

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY TEAM

Statement of Purpose 2011--2014

Contents

Introduction

Part I

1. Aims and Objectives
2. Securing and promoting children's welfare: outcomes for children and young people
3. Organisation and Management of the Adoption and Permanency Team
4. Recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval and support for prospective adopters
5. Procedures for monitoring the activities of the team and for ensuring quality of performance.

Part II

1. Information about the numbers and qualifications and experience of staff
2. Tasks and roles of staff

Part III

1. Schedule of relevant policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing the Adoption and Permanency Team and its service delivery.
2. Structure chart
3. Complaints and representations

INTRODUCTION

The main function of the Adoption and Permanency Team is to provide a high quality adoption and permanency service for children. This involves enabling children who are looked after by the local authority and who can no longer return to live with their birth families, to move to permanent substitute families, including with friends and family carers and other connected people. The new families should be able to care for them throughout childhood through to adulthood and independence, providing love, care and warmth, and be able to respond to their individual needs.

This Statement of Purpose is divided into three parts:

- Part One sets out:
 - the broad aims and objectives of the service
 - the management structure
 - the services provided
 - the outcomes expected for children and young people and the standards of care expected
 - how adoptive families are recruited, approved, trained and supported.
- Part Two gives more changeable information about the numbers and qualifications of staff.
- Part Three consists of an appendix listing the relevant policies, procedures and guidance that govern and inform the Adoption and Permanency Team and its service delivery, including the procedures for complaints and representations.

PART ONE

1. Aims and Objectives

1.1 The aims and objectives of the Adoption and Permanency Team accord with a number of local and national aims and objectives. These include:

- The National Minimum Standards for adoption (2011)
- The Council's Family Services Improvement Plan 2011 - 12
- The Adoption Act 2002 and Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 and supporting statutory guidance and regulations
- Friends and Family Care, statutory guidance for local authorities, 2011.
- The care planning, placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and accompanying statutory guidance
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011)

The Team actively contributes towards improving the Council's performance in placing children for adoption and permanence within national timescales by recruiting adopters, and assessing friends and family and existing foster carers who have applied for special guardianship or adoption.

AIM 1

To identify the needs of individual children waiting for legal permanence and to find families to match their needs within national timescales in accordance with DfE standards.

Objectives

- To take a child's assessed needs and their background into account when considering their permanence plan, including their age, gender, ethnic, linguistic and cultural heritage, religious background, and any specific health needs.
- To ensure that regular planning meetings are held for each child under 14 years old who becomes Looked After as soon as it becomes apparent that their return home is doubtful.
- To ensure that parallel planning has been considered for each child. Before stranger adoption is considered to ensure that there is no one in the child's own friends and family network able to offer a stable, permanent home.

- To monitor the parallel plans for children and hold regular reviews of the plan with the locality team until an adoption, special guardianship or residence order has been made.
- If no suitable in house approved adoptive family is available, to plan a recruitment campaign. This will include advertising if permission has been obtained from either the birth family or the Family Court.
- To participate actively in the West London Adoption Consortium (WLAC) exchange for children who are waiting for placement.
- To place the child's name on the National Adoption Register.
- The Adoption Panel will monitor progress on all children for whom a permanence plan has been made until a permanence order has been made by the Family Court.

AIM 2

To offer a support service to birth families whose children achieve permanence through adoption or special guardianship.

Objectives

- To include birth parents in permanence planning for their children.
- To provide counselling for birth parents who are in the adoption process, including using the services of independent adoption support agencies where appropriate.
- To ensure that birth parents are informed promptly in writing about the implications of an adoption, special guardianship or match recommendation when the Agency Decision Maker makes a decision.
- To offer birth parents an independent worker to support them through the adoption process.
- To engage birth parents and the wider family in contributing material for the child's life story book

AIM 3

To propose a suitable match for each child, and to present this to the Adoption and Permanence Panel for recommendation and Agency decision.

Objectives

- To consider the child's assessed needs and unique characteristics including their cultural and linguistic background, ethnic origin, health, religious persuasion, gender and sexual orientation when interviewing and choosing a permanent family.

- When possible families have been identified, to share information with the child's social worker and foster carer and make a decision as to which family is likely to be suitable.
- To meet the prospective permanent family and obtain any further information needed.
- To ensure that any family identified is fully informed about the child and the birth family, and that the family is helped to obtain independent advice if this is wanted.
- To present to the Adoption Panel all the information about the child and prospective adopters or special guardians.
- To present to the Panel the arrangements for adoption and special guardianship support, including the adoption or special guardianship support plan and any recommendations for financial support.

AIM 4

To ensure that each child and family experiences a suitable period of introductions in order for them to feel comfortable when the child moves to live with the new family and to ensure that the settling-in period is fully supported.

Objectives

- To arrange an introductions meeting for the family with professionals in order to share all the necessary information and support arrangements, and to arrange a detailed timetable for introductions and the move. This meeting should include the adoptive family, their social worker, the child's social worker, foster carer and supervising social worker and be chaired by the Manager of the Adoption and Permanence Team
- To provide to prospective adopters clear, full and appropriate information in writing about the child and his or her family, medical history, health, education and his or her emotional and cultural needs.
- To speak to the new permanent or adoptive family, the child and other professionals during the introductions period to monitor progress and identify any additional support that may be needed.
- To ensure that the family is provided with a set-up grant before the child moves to the new home.
- To ensure continued support for the child and the adoptive family, including regular visits to the child by their social worker and communication with the adoptive family and their adoption social worker.
- To ensure that adoptive families are aware of how to proceed in the event of any concerns, current or historic, about the adopted child's safety or protection.

- To ensure that the child is safe and their health, education and emotional needs are met, including making any necessary referrals to health and education services and informing the appropriate Local Authority, Health and Education Authorities when the child moves.

AIM 5

To recruit and assess adoptive families to meet the needs of looked after children waiting for a permanent family.

- To welcome enquiries from prospective adopters without prejudice, and to treat them fairly and with respect having regard to their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, their sexual orientation, marital status and any disability.
- To run advertising campaigns for families from a wide range of backgrounds who can meet the diverse needs of the children who are waiting for adoption and permanent placement.
- To respond quickly to families who make enquiries about adoption.
- To hold regular information sessions for prospective adopters.
- To arrange preparation groups for prospective adopters. The preparation groups include awareness of child protection and diversity and equality issues, including the challenges faced by looked after children and those with disabilities, children of mixed ethnic heritage, transracially and trans culturally adopted children, older children and children with same gender sexual orientation.
- To refer prospective adopters to WLAC preparation groups if no RBKC group is running within a suitable time.

AIM 6

To treat all prospective adopters, children, birth families and professionals with respect, paying due consideration to their individual characteristics and needs. To promote a positive attitude to diversity and reduce discrimination.

Objectives

- To recruit staff that understand and appreciate the diversity of the Borough's population and to offer training to all staff on equality issues and promoting anti-discriminatory practice.

- To include training in the preparation groups to promote anti discriminatory practice and improve knowledge and awareness of diversity issues.
- In particular to be aware of the issues pertaining to inter-country adoptions such as trans cultural and trans racial placement, language, religion and health, and to enable appropriate preparation and assessment to prospective inter-country adopters.
- To arrange for information to be translated and for interpreters where necessary.
- To organise working arrangements in the team so that black and minority ethnic workers may attend the BAAF black workers group.
- To ensure that all staff members are offered a rolling programme of training on equality issues in line with Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001 and other relevant legislation.
- To deal with all complaints and queries in a manner that meets departmental and national requirements.

AIM 7

To ensure that all staff and Adoption and Permanence Panel members have appropriate training on adoption issues, child care and child protection issues and legislation, regulations and standards.

Objectives

- To ensure that training and development needs for staff are addressed in regular staff supervision and in their personal development plans as part of their annual performance review.
- To use internal and external training to meet these needs.
- To organise an annual training day for Panel members with the adoption team.
- To ensure that members of the Panel and staff are kept up to date with new legislation and standards and provided with the relevant documentation, including child protection procedures.
- To ensure that new staff and Panel members have adequate induction and opportunities to attend the Panel as observers.

AIM 8

To offer a culturally sensitive service to adopted adults over the age of eighteen and adult birth relatives of adopted adults for access to information and an intermediary service for making contact or establishing a reunion.

Objectives

- Where RBKC is the appropriate Adoption Agency, to offer access to adoption files for adopted adults either directly or through another registered Adoption Agency or Intermediary Agency
- Where an adopted adult lives in the borough but RBKC is not the appropriate Adoption Agency, to offer advice, counselling and information how to access birth and adoption records and to liaise with other agencies, the General Register Office and courts.
- To act as an intermediary agency for both adopted adults and adult birth relatives of adopted adults where RBKC is the appropriate Adoption Agency or where any of these people lives in the borough.
- Where an adult birth relative does not live in the borough, but RBKC is the appropriate Adoption Agency, to advise people how to obtain the services of an intermediary agency.

AIM 9

**To offer an assessment service to prospective special guardians for an RBKC looked after child or a child resident within the Royal Borough.
To provide a support service to special guardians, children and their birth families after a special guardianship order has been made.**

Objectives

- To think about a child's needs, including their background, when considering special guardianship; their age, gender, ethnic, linguistic and cultural heritage, religious background, and any specific health and behavioural needs
- To work with the prospective special guardian to assess their ability to meet the child's needs until adulthood and beyond
- To provide information to prospective special guardians about special guardianship and special guardianship support.
- To prepare reports for the courts in special guardianship proceedings.
- To meet with prospective special guardians early in the assessment to discuss their needs for post order support
- To provide support for special guardians, including financial support, and to review their support needs at least annually.
- If a child is living with prospective special guardians before an order is made the agency will supervise and monitor the arrangement as required by any regulations and pay particular attention to the child's need for protection from harm
- To ensure that special guardians are aware of whom to contact locally in the event of any child protection concerns.

- The local authority will provide a letterbox service if needed after an order has been made to facilitate correspondence between birth parents, their children and the special guardian family.

AIM 10

To offer an adoption support service to RBKC adopted children, their birth families and their adoptive parents

Objectives

- To include birth parents in permanence planning for their children
- To provide counselling and an independent worker for birth parents to support them through the adoption process. (this may be provided by the independent adoption support agency After Adoption.)
- To arrange for translations of material and for interpreters where necessary.
- To provide a letter box service, receiving , checking and forwarding letters , photographs and information between an adopted child, their birth family and their adoptive family
- To arrange, supervise and monitor face to face contact between adopted children and their birth family where agreed by the court .
- To provide advice, support and information to adopted children and young adults, their adoptive families and their birth families for at least three years after an adoption order is made.

2. Securing and Promoting Children's Welfare: Outcomes for Children and Young People

The Adoption Service works to improve the lives of looked after children through:

- Helping children to be healthy
- Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe
- Helping children to achieve and enjoy what they do
- Helping children to make a positive contribution

These outcomes and principles are also outlined in RBKC's Pledge to Looked After Children (LAC), the Foster Carer Charter and the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose.

2.1 Helping children to be healthy

- 2.1.1 Each child with a permanence decision for adoption has a full adoption medical and a health plan and child health report written by one of the agency's medical advisors.
- 2.1.2 Adopters are given information about a child's health, including information about administering medication, and are clear what responsibility has been delegated to them in making health related decisions when they are matched.
- 2.1.3 Prospective adopters meet the agency medical advisor during preparation training and learn about looked after children's health needs and in particular how to meet their needs for emotional health.
- 2.1.4 Prospective adopters are able to meet or speak to the agency's medical advisor before a child is placed to further their understanding of his/her health needs.
- 2.1.5 Before permanent placement foster carers are promoting an active and health lifestyle by providing healthy food and snack options and encouraging children to engage in physical activities. Prospective adopters are encouraged to take account of what the child is used to during introductions.
- 2.1.6 Social workers, foster carers and prospective adopters speak to children about their health needs and support and encourage them to live a healthy life style.
- 2.1.7 Children with specific medical needs receive support to take medication and use the services of CAMHS both before and after placement where appropriate.

2.2 Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe

- 2.2.1 Every adopter of a RBKC looked after child is asked to sign an agreement before the child comes to live with them. This includes what to do in the event of a child protection concern.
- 2.2.2 All prospective adopters' homes have a health and safety check which is reviewed by the adoption panel at approval and match. placement.
- 2.2.3 Prospective adopter training includes a module on the dangers of social networking and using the internet and the implications of neglect and abuse.
- 2.2.4 During their assessment adopters learn how to help children learn how to protect themselves from abuse and how to provide a safe and secure home.
- 2.2.5 Prospective adopters make appropriate risk assessments in the areas where some areas that they have been delegated authority and encourage children take appropriate risks. For example they decide if a child can stay overnight at a friend or relative's house.
- 2.2.6 The Adoption Team seeks to promote and safeguard the welfare of looked after children and other children affected by adoption as its

paramount concern and ensures that this is written into any agreement with a partner agency.

- 2.2.7 Adoption social workers attend the child's first and second looked after reviews following adoption placement and together with the child's social worker ensure appropriate links are made with agencies in the responsible authority for the child.

2.3 Helping children to achieve and enjoy what they do

- 2.3.1 The Adoption support service helps adopters to support children and young people to achieve in education by responding to requests for adoption support. This includes attending meetings and advocating on behalf of the child where the adopters ask them to do so.
- 2.3.2 The Adoption service helps prospective adopters and special guardians obtain an appropriate school place for the child before placement .
- 2.3.3 Prospective adopters attend the child's PEP meeting, review and parents' meetings at their child's school or nursery and remain actively involved in their child's education.
- 2.3.4 Where adoption and special guardianship allowances are paid they continue until a young person has concluded the academic year or course they are pursuing on their eighteenth birthday.
- 2.3.5 Prospective adopters research their local area to find out what facilities exist for children and become familiar with them. They are able to support children to engage in a variety of leisure activities that helps their child to develop confidence and interests.
- 2.3.6 Before placement the adoption team works closely with the Virtual School and Activities Officer and the LAC psychologists to ensure that children are able to use the education provided for them.

2.4 Helping children to make a positive contribution

- 2.4.1 Children's feelings and wishes are outlined in their child permanence report, no matter how young they are.
- 2.4.2 Maintaining links for a child with their birth family is important. The adoption support service ensures these links are maintained when that is in the child's best interest by providing a letterbox service and arranging for any direct contact to be supervised .
- 2.4.3 Every adopted child has a life story book to help them understand their origins and why they became adopted.
- 2.4.4 Prospective adopters contribute to the child's later life letter and are clear about when to share it with their child.
- 2.4.5 Children and young people receive an appropriate guide to adoption, including how to make a complaint and contact an advocate. Children

receive a simplified version of this statement of purpose before they are placed.

- 2.4.6 Children's wishes and feelings are taken into account when a placement is being considered. Children are able to express their views to their social worker or, where appropriate, an advocate during the introductions.
- 2.4.7 Prospective adopters are encouraged to take into account children's ethnicity, religion, language, culture and describe how they will positively promote the birth family's heritage in the adoptive home so that a child can develop a positive view of themselves, their origins and their adoptive identity.
- 2.4.8 Prospective adopters and adopters are supported to meet their child's specific behaviour needs. This includes access to specialist programmes for adopters such as Safe Base provided by our partner agency, After Adoption and a contribution towards further training where needed.
- 2.4.9 Adopters and approved adopters, including intercountry adopters, can access, free, the west London Adoption Consortium's training programme including quarterly evening seminars for adoptive parents.
- 2.4.10 Where children placed for adoption need specific help to manage their behaviour, the looked after psychologists support prospective adopters to meet their specific needs.
- 2.4.11 Where children placed for adoption have specific needs the adoption service can provide prospective adopters and special guardians training in filial therapy to support a child in their adoptive home.

3. Organisation and Management of the Operation of the Adoption and Permanency Team

- 3.1 The Adoption and Permanency Team is part of the Royal Borough's Families and Children's business group.
- 3.2 The Manager's name and address is :

Susan Howard
Adoption and Permanence Team Manager
Westway Aid and Information Centre
140 Ladbroke Grove
London W10 5ND

Telephone 0207 598 4438
Susan.Howard@RBKC.gov.uk

3.3 The structure of the Team and how it relates to the Business Group is shown in the following diagram:

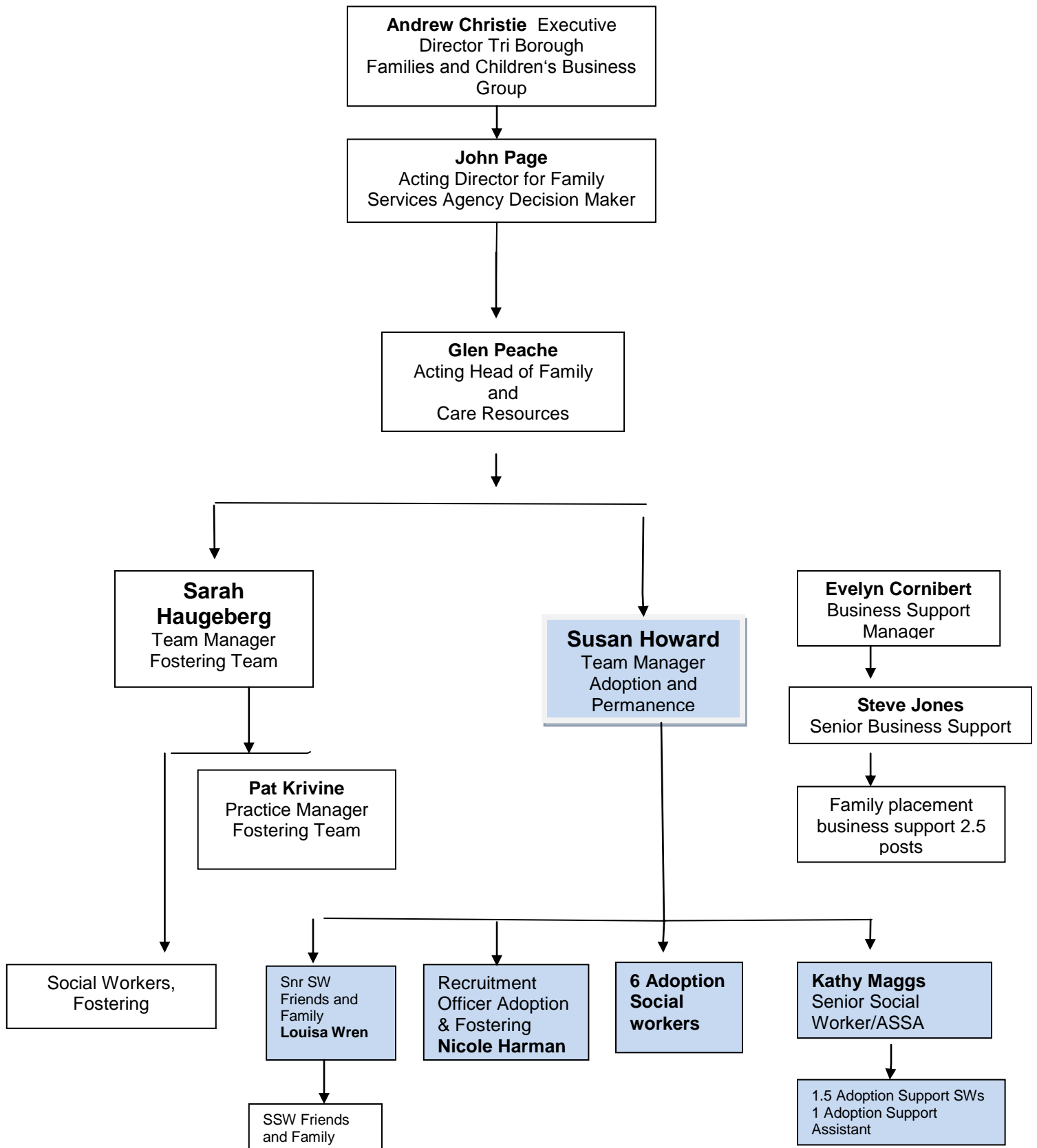
3.4

The Team comprises:

- The Team Manager;
- 1 Senior Social Worker, lead on Adoption Support (ASSA)
- 1 Senior SW Friends and Family Care
- 7 full-time adoption social workers, including one full time adoption support SW and 2 part-time social workers (including 1 working in adoption support)
- 1 Adoption Support Assistant
- 1 post of Senior Business Support Officer (shared with Fostering Team)
- 1 Adoption Business Support Officer
- 1 post of Recruitment Officer. (Shared with Fostering Team)

3.5 The qualifications of staff and their experience are shown in detail in Part Two

Adoption and Permanency Team Line Management Diagram



4. Recruiting, assessing, approving and supporting adopters.

4.1 The team has written plans for recruiting sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally. These are listed in Part 3.

4.2 The following is a summary of the strategies for recruitment:

- Two annual advertising campaigns in June and the autumn (September or November)
- One campaign is specifically targeted at prospective adopters from the black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.
- Regular public information meetings with presentations about the adoption process, the children who are waiting for adoption and direct and indirect contributions from adopters.
- Taking up opportunities for promoting the service in the media.
- Use of the Internet and the Borough's website
- All children with a permanence plan for adoption and all approved adopters for whom there is no suitable RBKC child are referred to the national Adoption Register.
- Joint advertising with the West London Adoption Consortium and participation in Consortium and regional exchange events.
- Advertising on behalf of individual children in "Be My Parent", *Be My Parent Online*, "Children Who Wait" and if necessary the national media.
- Distributing flyers within Greater London.
- Sharing information with the West London Adoption Consortium of ten adoption agencies every two months, and distributing individual flyers to members of the Partnership.
- Using the RBKC website to recruit for specific children for whom court permission has been granted.
- A quarterly RBKC brochure with profiles and photographs of waiting children and approved adopters is distributed to over 400 adoption agencies throughout the UK.
- All children who may have to wait longer for a placement have a DVDs to accompany their profile.

All these activities are co-ordinated by the Recruitment Officer in the Family Placement Unit, working with social workers in the Adoption Team. The programme of recruitment is on- going with a consistent message to raise the need for recruitment of adopters for RBKC.

4.3 The following is a summary of the plans for evaluating the recruitment strategy:

- The FPU data base produces reports on where adopters heard about the Royal Borough . The recruitment officer analyses them to plan further advertising in the most cost-effective way. Particular emphasis is given to analysis of the ethnicity of respondents to meet the needs of RBKC children of mixed ethnic heritage.
- The adoption team manager includes a question in her second opinion visit about why adopters chose to apply to RBKC. This qualitative information is used to inform the recruitment campaigns.
- Annual benchmarking statistics are completed for the West London Consortium (WLAC) to record all matches achieved within the Consortium.
- Outcomes of campaigns and information about costs are shared with WLAC members.
- The outcomes of all campaigns are considered when planning further campaigns, and unsuccessful campaigns are not repeated.
- The cost of all campaigns and advertising is carefully monitored to remain within designated budgets. The Adoption Team Manager and the Recruitment Office evaluate the costs and outcomes of advertising campaigns to ensure the most cost effective deployment of resources.
- The adoption panel monitors the children waiting for permanent homes and enquires about efforts to find a family for them.

4.4 Procedure for Monitoring and Controlling the Activities of the Service to Ensure a Good Quality of Performance

4.4.1 The following systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the service:

- The Adoption Panel reviews all children waiting for a permanent placement until a permanence order is made.
- Children in long term foster placements are reviewed until they leave care.
- The Adoption panel reviews any breakdowns in placements, and an independent agency (After Adoption) has been contracted to chair a disruption meeting and write a report for the agency and the panel.
- The Adoption panel reviews progress on family finding and matching for approved adopters, including those approved to adopt from overseas.
- A six-monthly report on Team activity and outcomes for children is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council.
- The Adoption Service has a service improvement plan set in line with Council and Business Group objectives

- There are annual Performance Reviews for all staff, setting and reviewing targets that are in line with departmental and team service plan targets and objectives.
- Each member of staff has a personal development plan that includes keeping up to date on safeguarding issues. The plan is reviewed in supervision and updated at least annually.
- Each team social worker receives monthly supervision with them team manager or one of the senior social workers with a review of casework tasks, monitoring targets and progress on development.
- The adoption tracking report within the Integrated Children's System details numbers of RBKC LAC placed, adopted, ethnicity, and timescales to be obtained and compared with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 regulations and national performance measures.
- The FPU database produces a range of management reports including sending emails when statutory checks for adopters have expired or need to be repeated.
- The FPU data base alerts the adoption support service when a contact for an adopted child is due and when the relevant date has passed.
- All applicants approved for over a year and who have not been matched with a child are reviewed annually by the adoption team manager and the results reported to the Adoption Panel.
- The Customer Care and Complaints Section maintain records of complaints, their outcomes, and praise.

4.4.2 In addition, the following financial procedures are in place:

- The team manager receives monthly reports on:
 - staff costs
 - the adoption service budget
 - expenditure on adoption, residence order allowances
 - expenditure on special guardianship allowances and support
- The team manager arranges quarterly budget reviews with the finance accounts manager.
- Adoption, residence order and special guardianship allowances are paid weekly by the FPU database payments system.
- The business support supervisor and the adoption team manager review all adoption, residence order and special guardianship allowances annually.
- Families are informed by letter of any changes in payments.
- Inter-country charges are discussed on first contact and included in the information pack given to prospective adopters. Charges are reviewed and agreed with the WLAC.

- Inter-agency financial agreement meetings are held, and charges and expectations of timescales for payment are recorded on BAAF Form H1. The National Agreement is ratified annually by BAAF.

5. Procedures for recruiting, preparing and assessing adopters and for supporting adoptive parents

5.1 A detailed set of procedures is listed in Part III. The following is a brief summary of the steps:

- **Step 1: Expressing an interest.** An information pack is sent within 5 working days of the initial enquiry, and there is an opportunity to speak to the Duty Social worker on the telephone.
- **Step 2: Attending an information meeting.** Enquirers are invited to attend an information meeting. Information meetings are held every six weeks locally or within the WLAC.
- **Step 3 Initial home visit.** Two social workers visit those prospective adopters who wish to proceed within two months of their enquiry to provide more information and to discuss their personal circumstances, motivation and what they feel they can offer a child. Following this visit the adoption team will decide whether the prospective adopters can meet the needs of a looked after child and are ready to begin assessment.
- **Step 4: Formal application.** Prospective adopters complete an application form giving permission given for references and statutory checks on the adopters and their household.
- **Step 5: Preparation Training.** The prospective adopters are invited to attend a Preparation Training Group locally or within the WLAC. Intercountry adopters attend preparation training and information meetings provided by the Intercountry Adoption Centre.
- **Step 6: Assessment.** Prospective adopters have an allocated social worker who works with them from the date of their application to help them prepare to become adoptive parents in a sensitive way and identifies the strengths they have or will need to develop to meet the challenges of being parents to a child who has been looked after.
- **Step 7: The prospective adopter's report.** The information gathered during the assessment, along with the results of the statutory checks and references, etc. Is written into a prospective adopters' report by the social worker. Applicants have an opportunity to see and make comments on the report before it is presented to the Adoption and Permanence Panel.
- **Step 8: Adoption and Permanence Panel.** The assessing social worker will present the prospective adopters' report to the Panel within 8 months

of the formal application unless unforeseen circumstances result in delay. The prospective adopters are invited to attend the Panel meeting, together with the adoption social worker. The function of the Panel is to make an independent recommendation to the Agency (The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea). The agency will make a decision on receipt of the approved minutes of the adoption panel – this is generally within ten working days.

- Prospective Adopters may request a refusal to approve to be reviewed by the **Independent Review Mechanism**.
- Step 9: **Matching to a child**. Once approved, the social worker and approved adopters will try to identify a suitable child, starting with local children, and then extending the search through the West London Consortium and the National Adoption Register. If a possible match is identified, the child's social worker will visit the prospective adopter (and any other adopters being considered). The prospective adopters will be given full information to enable them to consider whether the child would be right for them. One family will be selected who are considered suitable for the child, and details of this match will be presented to the Panel in the child's agency. The Panel will make a recommendation and the Agency will decide whether to approve the match.
- A detailed **Adoption Support plan** will be drawn up by the child's agency, discussed with all parties and presented to the Panel for recommendation. It will cover the identified needs of the child, the prospective carers and the birth family and how these are to be met.
- Step 10: **Placement**. If the match is approved there is a planning meeting and a period of introductions. The child will then come to live with the prospective adopters as part of their family. The child is placed according to the Adoption Regulations and any Placement Order that may be in force. The adopter's social worker will continue to offer support and advice. Adopters sign a local agreement that includes undertakings and highlights child protection procedures.
- Step 11: **Adoption Application**. When the adoptive child has settled successfully, the child's social worker and the prospective adopters will agree when to submit the adoption application to the Court. Several reports and formalities must be completed before the Hearing.
- Step 12: **The Adoption Hearing**. At the Court the prospective adopters will be supported by their social worker and, if necessary, a legal representative. Once the Court grants the Adoption Order, the adopters become the child's legal parents.

5.2 For RBKC children after the adoption has been finalised the RBKC adoption support team will provide adoption support to adoptive families. Adopters are entitled to an assessment of their needs and an Adoption Support Plan will be agreed with the adopters.

5.3 The birth family and adoptive family may exchange letters and photographs by mutual agreement, via a service called “**letterbox**”. The Adoption Support Team acts as the post box and vets and forwards correspondence to the families. For some children it is important that direct contact with birth relatives is maintained. Decisions about contact will always be based on the best interests of the child, in consultation with and with the agreement of the adoptive family. This is normally a voluntary agreement.

5.4.1 Financial support. The Borough’s Adoption and Special Guardianship Allowance Scheme provides a financial allowance to facilitate the adoption and placement of children. The criteria for an allowance is based on the child’s needs and paid following a means test of the adoptive family’s income. Special guardianship allowance is not means tested but there is an income ceiling after which families do not qualify for an allowance. Adoption and special guardianship allowances are reviewed each year.

6. Complaints

- 6.1 All local authorities are required to have a Complaints Procedures under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and where children are involved, under the Children Act 1989. The Complaints Procedure is listed in Part III. The following is a brief summary.
- 6.2 “A complaint is a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet from anyone, or on behalf of anyone, who is a qualifying individual because the local authority has a power or duty to provide, or to secure the provision of, a service for them and whose need or possible need for such a service has come to the attention of the authority.”
- 6.3 At the First Stage the complainant should contact the Complaints Officer to explain the nature of the complaint. If a Court is considering the matter, it cannot be dealt with under the Complaints Procedure. The Complaints Officer will refer the matter to the appropriate Team Manager for investigation (if this has not already been done). The Team or Service Manager will reply to the complainant.
- 6.4 If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, s/he should be helped or advised as appropriate to make a written representation to the Complaints Officer asking for a further investigation. There are several ways of dealing with this, but the most usual is for the Head of Service to appoint an Investigating Officer (IO) who may either be an officer with no direct line management responsibility for the matter or an independent person. In the case of a complaint under the Children Act 1989 the Complaints Officer will ask the Advocacy Officer to appoint an Independent Person to take part in the investigation and to look after the interests of the child.
- 6.5 Both the Investigating Officer and the Independent Person will write separate reports of the investigation. Normally the reports are sent to the complainant. The reports will be submitted to the senior officer who is the Adjudicating Officer, usually the Director. This officer will reply to the complaint giving his or her decision based on the reports. The procedures require that this reply must be sent to the complainant within 28 days of the complaint having been received
- 6.6 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Adjudicating Officer s/he may request, in writing, that a Review Panel be appointed. The Panel usually consists of an independent chairperson, and two elected members of the Council, one minority and one majority party member. Immediately following the hearing the Panel will record their recommendation in writing and send it to the complainant, the Executive

Director of the Department, the initial Independent Person and the Investigating Officer. The Executive Director will decide what action to take, and will advise the complainant of this.

- 6.7 This exhausts the Council's own Complaints Procedure, but in cases of alleged maladministration a complainant may raise the matter with the Local Government Ombudsman (who will not take it up until after the Council's procedures have ended). These procedures do not limit a complainant's normal legal remedies.
- 6.8 The Customer Care and Complaints Officer's Contact details are:

020 8964 6120

Additionally, in appropriate circumstances, complainants may wish to draw matters to the attention of OFSTED

Head Office,
Alexandra House
33, Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE
Tel: **08456 404045**

- **0161 618 8524** for Minicom users.

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

PART TWO

The following is a schedule of all staff employed permanently in the Adoption Service, with their dates of service and qualifications:

PERMANENT STAFF

| Position in Team | Hours per week | Name | Year of appointment | Qualifications |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|---|
| Acting Head of Service | 36 | Glen Peache | | Diploma in Management Studies (Westminster) Advance Diploma in Social Work, (Goldsmiths) Diploma in Social Work, Practice Teaching award, (Goldsmiths) Certificate in Management Studies. (Bromley) |
| Team Manager | 36 | Susan Howard | December 2005 | BSc Geography (Hons) Diploma in Social Administration Diploma in Social Work Studies and CQSW Cert. in Management Studies (Kingston) PQ1 |
| Senior Social Worker Adoption (ASSA) | 36 | Katherine Maggs | 1982 | BA Sociology & Social Anthropology (Hons); Diploma in Social Administration, Diploma in Applied Social Sciences, Certificate in Management Studies, Post qualifying award in social work 2007 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|--|--------------------|--|
| Senior social worker friends and family | 36 | Louisa Wren Hannah Foxcroft (until January 2012) | 2007 | BSc (Hons) Psychology with Clinical Psychology, MA / PgDip Social Work, Post Qualifying Child Care Award. |
| Social Worker | 36 | Violet Duncan | 1995 | BA Sociology (Hons); CQSW |
| Social Worker | 36 | Marc Sidwell | 2011 | BA Hons Degree, Social Work. Post Qualifying NQSW Award. |
| Social Worker | 36 | Samira Shaya | 2006 | BA (Hons) in Politics and Public Policy, MA in Applied Social Studies/ Dip SW Post Qualifying Award part 1 Currently completing MA in Child Psychotherapy. |
| Social Worker | 36 | Sharon Hall | September 2007 | B Soc.Sci Social Work and Psychology B Soc. Sci (Hons) in Social Work |
| Social Worker (0.5) | 18 | Maureen Williams | 1999 | BA (Hons) Social Science; CQSW; Cert. Post-adoption counselling |
| Social Worker (adoption support) | 21 | Judith Allen | 1988 | MA Applied Social Studies; CQSW |
| Social Worker | 33 | Hing Ng | Adoption team 2006 | BA (Hons) Social Sciences and Social Administrations CQSW and Dip in Applied Social Studies PQ1 |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | | | | Practice Teaching Award Part 1 |
| Social Worker | 36 | Louise Frankiss | Adoption Team December 2007 | BSc (Hons) Behavioural Sciences, MA Applied Social Studies with a PgDip Social Work GSCC no: E/1049875 |
| Assistant Adoption Support Worker | 36 | Sarah Shepherd | 2009 | MA Politics & Mass Media BScEcon (Hons) Political Studies |
| Recruitment Officer | 18 for adoption 18 for fostering | Nicole Harman | RBKC 1995 Adoption 10.2000 | Institute of Personnel Management Certificate CAM (Communication, Advertising and Marketing) Diploma in Marketing Communications 2005. Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) Professional Diploma in Marketing (Stage 2).2008 |
| Senior Business Support supervisor | 36 | Steve Jones | | |
| Business Support Officer | 36 | Ellie Brace | 2007 | NVQ Level 3 IT 10 years experience in administration |
| Business Support Officer | 18 | Samanta Collorafi | March 2009 | GNVQ Leisure and Tourism 2002 VCE Advanced |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | business finance 2002 City and Guilds Pitman – book keeping and accounts 2004 |
|--|--|--|--|--|

PART THREE

Schedule listing the relevant policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing the Adoption and Permanency Team and its service delivery:

1. Access to records policy.
2. Adoption Allowances procedure.
3. Adoption in the UK – Step by step.
4. Adoption Panel – policy and procedure.
5. Adoption policy.
6. Adoption procedures.
7. Adoption Support – Guidance and Plan.
8. Children's guide to adoption.
9. Child Protection policy.
10. Complaints policy.
11. Contact post adoption.
12. Equalities policy.
13. Health and Safety policy.
14. Procedure covering the use of the Adoption Register.
15. Recruitment and selection – These are Borough wide policies for all Departments.
16. Special Guardianship Procedures

