

# Adoption Statement of Purpose

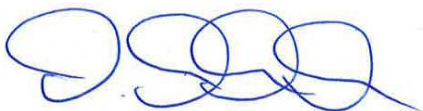
2017-2020.

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The Enfield Adoption Service "Statement of Purpose" has been endorsed by the Director of Schools and Children's Services and the Lead Member for Schools and Children's Services on behalf of elected Members.



**Lead Member: Councillor Ayfer Orhan**



**Director: Tony Theodoulou**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document is designed to meet the requirements of the National Care Standards Act 2000 Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Local Authority Adoption Services in England and Wales, in line with the Local Authority Adoption Agencies Regulations 2013.
- 1.2 The Statement of Purpose will be made available to the relevant staff in the London Borough of Enfield, and everyone in Enfield whose life has been touched by adoption. It will also be made available to the relevant inspectorates.

## **2.0 Guiding Principles**

- 2.1 The Adoption Service is committed to ensuring that the welfare of children is paramount in the adoption process, and that they will be treated with respect and dignity, protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation by the provision of safe placements.
- 2.2 The lifelong nature of the effects of adoption on all parties of the adoption triangle is recognised in the work of the Adoption Service. Children are entitled to grow up in a loving family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- 2.3 Where children need permanent care away from their own families, the Adoption Service will place children with adoptive families who are able to promote their cultural, emotional, health, disability, educational and social needs.
- 2.4 Since discrimination of all kinds is an everyday reality in many children's lives, every effort will be made by the Adoption Service to ensure that practices do not reflect or reinforce it.
- 2.5 All children have a right to be kept informed about what is happening in their lives, and to participate in any decision-making processes about them. The Adoption Service will inform and involve children in these processes according to their level of understanding and maturity.
- 2.6 Children's wishes and feelings will be sought and taken seriously. Their age, level of understanding and maturity, as well as any disabilities, will be taken into account in deciding the most appropriate way to seek their views.

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### **3.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1 The aim of the Adoption Service is to provide safe, secure, and effective adoptive placements in a timely manner for those looked after children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families, and for whom the care plan is adoption. The placements will enable vulnerable children to reach their full potential during childhood and beyond.
- 3.2 In providing adoptive placements, the service recognises that the adoption process affects many other people throughout their lives: this includes birth families, adoptive families, and adults who have been adopted as children.
- 3.3 The Adoption Service is therefore committed to offering support and guidance to all people affected by adoption, after an assessment of their needs.
- 3.4 The principles guiding the provision of the service to all parties are contained in the Departmental Adoption Policies and Procedures, Section 1, which are part of the Looked after Children procedures.
- 3.5 All services provided are governed by the relevant legislation and guidance and follow the National Adoption Standards, the Adoption National Minimum Standards, the Adoption and Children Act 2002, The Children and Adoption Act 2006, The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and the Children Act 1989.
- 3.6 The Adoption Service has taken on responsibility for all aspects of special guardianship work, including assessments of persons wishing to become approved special guardians; this work is however outside the statutory scope of this statement of purpose where the focus is on adoption.

### **4.0 Management Structure & Staffing**

- 4.1 The Adoption Service is part of the Looked after Children's Service in the Children & Families Division.
- 4.2 Anne Stoker – who is the recently appointed Assistant Director of Schools & Children's Services, is also the designated Agency decision Maker (ADM). Anne is responsible for approving all care plans for those children where adoption is the plan, adopter approvals and matches for Enfield children with their identified adoptive families.
- 4.3 The day-to-day management of the service is the responsibility of the Adoption Team

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Manager, Morris Linton. Morris Linton is managed by Debbie Michael, Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption, who in turn is answerable to Linda Hughes – Head of Service for Looked After Children, who is also the Adoption Support Advisor (ASA).

The details of the Adoption Team Manager are:

Morris Linton

Triangle House

305-313 Green lanes

London, N13 4YB

Qualifications

DipSW & Certificate of Qualification in Social work (CQSW)

Enfield Management Course

The details of the Head of Service for Looked After Children and ASA are:

Linda Hughes

Triangle House

305-313 Green lanes

London, N13 4YB

Qualifications

CQSW, DMS, MA Health and Social Care, MSc Public Sector Commissioning

- 4.4 The Head of Services for Looked after Children is responsible for the Adoption Team, the Fostering Team, and the Looked after Children's Teams and the Leaving Care Team.
- 4.5 The Adoption Team is responsible for the recruitment and assessment of adoptive families, family finding for Enfield's looked after children where adoption has been agreed, and support services to anybody affected by adoption and permanence. The Looked After Children's Teams work in close partnership with the Adoption Team so as to provide a coherent and comprehensive adoption service.
- 4.6 The adoption managers have a wealth of experience in the field of adoption with background experience in child protection, children in need and looked after children. The Adoption Team manager has been employed in Enfield's Adoption Service for over fourteen years.
- 4.7 All social work staff in the Adoption Team are professionally qualified with either the C.Q.S.W. or the Dip. SW qualification and each team member has many years of professional experience in Children and Families social work and specifically in adoption work.

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- 4.8 The previous experience of the adoption social workers includes working with younger children in residential care with a specific brief of preparing children for adoptive placements. Previous experience has also included working in a Family Centre undertaking preventative work and counselling; Children and Families work in a hospital setting and assessment work. The wide range of professional experience of adoption team members includes group work and direct work with children as well as permanence planning.

## **5.0 Cross Service Links**

- 5.1 The Adoption Team has developed links across Enfield's Children's Service and beyond, with team members representing the service at local and national working parties and groups.

These links are as follows:

- The Looked after Children Teams who play a large part in progressing children care plans for adoption.
- The Fostering Service, where close liaison over children in transition from foster care to adoption is essential to ensure their settled future.
- The Children In Need Teams who refer children to the Adoption Team and contribute to the permanence planning for children at the early stages.
- Cheviots Children's Centre where specialist knowledge of work with children with disabilities is located.
- North London Adoption Consortium, of which Enfield was a founder member, and which is very active in developing services to meet the needs of all parties in the adoption triangle.
- The Post Adoption Centre UK has a Service level agreement with the North London Adoption Consortium to provide services to adoptive and birth families.
- The Post Adoption Centre - UK also has a Service Level agreement with the North London Adoption Consortium to provide independent services to birth families.
- Coram / BAAF (British Agency for Fostering and Adoption) North London Fostering and Adoption group that meets regularly to debate adoption issues and progress the adoption

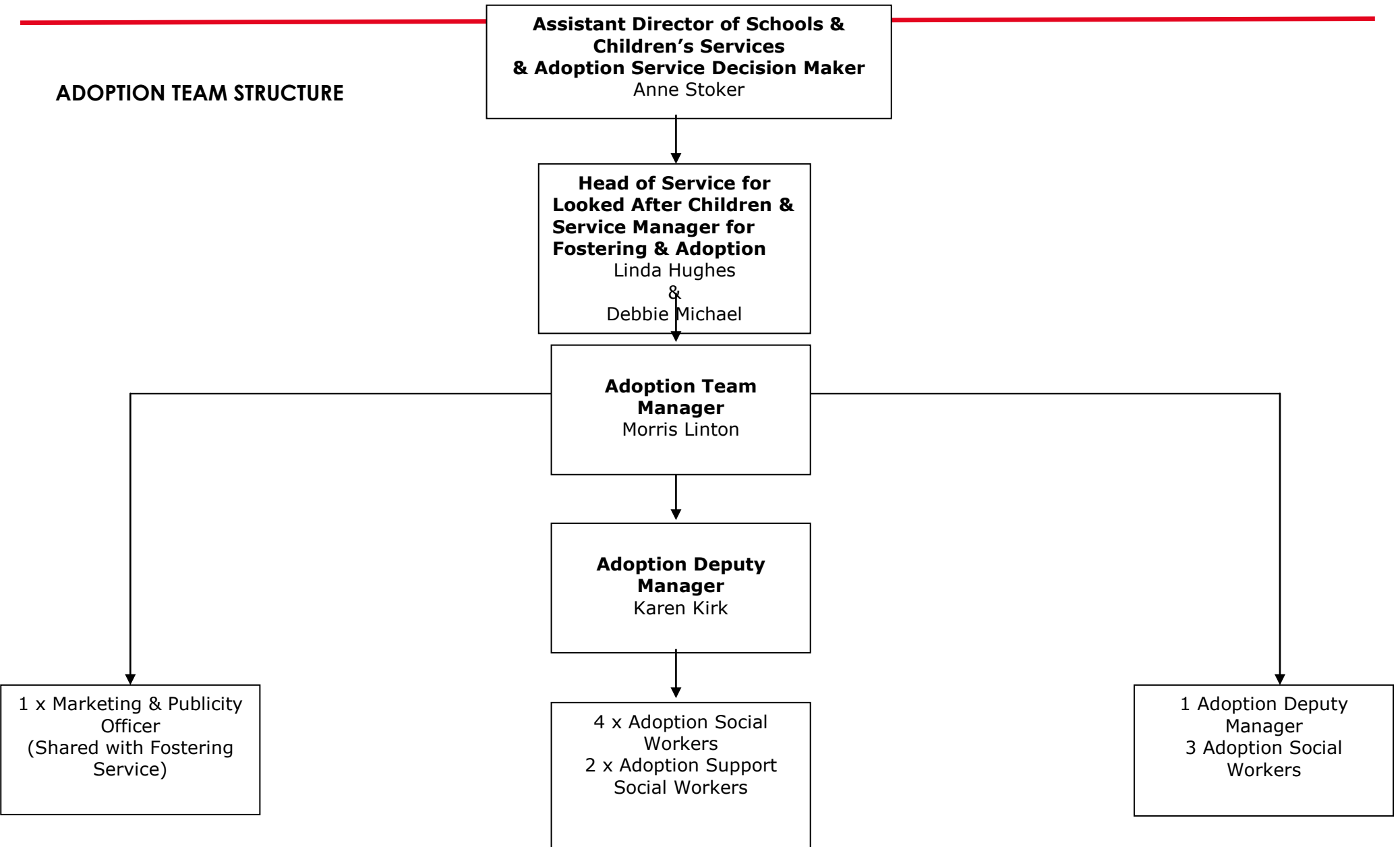
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agenda.

- The Family Centres where children in adoptive placements often have direct contact with birth family members.
- The Leaving Care Team which maintains social work responsibilities for young women care leavers who have children whose care plan is adoption.
- The borough's Legal department, in relation to adoption applications. Corporate links such as with the training department, procurement, complaints, the business unit, finance, marketing, press and publicity. This ensures service compliance with corporate policy and efficient service development.
- Health – in promoting the health care needs of children whose care plan is adoption. The Medical Adviser represents the health needs of prospective adopters being presented to the Adoption Panel and children where adoption is the plan.
- Education – in promoting the educational needs and achievements of children whose care plan is adoption. Team members attend meetings of the SENCOs of Enfield schools to update education professionals on adoption issues. This work is carried out through links with the HEART Team (Health and Education Access and Resource Team). Adoption support social workers have also been proactive in visiting schools to offer advice where issues have arisen in relation to a child's needs as an adopted child.
- CAMHS – The adoption team has made close and productive links with this service in order to meet the needs of children placed for adoption who have therapeutic needs.



**ADOPTION TEAM STRUCTURE**



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## **6.0 The Staff of the Adoption Team**

- 6.1 The Adoption Team consists of 1 Team Manager, 1 Deputy Team Managers, 6 Social Workers (4 for assessing prospective adoptive families and family finding for children, and 2 for adoption and special guardianship support services), and 1 Marketing & Publicity Officer (shared with the Fostering Service). All social workers in the Adoption Team are qualified with either the DipSW or the CQSW and are registered with the HCPC.
- 6.2 The administrative support to the service comprises of a Panel Administrator and 2 clerical staff members.
- 6.3 Copies of staff qualifications, references, and DBS checks are kept on Personnel files and are available for inspection by the appropriate inspectors and managers. Team members receive regular supervision and performance annual reviews, which include identifying any training needs.
- 6.4 Staff have access to both in-house training and specialist training provided by external agencies e.g. Coram / BAAF and training organised by the North London Adoption Consortium on adoption issues. Individual and team training needs are annually fed into the Service Centre Plan.
- 6.5 The Adoption Team Manager has overall responsibility for the work of the team. The Adoption Team Manager and the Deputy Team Manager are responsible for team members' supervision and professional development. The Team Manager also acts as a consultant to the Looked after Children's teams on adoption issues as well as the monitoring, review and evaluation of the service operation. The Manager acts as the Professional Adviser to the Adoption and Permanence Panel, develops, and maintains links with the local and national partners and bodies concerned with adoption services, as well as taking responsibility for non-agency adoption applications.
- 6.6 The Adoption Service is divided into three areas of work: recruiting, assessing and approving prospective adopters; family finding for Enfield's looked after children, where adoption has been agreed; and support services for anybody affected by adoption and special guardianship. The Adoption Team Manager supervises the Deputy Manager within the team, three Social Workers and part-management of the Marketing & Publicity Officer, together with the Service Manager for Fostering & Adoption. The Deputy Manager supervises three

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social workers (1 whose duties relate to assessment of adopters and family finding and 2 whose duties relate to adoption support) as well as social workers (both in house and through commissioning) that are engaged in the assessment of persons wishing to become special guardians.

6.7 The Deputy Manager supports the work of the Team Manager, deputising in the Team Manager's absence, in addition to holding responsibility for specific areas of the service i.e. the commissioning of assessments for persons wishing to become special guardians, support services to children and their families affected by adoption and special guardianship and the induction of new children and families social workers within the LAC and CIN Services.

6.8 In addition to assessing families and family finding for children, the Adoption Service social workers have specific responsibilities for the development and running of the adopters' preparation training groups. The team offers a daily duty service to anybody interested in finding out more about adoption. For applicants wishing to pursue their interest further, team members will undertake an initial visit assessment to assess their potential suitability to adopt. The team takes an active role in adoption recruitment campaigns and facilitate regular information sessions as part of the tri – borough project (involving Enfield, Barnet and Haringey).

## **7.0 Services provided by the Adoption Team**

7.1 The Adoption Service provides and maintains a comprehensive service which meets the needs of:

- Children who have been or may be adopted
- The birth families of such children and
- Families who have either adopted children or wish to adopt children or who are Special Guardians.

7.2 As part of the Tri-Borough Recruitment Project, The Enfield Adoption Team has a dedicated phone number for recruitment, which is widely publicised throughout the London borough of Enfield. Prospective adoptive enquirers are given information over the phone by the relevant social worker on duty and are sent a

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comprehensive information pack.

- 7.3 The Marketing and Publicity Officer (shared with the fostering service), takes the lead for the promotion of the Adoption Service. The Post holder works closely with the adoption team to ensure that recruitment of prospective adopters is based on the needs of children being referred to the service.
- 7.4 Information on Adoption is available on the Enfield Council website and the North London Consortium website. The Enfield leaflet also includes details of other useful adoption organisations.
- 7.5 Enfield's Adoption Team attends monthly information sessions in partnership with the tri boroughs of Barnet and Haringey, to which all enquirers are invited. These meetings are intended to provide an overall picture of adoption recruitment across North London. This also provides the prospective enquirers with an opportunity to talk to experienced adoption social workers about their individual circumstances.

## **8.0 Services to Children**

- 8.1 The Schools & Children's Service is committed to promoting stable and secure attachments to appropriate carers for looked after children throughout their childhood. To this end, adoption, as a possible outcome, will be considered for all looked after children who are unable to return to their birth families.
- 8.2 The service is mindful of research, which indicates improved outcomes for children brought up in adoptive homes compared to children who have spent considerable time in the looked after children care system.
- 8.3 The decision to refer a child to the Adoption Team is made through the reviewing system in a timely way so as to ensure parallel planning can take place, if appropriate, through the permanence planning procedures.
- 8.4 Children are given their own Guide to Adoption to help inform them of the meaning and effect of adoption and the process. For younger children, a Guide called "Fluffy Gets Adopted" with colourful illustrations and simple language and terminology is used.

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- 8.5 Prospective adoptive families approved by Enfield are always considered first for children in Enfield's care where adoption is the plan, followed by a referral to the North London Adoption Consortium, the Adoption Register, Link Maker and other adoption agencies nationwide. This is to ensure an appropriate placement is secured within the timescale set down in the National Adoption Standards
- 8.6 The Adoption Service aims to place children in adoptive placements that reflect their race, culture and religion, taking into account any wishes of the birth parents. Where this is not possible, families that do not reflect the child's own race or culture will be considered favourably, to avoid drift and delay in providing a child with a loving adoptive family.
- 8.7 The Adoption Service will place siblings together unless there are good reasons for them to be separated. The reasons for any proposed separation will be recorded and taken into consideration throughout the whole planning process and up until the child's plan of adoption is agreed by the agency decision-maker. Careful care planning is undertaken in these circumstances to ensure that siblings are able to maintain suitable and appropriate contact with one another, post permanency.
- 8.8 Contact plans for children who are to be adopted will be based on a thorough assessment of the child's needs, taking into account their wishes and feelings, and bearing in mind the need to safeguard the child's welfare at all times.
- 8.9 The service will protect the child's rights to privacy, freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion. The child's age, gender, health, personality, disability (if any), sexuality, race, culture and life experience will be taken into account in planning, decision making, and the provision of care and support services.
- 8.10 All plans for children will be presented to the agency decision-maker for the decision that this is the right plan for the child. Children being matched with prospective adopters will be presented to the Adoption Panel in line with policies and procedures, which will include an assessment of their need for adoption support. The final decision regarding the match will be considered

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and be made by the agency decision-maker.

- 8.11 The adoption support team members will offer an assessment of need to any adopted child provided that child is entitled to an assessment under the regulations. The assessment of need will incorporate all aspects of the child's situation including health and education, and contact will be made with any other agency if it appears that any services provided by that agency are required.
- 8.12 The Adoption Service works together with voluntary organisations such as the Post Adoption Centre, After Adoption, and the North London Adoption Consortium in order to meet the adoption support needs of children and families affected by adoption.

## **9.0 Services to Birth Families**

- 9.1 The Looked after Children's Service will ensure that birth parents are consulted in planning for their children's future both before and whilst they are looked after.
- 9.2 Birth parents will be given written information about adoption as soon as the care plan is adoption. This will take place also during legal proceedings when the Looked after Children's Service is engaging in parallel planning for a child.
- 9.3 Birth parents' wishes for their child will be taken into consideration when plans are being made.
- 9.4 Where possible and if appropriate, birth parents will have the opportunity to meet with adoptive parents, either prior to, or in the early stages of an adoptive placement.
- 9.5 The need for support and information for any member of the birth family will be considered during the planning process.
- 9.6 Birth families will be offered the opportunity for support independent of their child's social worker either by referral to the voluntary organisation of The Post Adoption Centre - UK, or a referral in-house to the Adoption Team when one of the adoption support social workers will become involved.

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- 9.7 Birth relatives will be able to receive counselling, advice and support from the adoption support part of the Service at any stage, should they wish to discuss any matter connected to their child's adoption.
  - 9.8 Birth relatives will be offered assistance and guidance in maintaining appropriate contact arrangements with the adopted child, either through support with direct contact or indirect letterbox contact.
  - 9.9 Social work support will be available to assist in the planning and preparation for direct and indirect contact arrangements.
  - 9.10 Birth relatives can obtain assistance in writing letters to the adopted child and this will be made available for as long as it is required.
  - 9.11 Birth relatives will receive social work support where the plan is for direct contact with the adopted child. It is recognised that birth relatives may experience a range of different feelings and emotions and will require a sensitive and supportive social worker to meet their own needs, irrespective of whether this contact needs to be supervised.

## **10.0 Services to Prospective Adoptive Families**

- 10.1 Recruitment is an on-going development area for the Adoption Service with the aim of placing increased numbers of Enfield children with in-house adopters. Where "in-house" provision is not possible, the Adoption Service places children via the Inter-Agency system recognised nationally, with preference given to families approved by other members of the North London Adoption Consortium, where appropriate. All placements are made based on the assessed needs of the child and the resources, which the prospective adopters are offering.
- 10.2 In response to the Government's agenda and action plan, the consortium has developed a two stage training and assessment process, to meet the timescales for recruiting, assessing and approving prospective adoptive families. There will be a fast-track process for people who have adopted before, or who are already approved foster carers who wish to adopt a child in their care.

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- 10.3 The Adoption Service has developed a Concurrent Planning Scheme with Coram, an adoption agency experienced in running such projects. The ethos of this scheme is to minimise disruptive attachment patterns of babies in need of permanency by placing the baby with carers approved for both fostering and adoption. If the baby is not returned to birth parents, he/she will remain with these carers who will then go on to adopt the child.
- 10.4 All applicants will be treated with respect and consideration. Prospective enquirers will be given initial information via the Adoption Team's duty system, which ensures applicants receive written information on the day of their enquiry.
- 10.5 Prospective applicants have the opportunity to discuss their individual circumstances and have their questions answered by an experienced duty officer from one of the three tri-boroughs that undertake adopter recruitment on a three monthly rota. The duty officer is available from 9.00am to 5.00pm, 5 days per week. Prospective applicants making contact outside of working hours can leave their details on the duty phone messaging system or email the tri borough duty team.
- 10.6 The Department will treat all personal information gathered about prospective adopters as confidential. In the event of it being necessary to disclose information outside the Department, the applicant's permission will be sought first unless statutory obligations dictate otherwise.
- 10.7 The Adoption Team provides monthly information sessions for prospective adopters (as part of the tri-borough), in line with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption, and undertakes initial assessments through home visits.
- 10.8 Recruitment initiatives to meet the needs of our children continue to be a priority. On 20/10/16, during National Adoption Week, the consortium Boroughs facilitated a large event in Hackney, also as part of Black History Month, to raise awareness and the profile of adoption with the aim of attracting potential applicants for our black and dual heritage children in need of adoption.



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- 10.9 All applicants, subject to the eligibility criteria, will be considered as potential adopters, as the Adoption Service aims to recruit from all sections of the community
- 10.10 Potential applicants will be advised of the Adoption Service's policies on health and statutory checks, including the Disclosure & Barring Service check, and references.
- 10.11 Where a conflict of interest issue exists, e.g. applicants related to a member of the Adoption Service, or employed by the Council within the Children and Families Department, or related to a Children and Families Department Employee, this must be brought to the attention of a manager from the Adoption Service. Such applicants will be supported to apply to another adoption agency.
- 10.12 Applicants will have preparation training about adoption organised and presented by the adoption team. The programme of the preparation training is reviewed and updated regularly. Currently the programme offers a comprehensive insight into adoption issues and includes guest speakers from a range of backgrounds (e.g. foster carers, adopters, birth relatives, health professionals). The programme also includes information about the needs of children likely to be available for adoption, and the process of adopting a child.
- 10.13 Applicants will be fully involved in the process of completing their home study. The assessing social worker will ensure that the applicant(s) understand the assessment requirements and their responsibilities as prospective adoptive parents.
- 10.14 The Adoption and Permanency Panel meets once a month with extra Panels on occasions to meet the high demand of cases for Panel. The Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker on the applicants' suitability to adopt, as well as making recommendations of matches between prospective adopters and children whose care plan is adoption.
- 10.15 All applicants will have access to their completed assessment ten days prior to the presentation at the Adoption Panel. They will be encouraged to attend Panel and present their own written information to panel, and will be informed

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verbally of the Panel's recommendation immediately. Applicants will be informed in writing of the final decision within seven working days of the Panel.

10.16 Applicants wishing to adopt from abroad will be referred to the Inter Country Adoption Centre in line with the contract in place between the North London Adoption Consortium and Norwood Adoption Agency. Applicants will be given access to information about domestic adoption by the Adoption Service, to ensure that they are able to make an informed decision.

10.17 Step-parents and others wishing to adopt a child already in their care, (non-agency placements) will be offered guidance and advice by adoption team members

10.18 Applicants wishing to appeal against the Decision Maker's decision regarding their suitability to adopt will be informed of their right to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The Independent Reviewing Mechanism is organised by the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)/ Coram. The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a review process, conducted by a panel, which prospective adopters can access if they are not in agreement with the decision made regarding their suitability to adopt.

More information on the IRM can be obtained from the IRM Contract Manager, details as follows:

Contract Manager,  
Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)  
Unit 4,  
Pavilion Business Park,  
Royds Hall Road,  
Wortley,  
LEEDS, LS12 6AJ

Tel No: 0870 034 6420

(charged at local rate)

Fax: 0870 034 6421

Email: [irm@baaf.org.uk](mailto:irm@baaf.org.uk)

Web: [www.irm-adoption.org.uk](http://www.irm-adoption.org.uk)

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## **11.0 Services to Approved Adoptive Families Prior to a Match being made**

- 11.1 All approved families will have a named link social worker from the Adoption Team, who will keep them informed of developments and will support them through the matching and placement process, right up to the making of the Adoption Order. This will be done through home visits, letters, telephone contact and email as appropriate.
- 11.2 The Department will work in partnership with approved adopters, and will actively inform and consult them to ensure that every aspect of the adoption task and any policy or legislative changes are understood.
- 11.3 Unless there is a match with an Enfield child, families will be referred to the North London Adoption Consortium on approval and Adoption Match after three months.
- 11.4 The status of families as "suitable to adopt" will be reviewed annually in accordance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2013 and they will return to the Adoption Panel where necessary according to their individual circumstances.
- 11.5 Prior to a match with a child being made, adoptive families will be given full written information about the child including the opportunity to meet with the child's carers and any other professionals involved with the child.
- 11.6 The adoptive family's need for adoption support will be assessed prior to the match being made and this assessment presented to the Adoption Panel.
- 11.7 Prospective adopters will be invited to attend the Adoption Panel where the match is to be considered.
- 11.8 Where a match is agreed by the Agency Decision-Maker, the prospective adopters will be involved in the Placement Planning Introductions Meeting and will need to give their notice in writing of their intention to proceed, prior to the child being placed.
- 11.9 Once the child is placed, the family's link social worker and the child's social worker will visit the placement regularly, as required. The social workers are responsible for supporting prospective adopters in the care of the child, until

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granting of the adoption order. Contact will also be maintained through phone calls, letters and emails as appropriate.

- 11.10 In the event of an allegation being made against an adoptive parent where a child is placed for adoption, the Department will carry out an investigation according to the London Child Protection Procedures. There is also an additional Enfield Safeguarding Procedure for children in adoptive placements to clarify roles and responsibilities, which is given to prospective adopters at the Placement Planning Introductions Meeting prior to the child being placed. Prospective adoptive parents will be kept informed at each stage of the process unless it is deemed that this will interfere with the investigation. Prospective adopters will be given written confirmation of the outcome of any investigation, and the matter will be referred to the Adoption Panel for consideration. Limited support to prospective adopters will be offered by the Adoption Team, who will advise that independent support be sought from such organisations as Adoption UK.
- 11.11 An adoption support social worker will attend the child's second looked after children's review in order to consider the adoption support plan and whether it is enabling the adopters to meet the needs of the child. By agreement, the adoption support team will also attend subsequent looked after children's reviews where it is felt this would be beneficial.
- 11.12 Adoptive families will be supported by their adoption social worker to lodge their formal application with the court to adopt the child.
- 11.13 The Adoption Social Worker will support the adoptive family by attending court for the making of the Adoption Order and then transfer the case to the adoption support professionals where appropriate and if required.

## **12.0 Support Services to Adoptive Families / Special Guardians and their Children**

- 12.1 The Adoption Service has two dedicated adoption support social Workers managed by the Adoption Deputy Manager. The adoption support service offered to adoptive families and birth family members is comprehensive and robust. There is a comprehensive range of leaflets available to adoptive families, adopted adults and birth relatives detailing support services

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available.

- 12.2 Any adoptive family is entitled to an assessment of their need for adoption support, except where they are excluded under the regulations. This service is provided by an adoption support social worker and will be carried out using the Framework for Assessment for Children in Need and their Families.
- 12.3 Where an adoptive family is also known to other departments within Children's Services, for example when a child becomes Looked After, the Adoption Service can still offer a supportive role in addressing that child's specific adoption-related needs. However, the lead role will rest with the team having day to day responsibility for that child and its adoptive family.
- 12.4 An adoption support handbook has been created to support newly approved adopters with understanding the range of adoption support services available, including an overview of the types of support issues that may arise for adoptive families. This handbook has been developed in conjunction with our consortium counterparts and is accessible via the consortium website.
- 12.5 Enfield's Adoption Team provides a regular support group for adoptive families with a connection to Enfield to meet the needs of Enfield's adoptive families.
- 12.6 Enfield is able to assess adoptive families requiring independent therapy / training and is now able to make applications to the Adoption Support Fund, who are responsible for agreeing the funding of these requests.
- 12.7 Enfield, in partnership with the North London Adoption Consortium are engaged in a project with Body and Soul, which seeks to offer a therapeutic support group to adopted children aged 8-11 years and 12-16 years.
- 12.8 The Adoption Service is working well with the local Child and Adolescents Mental Health Service to promote the needs of children in adoptive (and Special guardianship) placements with emotional or mental health problems, to prioritise access for them to counselling and therapy.
- 12.9 The Adoption Service has an active working relationship with the Medical Adviser to the Adoption Panel, to facilitate access to specialist health

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resources for children being adopted.

- 12.10 The Adoption Service is working together with the local Education Service, through the Health and Access to Resources Team, to promote the particular educational needs of adopted children.
- 12.11 The Adoption Support Service will support any adopted child or child under a special guardianship order who is experiencing difficulties in school due to their status, by working directly with the teachers and parents in partnership.
- 12.12 The North London Adoption Consortium has a service level agreement with the Post Adoption Centre, which provides a confidential independent service for adoptive families, special guardians, adopted persons and birth family members. Promotional literature is available about the range of services offered by the Post Adoption Centre. Services provided by the Post Adoption Centre include a monthly outreach surgery based locally, which is regularly publicised.
- 12.13 The North London Adoption Consortium runs an annual activity event for younger adopted children and their parents.
- 12.14 Enfield's Adoption Service holds an annual Family Fun Day for adoptive parents and their children. This gives the opportunity for families to network and for children to interact and play with other children in a fun setting.
- 12.15 The North London Adoption Consortium offers special guardians and their children Celebration days where various fun events are hosted by the six boroughs making up the Consortium.
- 12.16 There are opportunities for adoptive families and special guardians in Enfield and indeed across the North London area to receive post placement training. This training is provided by each of the 5 boroughs in turn through the North London Adoption Consortium.
- 12.17 Support groups for adoptive parents and special guardians run separately on a monthly and bi monthly basis.
- 12.18 All service users receiving an Adoption Support service are given a copy of the Council's complaints procedure, which they are encouraged to use should they be dissatisfied with the quality of support received. The Adoption

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Service is committed to providing a high quality service and to learn from comments and complaints. Service users are encouraged to contact the Adoption Team in the first instance where every attempt will be made to address their issues.

### **13.0 Social Networking**

13.1 Social networking sites have already had an impact on many adoptive families and have the potential to affect many more. Increasingly, young people are using the internet to trace and contact their birth parents and other birth relatives. Birth relatives are using the internet to trace their children. Once they have made contact, adopted young people may go on to have phone calls and even meetings with their birth parents or brothers and sisters – often in secret and therefore bypassing the support and safeguards that are usually in place in usual contact arrangements.

13.2 In Enfield we take this issue seriously and have put strategies in place to help adoptive families appreciate the way in which social networking is changing adoption. This includes compulsory training incorporated into preparation training; further voluntary training offered via the North London Adoption Consortium and an Enfield Adoption Support page on Face Book. We also advise adopters that they need to assist their children in understanding their life stories from an early age and to promote positive contact with birth family members in a safe and secure way. Our hope is that by the time that adopted children become Face Book users, they will be sufficiently aware of the risks associated with birth family members and have less of a need to search for birth family in secret because contact is positively promoted by their parents.

### **14.0 Intermediary Services and Access to Information for Birth Relatives and Adopted Adults**

14.1 Enfield Adoption agency is registered to provide an Intermediary Service as defined under the Adoption and Children Act 2005, Section 98. As an Intermediary Agency, the Act enables this agency to seek information from a wide variety of sources for the purpose of tracing and facilitating contact and reunions between birth relatives and the adopted person. All service users will be provided with a professional service, which has due regard for the welfare needs of all parties, and respects any wishes not to share identifying

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information.

- 14.2 Birth relatives and adopted persons may or may not be living in Enfield many years after the adoption. Regardless of this, they are still entitled to receive an Intermediary Service from this agency.
- 14.3 Where appropriate, the adoption support professionals will signpost birth relatives and/or adopted adults not living in Enfield to access intermediary services which are local to their current address.
- 14.4 Where this agency receives records from the Appropriate Adoption Agency, which was involved in the original adoption, the professional views of that agency will be sought as to whether they have any concerns about an application being made to Enfield to receive an Intermediary Service.
- 14.5 All staff members that provide Intermediary services are adequately trained, experienced and have a good knowledge and understanding of the issues faced by all parties.

## **15.0 Services to Adopted Adults**

- 15.1 Adopted adults within Enfield have a right to obtain information about their birth, adoption and family history. Schedule 2 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 preserves the legal right for an adopted adult, upon reaching the age of 18, to apply to the Registrar General for the information required to obtain a copy of the record of their birth
- 15.2 Birth record advice and support by the Adoption Service is available to any adopted adult who is currently living in the Enfield area, as well as those individuals who were placed for adoption by Enfield Social Services but who have since moved and are living outside of the Enfield area.
- 15.3 Service users will be given written and verbal advice on the procedures for accessing birth certificate information and location of adoption records. The adopted adult will be fully supported by the social worker throughout the process of their request for birth record counselling and/or advice.



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15.4 Adopted adults will be informed of their right to make representations and complaints if they have not been satisfied with the service, and will be helped to do so if this is required.

## **16.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Complaints Procedure**

16.1 All services are monitored and evaluated using the following processes.

- Looked After Children Review of Arrangements
- Permanence Tracking System
- Feed back from participants on the Preparation Group
- Feed back from Panel Users
- Annual Panel Report from the Independent Chair of the Adoption Panel
- Evaluation is taken forward to the Service Centre Plan, which is updated annually

16.2 All prospective adoptive parents are given a copy of the Council comments, compliments and complaints procedure, which they are encouraged to use when they are dissatisfied or may wish to highlight their concerns with the recruitment or assessment process, or with the quality of support received. The Adoption Service is committed to providing a high quality service and to learn from comments and complaints. Service users are encouraged to contact the Adoption Team in the first instance where every attempt will be made to address their issues.

16.3 Prospective adoptive parents are given information about their rights to attend the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), in such cases where the assessing social worker is unable to recommend that they are suitable to adopt. Applicants are also advised of the "Brief Report" procedure and invited to attend the panel meeting.

16.4 The Adoption Service monitors and evaluates complaints to the service, which are logged on a Database. If and when complaints are received, they are recorded and investigated in the first instance by the Adoption Team Manager followed by a more formal process of investigation via the Council Complaints procedure as outlined in the leaflet given to all families.

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## **17.0 Performance of the Adoption Service**

17.1 During 2016, (as at 9/11/16):

- 16 children had plans of adoption agreed by the agency decision-maker (3 of these children have since had their plans changed to long-term fostering). Of these 14 children where adoption remains the plan, they have all been identified with potential placements, pending adoption panel approval.
- in the last 12 months, 12 children were placed
- 4 families were approved as suitable to adopt. 7 families are currently awaiting a suitable placement. To date, 3 of these families are in the process of having a child placed and 3 families have withdrawn from the process.
- In the preceding 12 months (up until November 2016) 12 adoption orders were granted (in respect of children placed in this year and from the previous year).
- Xx enquiries were received by people enquiring about adoption
- 45 requests were received for an adoption support service with a steady flow of referrals from families requesting an adoption support service.

## **18.0 Objectives for 2017 Onwards.**

- The London Adoption Board is leading on the regionalisation agenda across the Capital. There is, as yet, no clear plan for how this will impact on individual adoption services. It is anticipated that while some services will be organised across London, others will be delivered by smaller groups of authorities working in partnership – a model similar to the current consortium arrangement.
- The demand for support services to adoptive and special guardianship families in crisis has continued to increase, driven in part by the growing number of children being placed with extended family members, many of whom have their own problems. These placements have a higher risk of breakdown, particularly if the child has additional needs. In response, the service has been restructured with the responsibility for the special guardianship assessments and support now being cited in the adoption team.

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- The recent Scrutiny Panel work stream focussing on adoption found the service to be a very good one. Adoption in Enfield received a judgement of 'Good' from Ofsted in 2015. Since then, a small number of adoption services in the country have been awarded a judgement of Outstanding. The Head of Service is reviewing practice in these authorities to determine if any lessons can be learned to improve our local practice.

## **19.0 Who to Contact**

### **19.1 Ofsted**

19.2 This is the regulatory body for Adoption Agencies. They inspect against the National Minimum Standards for the adoption service to make sure that the service we give is of the best possible quality and that it meets the needs of the children where adoption is the plan.

Ofsted also check that providers of social care services comply with legislative requirements.

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#### **Ofsted**

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel No: 0300 123 1231

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## **20.0 Enfield Children's Rights Service**

20.1 Enfield's Children's Rights Officer, Lene Cherize Haugland, works closely with Enfield's Looked After Children's Service and can be contacted at:

**Barnardo's**

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### **Enfield Children's Rights Service**

Alan Pullinger Centre  
1 John Bradshaw Road  
Southgate  
London, N14 6BT  
Tel No: 020 8882 9983  
Mobile: 07904 712 629  
Young People's freephone: 0800 027 3348  
Email: [LC.haugland@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:LC.haugland@barnardos.org.uk)  
Web: [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

## **21.0 The Children's Rights Director for England**

- 21.1 Together they make sure that young people who live away from home, or who are receiving social care support, have a say on issues that are important to them, as well as advising on children's rights and issues that will make life better for them.

### **Roger Morgan**

#### **Office of the Children's Rights Director**

Ofsted  
Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London, WC2B 6SE  
Tel No: 0800 528 0731  
Email: [theteam.rights4me@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:theteam.rights4me@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)

## **22.0 Contact Us**

Please contact us for any further information:

### **Enfield Adoption Service**

The London Borough of Enfield  
Triangle House  
305-313 Green Lanes  
London, N13 4YB  
Tel No: 020 8379 8490

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Email: [adoption@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@enfield.gov.uk)

Web: [www.enfield.gov.uk](http://www.enfield.gov.uk)