Agency include the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters and the management of adoption panels, which take place in the 'hub' at Coram main office in Brunswick Square, and the family finding for children, and adoption and post adoption support are provided by Coram staff in the 'spokes' situated in each of the local authorities.

Adoption concerns only a small proportion of Bromley children who are unable to safely return to their families, but they are some of the most vulnerable children in society. Adoption usually offers the benefits of family life throughout childhood and beyond into



adulthood. It provides the opportunity for secure relationships to develop and the chance of developmental recovery for adopted children; the majority of whom have been maltreated and/or suffered significant trauma (Selwyn. et al., 20158).

Coram Ambitious for Adoption is responsible for recruitment, assessment, approval and support of adopter's pre and post-order, family finding for looked after children with an adoption plan and post-adoption support services. The team provides a duty service for adopters and offers consultancy on adoption matters to social workers from the Referral & Assessment, Safeguarding, Children in Care and Court Teams. The team also provides post placement and post adoption support and a range of services for adopted adults and descendants. The function of assessment of intercountry adoption applicants is subcontracted to 'the Intercountry-Adoption centre'.



2. Early Permanence

Early permanence (EP) for children has continued to be the main focus and a viable option for young children in Bromley who are likely to need adoption families.

Coram family finder tracks all of the cases that might need EP carers and works closely with the social work team to identify the most suitable placement for the baby.

Cases needing an early permanence placement are discussed and scrutinized at different stages of the Bromley Children Service's involvement. A weekly Legal Gateway Panel provides management oversight and scrutiny of all cases where a Legal Planning Meeting has been requested by Children Social Care and to ensure effective early case planning, timely interventions and pre-proceedings assessments. This panel is chaired by the Head of Safeguarding Service.

Similarly, for the Legal Gateway panel another layer of scrutiny is added by the Permanence Planning Meetings (PPM). This Panel meets fortnightly and focuses on children and young people entering care in Bromley, analyses care plans and ensure that all aspects of care arrangements, permanency and contingency plans are in place. All children and young people coming into care are presented between 6-8 weeks after accommodation. The panel is chaired by the Head of Fostering, Adoption and Connected Persons Service.

Coram family finder also uses the weekly performance data to monitor the progress of all the potential early permanence cases and any new referrals are discussed with the Early permanence team responsible for recruiting, assessing and approving early permanence carers in Coram Adoption and Permanent Families Service based in Central London.

Coram family finder is also part of the London Wide Early Permanence Steering group, a forum which meets bi-monthly to share expertise, ideas, good practice and family find for children who need early permanence carers.



Bromley was the first London borough to be awarded the 'Working towards Quality Mark' in Early Permanence and are now benefiting from focal work on consolidating the Early Permanence service.

Fostering for adoption is an established early permanence practice in Bromley; with 2 siblings being placed with early permanence carers in the last 6 months.

3. Children with an Adoption Plan

During the first 6 months of this year, 9 children have had an ADM decision and for this children adoption is the plan. There are currently 7 children in respect of whom the Courts have granted a Placement Order during this time and we are currently actively finding for them: 2 sibling groups of 2 and 3 individual children and their age is between 6 months to 7 years of which 4 are female and 3 are male. 1 sibling group has been matched at panel and they are due to be placed with their prospective adopters at the beginning of July. Another child is due to be placed in an Early permanence placement with her Early Permanence carers early July, with the view to be matched at Adoption Panel in the next couple of months. We are exploring active links for the other sibling group and another child who might be matched with prospective adopters in the next couple of months. For one child, the Placement Order will be revoked. This is an older child, 7 years old, with special needs for whom the Placement Order was granted for a period of 3 months. During this time, the child attended 2 Adoption Activities days, one Exchange day and his profile was featured on Link Maker and with Coram. Unfortunately, this intense family finding activity did not generate any interest and the care plan has been changed to long term foster placement.

We also continue to actively family find for another child, male, aged 2, for whom the Placement Order was made in December 2020.



4. Children Placed for Adoption in Jan- June 2021

Following an Adoption diagnostic of our performance, a Family Finding Lead role was created in September 2017. This is a practitioner with dedicated role in family finding for children with adoption plans from early stages of the child's care planning.

The Family Finding Lead undertakes the family finding in house (Coram RAA) and nationally for all cases where adoption is the plan, or likely to be the plan/ early family finding, working closely with practitioners from other teams, services or partner agencies.

There are 5 children placed with prospective adopters. 4 were placed before January 2021 and one was placed in March 2021. In this cohort, there is a sibling group of 2 and 3 individual children. 3 are female and 2 male children with ages between 3 ½ and 7 1/2.

In terms of ethnicity out of the 5 children placed they are all of White British heritage.

In terms of placement provider, of the cohort of 5 children, 3 were placed with Coram adopters and 2 were placed with adopters from voluntary adoption agencies under inter-agency arrangements.



5. Children Made Subject to Adoption Orders

Adoption Orders:

In the period of January 2021 to end of June 2021, 2 children were placed for adoption and 4 children were adopted. All these children were match and placed with their adopters during the pandemic.

All 4 children subject to an Adoption order: were 1 plus and of White British heritage .

They were all adopted by Coram adopters.



6. Adoption and Post Adoption Support Services

Post Adoption Services:

At the end of June 2020, the Post Adoption service was providing support to 28 families. The range of services vary from assessment of support needs and identifying provider to support the child and the family therapeutically. 6 accessed support and contact with birth family. 16 other families have a low-level intervention from the Post Adoption Service or have been closed during this time.

Access to Records:

9 requests for support to access Adoption records have been received from adopted adults during this time.

6.1. Overview of the service

Statutory adoption support is a key service to the regional agency and these services operate from local authority settings and managed by Coram RAA.

Adoption support services are prescribed by Adoption Support Regulations Services 2005 and listed as:



- Financial support
- Services to enable groups of adoptive children, adoptive parents and natural parents or former guardians of an adoptive child to discuss matters relating to adoption;
- Assistance, including mediation services, in relation to arrangements for contact between an adoptive child and a natural parent, natural sibling, former guardian or a related person of the adoptive child;
- Services in relation to the therapeutic needs of an adoptive child;
- Assistance for the purpose of ensuring the continuance of the relationship between an adoptive child and his adoptive parent, including—
- Training for adoptive parents for the purpose of meeting any special needs of the child; and
- Assistance where disruption of an adoptive placement, or of an adoption arrangement following the making of an adoption order, has occurred or is in danger of occurring, including—
- Making arrangements for the provision of mediation services; and
- Organising and running meetings to discuss disruptions in such placements or arrangements.

If there is a high level of crisis, safeguarding concerns or high risk of adoption breakdown/disruption it may require a different type of intervention and a referral will be sent to MASH to access safeguarding and family support services and work together with these professionals to ensure the family have the right kind of support.



Children's presenting with emotional difficulties who are posing risk to themselves or others are referred to CAMHS and Bromley Adoption Service have a great working relationship with the LAAC Team.

The post order team also works closely with the virtual school in providing advice and support to schools, parents and individual children with regards to education matters.

6.2.1 Pre-Adoption Order

Child's allocated social worker completes the Adoption Support Plan as part of the Adoption Placement Report (APR) and the support plan is discussed with and signed by adopters and any ongoing financial support will be agreed at this stage. Decision re: financial support lays with Head of Service for Bromley Permanence Service.

Signed contact arrangements: indirect (letterbox) and direct contact will be agreed and signed by birth family and adopters pre-Adoption Order.

The life story book and later life letter will be completed by child's social worker and given to the adopters before the case can be transferred to post adoption, 10 days after the Celebration Hearing.

6.2.2. Post Adoption Order

Once the adoption order has been granted, the case will be transferred to Post Adoption Team and one of the following pathways will be followed:



- There is no need for immediate support - Case to close and adoptive parents to be informed how they can refer themselves for support.
- Case to remain open for letterbox exchange only. Adopters will be advised how they can refer themselves for support
- Case to remain open with an allocated social worker due to ongoing support plan. Ongoing support plans will be reviewed at 3 or 6 monthly intervals until case closes.

We receive referrals directly from adoptive parents and professionals via phone call or email.

All cases which are open to post adoption support require an assessment of need and adoption support plan completed by the Post Adoption Team social workers, this will be then be reviewed once a year or any time the plan needs to significantly change.

6.3. Adoption Support Fund (ASF) Applications

The introduction and availability of the Adoption Support Fund in England has stimulated the provision of support services in an unprecedented way. Much of the focus of Bromley Post Adoption Service has been on ensuring a speedy application to the Fund to enable therapeutic services to be commissioned with minimal delay. This is usually based on a comprehensive assessment of need to ensure that services are responsibly and effectively commissioned in a joined-up and child-and-family centred way.

The therapeutic interventions offered via the Adoption Support Fund are mainly in-depth attachment /trauma models and they are often long-term interventions. The adoption support social worker works closely with other teams in Bromley Social Care, Thrive, independent therapists and CAMHS Teams to provide the relevant support to the adoptive families.



It is the responsibility of the Post Adoption Team to assess the need of the family, identify relevant services and make the application to the fund.

A total of **60** applications were made to Adoption Support Fund in the last 6 months which enabled us to purchase various resources for our adoptive families. This included Family therapy, specialist assessments, sensory integration programme, therapeutic parenting courses, family mediation provisions, play therapy, creative therapy .

6.4. Work with Birth Families

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 now provided in Bromley through referral to the therapeutic support team. A team of therapeutically trained social workers in this service offer a counselling service to birth parents affected by adoption to help assist them with loss and separation. As part of this work Bromley Therapeutic Support Service offer advice with letter writing and at the end of the continuum, preparation and support for '*Wishing Well Contact*' or with direct contact should there be a plan for this to occur post-adoption.

6.5. Other adoption support services offered

6.5.1. Education Support

Educational support to adopters is provided by Bromley's Head Teacher of virtual school for Children Looked After. The Virtual Head supports adoption via consultations with adoption service to support adopters in accessing the right educational provision for Children Looked After.

Additionally, the Adoption Support Fund has been used to provide play therapy resources in schools and this has reduced the need to access Pupil Premium Plus fund being used.



6.5.2. Post Adoption Contact

The letterbox arrangements are managed as part of the post adoption support duty system.

- Number of children who have letterbox arrangements: **206**
- Number of exchanges: **304**
- Number of family members receiving letters: **554**

The duty social worker with logistical support from an administrator provides the initial point of contact for information, advice and support to all those involved in indirect contact between adopted child and their birth families. If counselling or intensive support is required a designated social worker will be allocated for further work.

There are **13** adopted children with direct contact arrangements in place with birth family's members. The contact take place mostly during the summer and with siblings, but there is an increase in the number of direct contact arrangements involving both birth parents and grandparents. Each child will have one, two or more direct contacts annually with one or more parties.

Contact arrangements require a great deal of time and sensitivity from the service. The post adoption social worker prepares adoptive family members and birth family members to ensure the best possible outcomes from these contacts. The contacts are emotional and require sensitivity and empathy on the part of the adoption social worker. Direct contacts are an important piece of work for the child as it assists identity formation, reinforces important attachments made to significant people and promotes the cultural identity. Direct contacts continue until the child is 18 or until either party requests a review to either increase or changing contacts arrangements to better meet the needs of the child.

6.5.3. Adoption Allowances



This function of the Adoption Service was not transferred to the Regional Adoption agency so a Bromley Finance Officer has been undertaking all Adoption allowance reviews, overseen by the Head of Service for Permanence Service

This payment is reviewed annually and is means tested.

7. Disruptions, Complaints & Allegations and Compliments

There were no placement or adoption disruptions during January- June 2021.

There were no complaints and no allegations during this time.

8. Future developments and priorities

As part of our drive for improving further on service delivery the action plan for the year ahead is to continue to:

- Aim for an 'outstanding' adoption service, by continuing to engage in the development of the Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA, developing closer working relationships with the other Local Authorities which are part of the RAA in order to form a collective identity
- Continue to work in partnership with the Regional Adoption Agencies to look at best practice and service delivery, share ideas and expertise.



- To continue to further reduce the timescales for children with an adoption plan and to improve our Adoption scorecard by ensuring most of the children are matched with adopters within 4 months of the adoption order being made.
- Bromley and Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA to work in partnership in placing children with adopters who can meet their needs avoiding delays. Alongside this, we will work with other RAAs partners and VAAs to deliver efficient and cost-effective services for our children needing permanent families;
- Improve on the quality of CPRs and support plans for children with an adoption plan. This will be achieved by getting more involved in working in partnership with the relevant teams at the pre-order stage and upskilling the workforce and training the is writing good CPRs.
- Continue to develop the post-adoption assessment tools in order to support the process of making decisions on the right intervention for the adoptive families;
- Continue to apply to the Adoption Support Fund in a timely manner;
- Continue to expand the therapeutic independent provider list in order to have a wider choice when commissioning these services;
- Continue to develop our post order support services as well as the pathways of working together with other Bromley CS teams to ensure that adoptive families receive the relevant type of support;
- Ensure that post adoption support services are offered on the basis of clear, transparent and individualised support plans, which are reviewed regularly, with financial support provided based on the child's individual needs;



- To provide access to information, counselling and support as appropriate to adults whose lives have been affected by adoption, including adopted adults and their birth relatives
- To promote best practice in permanence planning for children by undertaking research and disseminating information to the professional network; This includes providing information through the Coram Centre for Early Permanence which hosts the early permanence subscription scheme.

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