

# People's Services

## Adoption Statement of Purpose 2018 - 2020

Next planned review: April 2020

Last updated: July 2018

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# 1. Introduction

The London Borough of Harrow aims to provide an efficient Adoption Service that meets the needs of vulnerable children in the borough who require permanent, stable, loving homes that will promote their physical, intellectual and emotional development, and to enable them to achieve their full potential. When children cannot be cared for by their own family Harrow enables them to move to alternative families who will care for them throughout childhood and beyond, providing love, care and warmth, and who are able to respond to their individual needs.

The Adoption Support and Connected Persons Team ('Adoption Service') works in partnership with all colleagues involved in the planning and care of children looked after including colleagues in Health and Education. Harrow also collaborates with consortium members and makes inter agency arrangements alongside a partnership with Coram on Domestic Adoptions (i.e. within the UK).

Harrow Council continues to operate a service level agreement with **Coram Partnership** (a 'Voluntary Adoption Agency') for the provision of domestic adoption services. Harrow's innovative adoption partnership began with CORAM in 2017. This was reviewed in 2015 and renewed for a further 3 years with an Annual Review. A further extension has been agreed until March 2019, whilst longer term plans are made in line with the Central Government regionalisation programme.

Senior managers from both agencies meet regularly to monitor the performance of the Service Level Agreement at Quarterly Monitoring meetings, against the agreed service specification.

Coram is responsible for providing a Team Manager and a Senior Practitioner for the partnership. Together they are responsible for managing the project and the interface between Coram and Harrow, including providing advice and consultation as appropriate.

Harrow has access to Coram's Concurrent Planning Project in order to facilitate the early placement of young babies. Concurrent Planning is always discussed at

Permanency Planning Meetings, for children under the age of two, where adoption is likely to be the Care Plan.

Harrow's Statement of Purpose reflects the overall aims, objectives and values of Harrow's Adoption Service. Published on the Council website, it is available to the general public, service users staff, and anyone seeking a copy.

This Statement of Purpose is produced in accordance with:

- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 (S18)
- Care Planning Regulations 2010;
- Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);
- Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012;
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013;
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013;
- Local Authority Adoption Regulations 2005;
- Adoption and Children Act 2002; and
- Care Standards Act 2000.

Harrow's Statement of Purpose will be reviewed as and when required and at least every 2 years.

Harrow Council sets its local target, which is 10% of Children Looked After, that reflect national priorities for adoption set by Central Government as well as objectives in providing alternative permanent families for children where adoption is not appropriate.

These include permanent placements within the child's extended family (Connected Persons Placement) or with a member of the child's community with whom the child may have a special relationship (Special Guardianship Orders granted by the Court).

## 2. Strategic Aims

From 01.10.15, our adoption function is positioned within the Corporate Parenting Service in Children and Young People Service Division. Our vision is that:

- The best adopters are recruited for our children;
- All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need;
- Children are found permanent families without delay – whether within their extended family network or outside;
- A responsive, flexible and effective post-permanency support offer is available to families;
- Staff within the service are encouraged to develop or grow their professional confidence and autonomy.

The Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the:

- Harrow Council Corporate Plan (2015-2019);
- Harrow Children Looked After Placement Sufficiency Strategy

### **3. Value Statement**

Harrow Adoption Service complies with the requirements of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and reflects the values that underpin those standards in its principles for service delivery. In particular:

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond;
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefit from consistent parenting and quality education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life;
- Children, birth parents/guardians and families, and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.

### **4. Equality and Diversity**

Harrow Adoption Service provides placements for a diverse range of children and families who experience great difficulty in their lives. Our service users come from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

The Adoption Service is committed to furthering equality, promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination in all its forms. We are committed to placing the needs of children first, to recognise children, young people and carers as individuals and to treat our service users, carers and partner agencies with dignity and respect.

We work with our partners, Coram, to recruit and assess a diverse pool of domestic adopters to reflect the needs of the local population.

## 5. Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that all children living in Harrow have the opportunity to grow up in a permanent, safe, loving home and where this cannot be provided by their birth family, adoption will be considered.
- To ensure that the needs, wishes, welfare and safety of the child are paramount, and at the centre of the adoption process.
- Coram Partnership to ensure that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents are welcomed without prejudice, responded to promptly and given clear information and support.
- To ensure that birth families are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process and have access to appropriate adoption services.
- To support Harrow's combined Fostering and Adoption Panel efficiently and to ensure it runs effectively.
- To provide a comprehensive, high quality Adoption Service to Harrow residents that is sensitive to the needs of all, recognises differences, and is reflective of ethnic origin, culture, faith, gender, disability, economic position and sexual orientation.
- To ensure all Children Looked After [LAC] have permanency plans in place by their second statutory review.
- To promote a secure, permanent family life and consider adoption as an option for all children under the age of 10 looked after by Harrow Children's Service.

- To ensure permanency plans are robustly monitored and implemented in line with legislation and Adoption National Minimal Standards (2011).
- To work effectively with our partner agency, Coram, to ensure all Children Looked After with a plan for adoption are matched with suitable adopters within an appropriate timeframe.
- To ensure we work in partnership with prospective adopters, children and their families and with colleagues, other professionals and agencies to deliver the best outcome for Harrow Looked After Children.
- To develop a range of adoption support services including practical, financial and therapeutic services in partnership with other agencies.
- To provide support to all those involved in adoption. This includes children and families who need support following an adoption order as well as adults affected by adoption, including birth family members.

## **6. Core Values/Principles**

### **Children**

- To take a child centred approach to adoption and permanency ensuring the child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre.
- To actively seek and take into account the child's wishes and feelings in age-appropriate ways.
- To consider adoption as a positive option for all looked after children who are unable to return to live permanently with their birth family.



- To offer consultancy to colleagues in Social Care on adoption issues, planning for children and alternative permanency options, e.g. Special Guardianship.
- To avoid and minimise delays as far as possible. Timescales for decisions and action will take account of the child's age and needs.
- To prioritise recruiting and assessing families who are most likely to meet the needs of local children who need permanent families.
- To ensure that we focus on children with needs that are often more challenging to find permanent placements for.
- To ensure adoption and other permanency allowances are agreed and paid promptly, where a child's needs and circumstances require it in order to secure an alternative home.
- To recognise, positively value and promote a child's cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic background and not discriminate against any aspect of their identity. Usually it is in the child's best interests to be placed with a family which shares their background, but we will not deny a child the chance of a permanent home, including adoption, if it proves impossible to find a family with similar characteristics within a reasonable time.
- To ensure brothers and sisters, who need to be found alternative permanent homes, are placed together. If this is inappropriate in terms of meeting individual children's needs, or not possible within a realistic timescale, we will consider carefully possibilities for maintaining contact between siblings.
- To ensure that each child and family is prepared for adoption, that a suitable period of introductions occurs and that the settling in period is fully supported.

## **Birth Family**

- To promote and facilitate post adoption contact between children and their birth parents, siblings and other birth family members, where it is assessed as being in the child's best interests.
- To offer independent counselling to birth parents and birth siblings during the adoption proceedings.
- To actively work in partnership with birth families, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- To arrange Family Group Conferences to involve the family in the planning for a child.

## **Permanent Carers**

- Our Coram Partnership approves all domestic adopters. The following is based on their Principles taken from the Coram Statement of Purpose (May 2017)
- We welcome all prospective adopters and other carers and treat them with respect.
- We recognise the lifelong implications of adoption for all parties and offer comprehensive support services to adopters, carers, and adopted children and adults.
- We work within the equal opportunities framework and value diversity. We recruit adopters and carers who reflect the ethnic, religious, language and

racial backgrounds of the children needing placement in so far as that is possible.

- We welcome families who can prioritise children's needs, and who can make a commitment and persevere through difficult times.
- We believe that many different kinds of family structure (e.g. single parents, couples who are heterosexual or gay, married, in civil partnerships or unmarried) can provide the kind of nurture and parenting required by children who have suffered separation from their birth family and possibly adversity, such as abuse, neglect or exposure to substances whilst in utero.
- We understand that birth parents and relatives of the children we place experience a profound loss, and that they may wish to make a contribution to their child's life, for example by providing photographs or a letter for the child to read in later life. We advocate a spirit of openness so that children grow up with knowledge and understanding of their birth family. Where it is in the children's interest, we support direct or indirect contact with birth relatives.
- We have a rigorous policy to safeguard children's welfare and implement Coram's Safeguarding Children Policy.

## **Adoption Support**

- To ensure that a high quality adoption support service is available to adoptive parents and children. Harrow Council Adoption Service provides support services to adopted families and birth families (as well as families with a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement in place). Social Workers will continue to support Harrow adoptive families for a maximum of six to twelve months following the making of an adoption order. This will be extended if required.
- To facilitate post adoption contact where this has been agreed. This may be Letterbox contact, when mail is re-directed in accordance with agreements

made at the time of adoption, or face to face contact with birth families at agreed times.

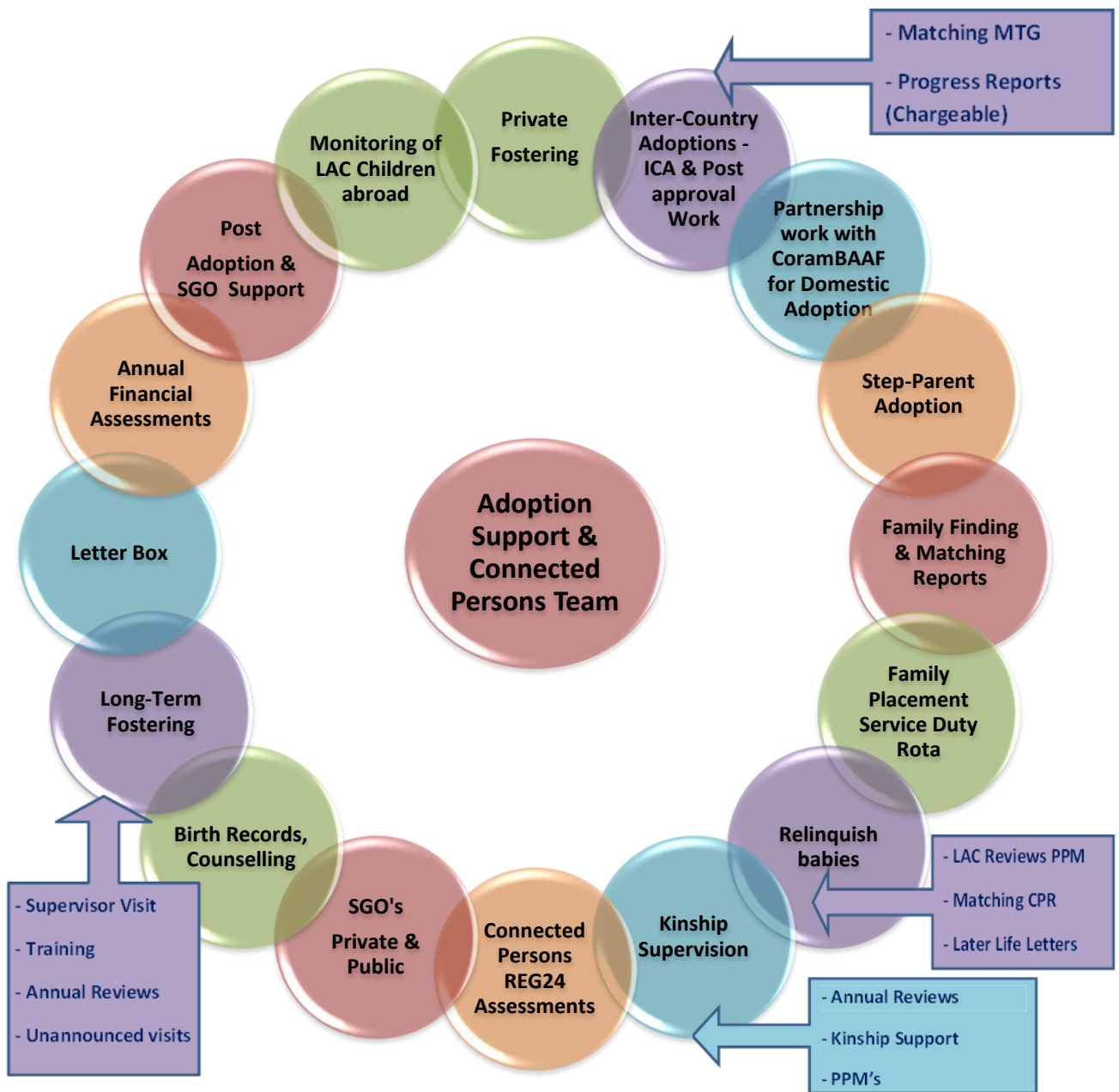
- To provide a social work service for adoptive families requesting advice on parenting and behaviour, to include home visits when necessary. Where appropriate, direct work with children will also be provided.
- Additional, more specialist support can be offered by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) if required.
- To provide an independent telephone helpline for both parents and children - available from the Post Adoption Centre. (Harrow Council is a subscriber).
- To provide newsletters, training events, up to date information on adoption issues and arrange group events for families.
- To provide birth record counselling, information and advice for adopted adults and their birth families who want to know more about their family history.
- To offer adopted people assistance in tracing their birth families, if that is what they wish. A Post Adoption Social Worker will act as an intermediary once the adopted person has found their birth family member.
- To provide support for adoptive parents where adult children are contacting birth families.
- To attempt to contact adopted people on behalf of their birth families where that is requested. Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and maintain the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

- Where the birth record counsellor is unable to trace the adopted person, Harrow will refer the case to NORCAP (Supporting Adults Affected by Adoption), or to the Local Authority where the applicant resides, who will endeavour to trace the adopted person. All information supplied to NORCAP is held on a strictly confidential basis. For each case Harrow Council will set up a non-disclosure agreement with NORCAP.

# 7. Adoption Support and Connected Persons Team

Harrow Council in house Adoption Support and Connected Persons Team consists of five Social Workers, one Deputy Team Manager and one Life Story and Letterbox Coordinator. The Team is managed by the Fostering and Adoption Team Manager.

The Team is responsible for the following areas of work:-



## 7.1. Intercountry Adoption

Intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child and may be considered as an alternative means of providing a family for a child who cannot be cared for, for a range of reasons, in his/her own country. Safeguards and standards equivalent to those which apply in domestic adoption are applied in intercountry adoption to protect the welfare of the child concerned.

Local Authorities are required to provide an intercountry adoption service to the residents in their borough who wish to adopt from overseas. This service includes advice, assistance, counselling, preparing, assessing, and supporting prospective intercountry adopters both during the waiting period, at the time a child is matched and once the child is placed.

From 01 June 2003, all relatives wishing to adopt a child overseas must follow the same procedures which apply to non-relatives, and undertake an **adoption assessment**. However, it is extremely important to check with the Immigration Authorities in the UK that you would fulfill the criteria for entry clearance, and to seek their decision in writing before embarking upon an adoption assessment. Relatives include parents, step parents and guardians who are habitually resident in the UK and who wish to adopt a child habitually a resident outside of the UK.

On 01 June 2003 the United Kingdom implemented the Hague Convention on protection of children and co-operation in respect of intercountry adoption.

This means that there are now three types of adoptions from overseas:

- a) **CONVENTION adoptions;**
- b) adoptions from **DESIGNATED** list countries;
- c) or adoptions from **NON-CONVENTION** and **NON-DESIGNATED** countries.

Prior to contacting the Local Authority you should have gathered information about intercountry adoption and the countries overseas that are willing to place children with UK applicants. A first point of contact would be the **Intercountry Adoption Centre, at the Department for Education** ([www.gov.uk/child-adoption](http://www.gov.uk/child-adoption)). Applicants

must attend an Information Session at the Intercountry Adoption Centre prior to the counselling interview. After the interview IAC will decide whether to suggest that the applicant proceed to preparation.

If the applicants are to proceed to preparation, IAC will outline the assessment process and the likely timescales. The applicants will be asked to attend a preparation group, in the case of couples both applicants are required to attend. Preparation is an opportunity for all applicants to obtain more information about intercountry adoption and to consider if it is the right option for them. The Local Authority requests that applicants attend an IAC preparation course, which lasts for three days. The Intercountry Adoption Centre also runs a two day course for adopters who are seeking to adopt related children.

During the adoption assessment, the Local Authority will look to assess the ability of applicants to parent a child to independence. Adoptive parenting involves challenges and responsibilities over and above those faced by birth parents. We are committed to safeguard children placed for adoption. Therefore the Local Authority seeks to ensure a child placed for adoption will grow up in a suitable, safe and healthy home environment with adoptive parents who have a reasonable prospect of good health and who are able to commit themselves fully to the adoption process.

Local authorities are able to recover the costs for the adoption assessment service from applicants. The financial arrangements for intercountry adoption are as agreed with the West London Adoption Consortium in line with Regulations from the Department for Education.

The Team are also responsible for ensuring that approved intercountry adopters are reviewed annually until a child has been matched, and for compiling and sending all the relevant documentation to the Department for Education.

Many countries require regular **post-adoption reports** to be sent to the originating country. Although it is for the adoptive family to decide how these reports should be prepared, they can only be undertaken by a Local Authority or Voluntary Adoption Agency and cannot be commissioned from private individuals. The Local Authority will undertake completing these reports at a set charge.



## 7.2. Connected Persons Assessments

The Team is responsible for all connected persons assessments for Looked After Children and for taking these assessments to the Harrow Fostering and Adoption Panel for approval.

## 7.3. Special Guardianship Order Assessments (SGO)

The Team is responsible for all SGO assessments, whether Connected Persons or non Connected Persons, and for completing the reports for the Harrow Fostering and Adoption Panel and Court.

## 7.4. Relinquished Babies

The Team have case responsibility for relinquished babies and the counselling work with birth mothers and family. They are also responsible for liaising with CAFCASS<sup>1</sup> so that formal consent to adoption can be obtained and for completing all the appropriate reports so a **'Should be placed for adoption' decision** can be obtained. Once the Multi-Agency Sharing Hub (MASH)/First Response Team have identified that a case is a relinquished baby for adoption they will transfer the case to the Adoption Support and Connected Persons Team to undertake the work required. This provides advice and counselling for parents, usually pregnant and new mothers, who are considering adoption for their babies. Parents are assisted to explore all of the options for their child's future.

## 7.5. Post Adoption Support Assessments

All requests for post adoption support assessments are managed by the Deputy and Team Manager who allocate them within the Team. These include requests from approved adopters who live in Harrow and those who have children placed by

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cafcass.gov.uk](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk) Cafcass represents children in the family courts. Cafcass looks after the interests of children involved in family proceedings. We work with the children and their families, and then advise the courts on what we consider to be in the best interest of individual children.

Harrow within the last three years. The Team also complete intercountry adoption progress reports required by the countries of origin.

## **7.6. Long Term Fostering Assessments**

All assessments of Long Term Foster Carer and Matching are undertaken by the Team and taken to the Fostering and Adoption Panel for approval. The Team is also responsible for all the family finding for children where long-term fostering is the plan. The Deputy Team Manager and Team Manager chair regular Permanency Planning Meetings for all long-term Fostering cases.

## **7.7. Support to Birth Families and Birth Relatives**

The Team is responsible for offering support to birth parents and other birth relatives affected by adoption and Special Guardianship Orders. A social worker is allocated to undertake an assessment. The social worker can offer counselling, provide information and advice and use the expertise of other agencies such as After Adoption or the Post Adoption Centre.

An **assessment of the need for adoption support** is completed by the child's social worker for all children for whom adoption is the plan. An adoption support plan is presented with the proposed match to the Fostering and Adoption Panel.

The adoption support plan is reviewed at the child's initial statutory adoption review, and at every subsequent review until the Adoption Order is made or if there is a significant change in circumstances.

The review of adoption support plans once the Adoption Order has been made is negotiated and agreed with the adoptive parents.

Harrow's **Adoption Allowance Scheme** provides a financial allowance to facilitate the adoption of children whose needs may involve additional costs. Adoption

allowances are considered as part of all support plans, are means tested, and subject to an annual financial review.

A full assessment of the child's need for **post adoption contact** is undertaken at all stages. 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.

The birth family and adoptive family may exchange letters and photographs by mutual agreement, via a service called "Letterbox". The Letterbox Co-ordinator in the team Adoption Support reviews and then forwards correspondence to the families.

If direct contact is to be maintained between the child and his or her birth parents or family, if assessed as necessary, the Team help facilitate this by providing support and / or supervision.

The Team provide independent support, advice and counselling to birth relatives, at their request, at any time pre or post adoption.

## **7.8. Returning for Adoption or SGO Support**

Adoptive families, parents and children, can return at any time for support, regardless of whether they live in Harrow, live outside Harrow, or move after the adoption order is made.

Harrow is responsible for the assessment and provision of support services identified as needed for a period of three years following the making of the adoption order.

Where that three-year period has expired, the local authority where the adoptive family lives will have the responsibility for assessing and providing adoption support services.

In the case of contact arrangements agreed before the adoption order, Harrow will continue to be responsible for managing and supporting the arrangements

irrespective of where the adoptive family lives, as well as for any changes to those arrangements over time.

Harrow will maintain responsibility for the continued payment of financial support as agreed before the adoption order was made, until adopters are no longer eligible.

## **7.9. Birth Record Counselling**

The Team are responsible for undertaking all Section 51 counselling, and all work regarding Birth Record counselling.

## **7.10. Co-ordination of contact**

In so far as it is consistent with their welfare, every effort should be made to ensure that the child maintains an appropriate level and type of contact with their birth family and community.

The Letter Box Contact Co-ordinator in the Adoption Support and Connected Persons Team co-ordinates all post adoption contact arrangements. They liaise with all parties to ensure all forms of direct and indirect contact are managed appropriately. Supervised contact is often facilitated at one of Harrow's Children's Centres.

## **7.11. Step Parent Adoption**

Non-agency adoption applications, usually a step parent seeking to adopt a child, require an assessment and recommendations in a report to court prepared by a social worker. Step parent adoption means that the resident birth parent and their partner share parental responsibility for the child. There is no automatic right to adoption and it is not appropriate for every child in step-families. Notification to adopt must be sent to Harrow Council no less than 3 months and no more than two years before the application to adopt is to be submitted to the court. Harrow Council will submit the standard report when ordered by the Court.

## **7.12. Advice to Other Professionals**

The Team provide advice, support and training to other professionals in all aspects of Adoption and Permanency, and promote robust and timely care planning.

## **7.13. Private Fostering**

The Team undertakes two functions in respect of private fostering:

- To raise public and professional awareness about private fostering and the requirements to notify the Local Authority of any actual or planned private fostering arrangements;
- And to respond to any private fostering notifications, assess the arrangements and to provide any necessary support to the children and adults involved.

The duties of the Local Authority in relation to private fostering are set out in the Children Act 1989 and amendments contained within the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

# **8. The Coram Harrow Partnership**

- 1) Residents of Harrow Council who wish to adopt children in the UK are referred to Coram, who provide counselling, and information about adoption and the children available for adoption through Coram (including Children Looked After in Harrow for whom adopters are sought). Where appropriate, preparation, training and assessment is offered via Coram.
- 2) Initially, Applicants are presented to the Coram Adoption and Fostering Panel for approval. Once approved, these adopters continue to be supported by Coram.

Efforts to link them with children are made via Harrow's children waiting for adoption list and the National Adoption Register, as well as via the West London Adoption Consortium, Adoption UK, Adoption Link and Placement Link, and any other links with other Local Authorities throughout the UK.

- 3) Coram assumes responsibility for family finding for Harrow's Children Looked After for whom a 'should be placed for adoption' decision has been taken. This involves working closely with the child's Harrow social worker to ensure that the child is prepared, necessary work with the birth parents and other relatives has been completed, all assessments (including health and education) are up to date and a child's needs assessment is completed.
- 4) Matches are, sought, firstly from amongst the families approved by Coram's four existing Family Teams, which cover a wide geographic area and recruit adopters from a range of ethnic, racial, religious and cultural backgrounds. Where necessary matches are sought via interagency placements, using the West London Consortium, the National Adoption Register and focussed advertising and family finding.
- 5) The Partnership Manager is involved early in the permanence planning process for children looked after by Harrow where there is a possibility of an adoption plan being made. She chairs the 6 weekly Permanence Planning Meetings in respect of these children and monitors the progress of assessments and counselling of birth parents, relatives and the children concerned. The Partnership Manager also attends Harrow's monthly Care Planning Group providing written update reports on all the children Coram are working with.
- 6) Harrow's Head of Service Corporate Parenting chairs all Selection Meetings, such as Permanency Planning Meetings, where adoption is the plan. Coram Partnership provides clear reports for this meeting and will attend alongside the child's social worker.
- 7) The match of prospective adopters for Child/ren Looked After will be presented to Harrow's Fostering and Adoption Panel where a formal recommendation will be made to the **Harrow Agency Decision Maker**.

- 8) Support during introductions and once children are placed is clearly documented in the Adoption Support Plan which is presented to the Panel alongside the match. Coram provides a range of post adoption services to their adopters including support groups, training, one to one support and access to the Tavistock Clinic. Harrow retains responsibility for providing financial support and for provision of Education and Health resources. Harrow also retains responsibility for providing adoption support services to residents of the borough who need an adoption support service but where Coram were not involved in making the placement. This includes a joint adoption support group with Harrow, therapeutic services through the Post Adoption Centre, Letterbox contact facilitation. Any person living in Harrow affected by adoption can request a Post adoption assessment which will be undertaken by the Harrow Adoption, Support and Connected Persons Team.

## **9. Harrow Fostering and Adoption Panel**

Harrow's Fostering<sup>2</sup> and Adoption Panel operates in accordance with the Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012.

These Regulations amended the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 in relation to the role of the Adoption Panel in decisions as to whether a child should be placed for adoption. In accordance with these Regulations, from 01 September 2012 cases, where an adoption plan is to be presented to the court, these are now referred directly to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision.

Each aspect of the agency's permanency work such as making plans for children (where appropriate), considering the suitability of prospective adopters / long term foster carers and matching individual children with permanent carers is considered by the panel.

An Independent Chair chairs the Panel. The Fostering and Adoption Panel holds a central list containing a number of panel members with a variety of backgrounds and experiences who can be called upon to attend panel. There are sufficient independent members with personal experience of adoption, a medical adviser, an

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<sup>2</sup> Since the Panel is a combined Fostering and Adoption Panel, the Fostering Regulations 2002 are also relevant.

elected member as well as social work members. This diverse group of people, pooling and sharing their different experience and expertise, can speak from an informed perspective and with an authoritative voice, providing vital and robust scrutiny as well as a validation of the agency's work.

Medical advice is provided by a Consultant Paediatrician, who is responsible for the pre-adoption clinic. Medical advice is provided predominantly in respect of children for whom the plan is adoption.

A Legal Advisor usually attends panel. Where it is not possible to attend, written advice is provided.

## **The Agency's Decision**

The Agency Decision Maker is the Divisional Director Children and Young People Services. The Agency Decision Maker takes final decisions on behalf of Harrow Council on proposed adoption arrangements and approvals.

The Adoption and Fostering Panel have a quality assurance form for all cases presented to panel by social workers. Completed by the Chair at panel, it is passed onto the Panel Administrator, to ensure that this is fed back to their managers. The manager will then address any issues or areas for development, as required, in professional supervision with the social worker.



## 10. Quality Assurance

### **Ofsted:**

All adoption services are monitored regularly to ensure that performance adheres to the standards set down in adoption legislation.

Ofsted is the independent, external agency that inspects Local Authorities, including adoption and fostering, on a regular basis. This is carried out as part of a wider single LA inspection system. Inspections are un-announced, i.e. LAs are notified the day prior to Ofsted arriving onsite.

Any feedback or complaints about our services can also be made to:

### **OFSTED**

Royal Exchange Buildings

St Ann's Square

Manchester M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404045

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

## **Harrow Council Quality Assurance Activity**

- All the staff receives regular professional supervision and training, as well as an annual appraisal.
- Children's cases are regularly reviewed, through statutory child care reviews chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Management information is collected regularly to ensure performance indicators are met, to plan adoption services that are effective and to set targets.
- A monthly Care Planning Group is held to monitor and track individual children to ensure adoption and permanency plans are robust and being implemented in a timely manner.
- Through the adoption partnership, Coram operates as a critical friend to Harrow's Adoption Service and permanency plans.
- The Fostering and Adoption Panel is independent of Harrow Council management structure, and is responsible for scrutinising adoption and fostering matches.
- Harrow Children's Services quality assurance process includes audits of fostering and adoption cases.
- Regular statutory returns are required, including the Adoptions Scorecard, published by Ofsted.

## 11. Comments, Compliments and Complaints

In seeking to constantly improve the quality of the Adoption Service, Harrow Council welcomes and encourages constructive feedback from service users, providers and partners.

The People Services Directorate recognises that children, their birth parents, carers and prospective carers are often best placed to identify the strengths and deficiencies of the Adoption Service and therefore learning from complaints can lead to changes and developments to be made to ensure continuing improvements are made over time.

Harrow Council's Corporate Complaints and Children's Social Care complaints information is on the website and in printed information throughout Council offices.

Any complaints, comments and compliments regarding our service should be made to our Complaints Service in writing to:

Adults and Children's Complaints Service

Harrow Council

PO Box 7

Civic Centre

Harrow HA1 2UL

Freephone 0800 136 104

Email: [complaints.adultsandchildren@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.adultsandchildren@harrow.gov.uk)

The Complaints service will discuss the options available and advise re the different stages of the Complaints process.

## 12. Staffing

Adoption Support and Connected Persons Team



**NOTE:** All Adoption Service managers and social workers are qualified and registered with HCPC as required by law.

All staff have a number of years experience in adoption or other children's social care positions.

## 13. Other useful Organisations and links

<https://www.gov.uk/child-adoption>

### **CoramBAAF (British Association of Adoption and Fostering) London Office**

49 Mecklenburgh Square

London WC1N 2QA

Tel: 020 750 0300

Email: [adoption@coram.org.uk](mailto:adoption@coram.org.uk)

### **PAC-UK London Office**

5 Torriano Mews

Torriano Avenue

London, NW5 2RZ

T: 020 7284 0555

### **HOPE UK**

50 Gold Street, Kettering, NN16 8JB

Telephone: 020 7928 0848

Email : [enquiries@hopeuk.org](mailto:enquiries@hopeuk.org)

### **WISH**

15 Old Ford Road

London

E2 9PL

Phone: 020 8980 3618

Fax: 020 8980 1596

E-mail: [info@womenatwish.org.uk](mailto:info@womenatwish.org.uk)

**Intercountry Advisory Service (IAC)**

22 Union Street

Barnet

Hertfordshire

EN5 4HZ

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**First 4 Adoption**

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[www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)