



# Statement of Purpose

Adoption and Permanency Service

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## INTRODUCTION

This statement of purpose meets the requirements of Standard 18 of Adoption National Minimum Standards, Regulation 2 of The Local Authority Adoption Service, Adoption Support Agencies (England) Regulations 2005 and Adoption and Children Act 2002.

This statement of purpose will be made available to those working in the adoption service, children, birth families, guardians, prospective adopters, adoptive parents and all relevant people involved in adoption process. The statement of purpose will be reflected on all policy and procedures that Hackney will be issuing regarding adoption. This statement of purpose will be reviewed annually by the registered manager.

## WHAT WE DO

Hackney Adoption Service strives to find the best adoptive parents for children; parents who will accept, love and cherish them all their lives. Hackney Adoption Service provides a variety of services to all those affected by adoption, including;

- Children for whom adoption is in their best interest
- Adults adopted as Hackney children
- Adults who wish to adopt
- Adults successfully approved to adopt
- Parents who need advice and support in caring for their adopted child

## VALUES

- To ensure that all attempts have been made for children to remain with their birth parents or extended families where the needs of children could be met in a safe environment. However, if this is not possible, all children need a caring and loving environment where they could grow up with the provision of alternative permanency options.
- We work systemically within a unit structure across the Adoption and Post-Permanency Service to undertake all activity related to finding, assessing and developing permanent adoptive families for children within the optimum timescale for the child.
- To ensure post-permanency support to families who care for children who were previously looked after whose futures have been secured by the Court under legal orders such as adoption, special guardianship or residence order.
- Delivering evidence based interventions based on social learning theory and systemic family therapy to provide;
  - A Family Finding & Assessment service
  - A Multi-disciplinary service for looked after children, including therapeutic support
  - A Post-permanence contact service
  - An Inter-country adoption service
  - A Tracing & counselling service

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Hackney Adoption and Permanency Service has an overall aim **to provide the best quality of service that will meet the needs of our looked after children with the permanency plan of adoption, special guardianship and residence order**. In order to meet this aim Hackney Children and Young People's Services are committed to the following objectives:

- To ensure that Hackney responds to all enquiries from people wishing to adopt in the UK or overseas promptly without any prejudice or discrimination on their age, religion, ethnicity or sexual preferences.
- To recruit adopters from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who will be meeting the needs of our looked after children.
- To ensure that the timescales for looked after children to be adopted have been met.
- To ensure that birth families are treated openly, fairly and with respect throughout the adoption process and they have access to independent services and counselling.
- To ensure that all enquiries from adopted adults are responded promptly and openly.
- To provide a range of post-permanency support services to adopters, including practical, financial and therapeutic services.
- To provide counselling, advice and support to adopted adults and their families that recognises the lifelong impact of adoption.
- To promote multi-agency working to identify best adoptive placements for our children.

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care is the decision maker for Hackney Adoption and Permanency Service.

The Head of Corporate Parenting Service is responsible for the overall operation of the service.

The Group Manager is the registered manager for adoption and permanency services. He line-manages consultant social workers and family therapists in the service and is responsible for operational and strategic tasks.

All managers are qualified in line with the national minimum standards in adoption.

<b>Names</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Sheila Durr <a href="mailto:Sheila.Durr@hackney.gov.uk">Sheila.Durr@hackney.gov.uk</a>	Interim Assistant Director
Alison Bishop <a href="mailto:Alison.bishop@hackney.gov.uk">Alison.bishop@hackney.gov.uk</a>	Interim Head of Corporate Parenting
Dr. Onder Beter <a href="mailto:Onder.beter@hackney.gov.uk">Onder.beter@hackney.gov.uk</a>	Group Manager, Registered Manager

## SERVICE STRUCTURE AND MEMBERS OF STAFF

Adoption and Permanency Services operates under the Department of Corporate Parenting in Hackney Children and Young People’s Services. The service consists of two social work units, each providing a different specialised service.

The Adoption Family Finding Unit focuses on recruitment, assessment, training and development of prospective adopters and matching processes. The unit ensures that caring and loving family placements are identified for children whose permanency is achieved via adoption. The unit also becomes involved in care planning from the initial stages in order to make sure that children are placed in adoptive placements within statutory timescales. The social work unit has a clinical practitioner who is assisting the unit in all stages of adoption including family finding, introductory work and matching.

The Post Permanency Unit provides support services for adopters, birth families and children whose permanency has been achieved via Adoption Orders, Special Guardianship or Residence Orders. This support consists of counselling, therapeutic support, intermediary work, assistance for service users requesting access to their birth records, annual review of support packages, assistance for families regarding contact arrangements and letter box contact. The unit also carries out preventative work to strengthen the placements if they are on the verge of family breakdown. The unit has a full time permanent systemic psycho-therapist to assist in post-permanency work.

We contract with the Post Adoption Centre (PAC) and Adoption UK to provide independent counselling and therapeutic support to adopters, birth parents and professionals when need be.

## STAFF AND THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

### Adoption Family-Finding Unit

Names	Designation	Qualifications
Vacant	Consultant Social Worker	N/A
Carolette Cains	Social Worker <a href="mailto:Carolette.cains@hackney.gov.uk">Carolette.cains@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in SW</li> <li>• BSc. Hons. Social Policy</li> <li>• MSc in Social Work Studies</li> </ul>
Joan McPherson	Social Worker <a href="mailto:Joan.mcpherson@hackney.gov.uk">Joan.mcpherson@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CQSW</li> <li>• BA in Social Sciences</li> </ul>
Hania Maclagan	Clinical Practitioner <a href="mailto:Hania.maclagan@hackney.gov.uk">Hania.maclagan@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA Combined Studies English and French</li> <li>• MSc Psychodynamic Psychotherapeutic Counselling for Children and Adolescents</li> </ul>
Marie Strydom	Social Worker <a href="mailto:Marie.strydom@hackney.gov.uk">Marie.strydom@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA in Social Work</li> <li>• MA in Play-therapy</li> </ul>
Louise Goligher	Social Worker <a href="mailto:Louise.goligher@hackney.gov.uk">Louise.goligher@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA in English and History</li> <li>• Cert. in Counselling / therapy &amp; concepts</li> <li>• Cert. in systemic family therapy (Year 1)</li> <li>• Post-graduate Diploma in Social Work</li> </ul>
Marcia McEachron	Unit co-ordinator <a href="mailto:Marcia.McEachron@Hackney.gov.uk">Marcia.McEachron@Hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in Leadership and Management</li> <li>• Cert. in Nat. Association of Para Legal Studies</li> </ul>

## Post-Permanency Support Unit

Names	Designation	Qualification
Rebecca Infanti-Milne (in job share post)	Consultant Social Worker <a href="mailto:Rebecca.Infanti-Milne@Hackney.gov.uk">Rebecca.Infanti-Milne@Hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA Hons</li> <li>• Graduate Certificate in Care of children and Young People</li> <li>• MA Social Work</li> <li>• Advanced Certificate in Systemic Practice</li> </ul>
Beverley Tugman (in job share post)	Consultant Social Worker <a href="mailto:Beverley.tugman@hackney.gov.uk">Beverley.tugman@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in SW</li> <li>• BA Hons. In Social Work</li> <li>• City and Guilds training for trainers</li> </ul>
Laurice O'Sullivan	Placement Support Practitioner <a href="mailto:laurice.o'sullivan@hackney.gov.uk">laurice.o'sullivan@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressive Arts Psychotherapy for Adolescents (Institute for Arts and Therapy in Education)</li> <li>• Professional Certificate of Effective Practice in Youth Justice</li> <li>• NVQ4 Learning, Development and Support Services for Young People</li> </ul>
Roina Daniel	Social Worker <a href="mailto:Roina.daniel@hackney.gov.uk">Roina.daniel@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA in Social Work</li> <li>• BA (Hons) Cultural Media Studies &amp; Film Studies</li> </ul>
Annette Odle	Systemic Psycho-therapist <a href="mailto:Annette.odle@hackney.gov.uk">Annette.odle@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSc Systemic Psychotherapy Training</li> <li>• Diploma in SW</li> <li>• BA Social Work &amp; Social Research</li> <li>• Diploma in Counselling and Supervision</li> </ul>
Ruth Valentine Montoute,	Social Worker <a href="mailto:Ruth.Valentine-Montoute@Hackney.gov.uk">Ruth.Valentine-Montoute@Hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CQSW</li> </ul>
Ellis Kaye	Unit co-ordinator <a href="mailto:Ellis.kaye@hackney.gov.uk">Ellis.kaye@hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Laws</li> <li>• PGDIP Psychology</li> <li>• MA psychotherapy</li> </ul>
Falaknaz Afridi	Business support officer <a href="mailto:Falaknaz.Afridi@Hackney.gov.uk">Falaknaz.Afridi@Hackney.gov.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GSCEs</li> <li>• BTEN Nat.Dip in Science</li> <li>• Higher Nat. Cert. in psychological Sciences</li> </ul>

## SERVICES FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

The Adoption Family Finding Unit aims to recruit and assess prospective adopters who can meet the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan. Initial enquirers are sent an information pack within 5 working days of the initial enquiry.

Inter-country adoption assessments are undertaken by the Inter-Country Adoption Centre ([www.icacentre.org.uk](http://www.icacentre.org.uk)).

The initial enquiry is discussed in the weekly unit meeting and the CSW will delegate the case for an initial visit and/or to invite the enquirer to a group Information Meeting. Initial visits are made no later than 8 weeks after the initial enquiry. Prospective adopters are written to with details about the visit and what it will entail.

The outcome of the home visit will be discussed in the weekly unit meeting and a decision made as to whether it is appropriate to proceed to the assessment. The enquirer will be sent an application form and invited to attend Preparation Groups. If there are reasons for not inviting an application, the Group Manager will write to the enquirers setting out the decision not to proceed and the reasons. Advice will be given of any steps they may take in order to meet the criteria or how they might pursue their interest elsewhere, if appropriate, or of steps they may take if they disagree with the decision.

An Adoption Case Record for prospective adopters is set up as soon as a formal application has been received.

The Preparation Groups are an integral part of the application process, and all applicants are expected to attend all sessions.

Applicants will be asked to complete application forms for the necessary checks to be undertaken for all members of the household aged 18 and over. On receipt of the completed forms: Criminal Records Bureau (enhanced criminal record certificates will be sought), Probation, NSPCC, Health Trust, Education Service, Children's Social Care Services and the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

Where an application is accepted, applicants will be asked to provide the names of three personal referees, who are adults, have known the applicant for at least two years and are not related to the applicant. Referees should be people who know the applicants well in a personal capacity, and it is desirable that the referees have direct experience of caring for children, either in a personal or professional capacity.

Where there is a joint application, referees should know both applicants, or additional referees will be required.

The applicants will also be asked to arrange for an adoption medical examination and report from their GP. The social worker will provide the applicants with the relevant BAAF medical forms for completion by the GP. The completed Medical Form will then be sent to the Medical Adviser, together with a covering letter providing a pen picture of the family, their life-style and the sort of child they are considering.

The Prospective Adopter's Assessment will comprise a series of interviews, the majority of which will take place in the applicants' home. Applicants will be interviewed at least once both individually and with their partner, and all other members of the household will also be interviewed, including the children.

The Adoption Family Finding Unit has a full-time clinical practitioner who will be providing clinical consultations to the unit on a regular basis during the course of the assessment. The clinical practitioner could also meet with the prospective adopters if need be.

The information gathered during the assessment, the Preparation Groups and the checks and personal references, will form the basis of the Prospective Adopter's Report. The report will also include a summary by the Medical Adviser of the health report obtained on the applicant/s.

Reports will address anti-discriminatory practice issues. It will contain a summary of the assessed strengths and weaknesses of the applicants, together with an opinion of the type of placement likely to be provided successfully. Potential risk factors should be highlighted.

The assessments are discussed on a regular basis during the weekly unit meetings. Once the report is completed, it will be submitted to The Group Manager for approval. The Group Manager will check that the report is accurate, up to date and contains evidence-based information before it is presented to the Adoption and Permanency Panel. If there are any issues of concern raised in the assessment or there are issues which require clarification, the manager will obtain a second opinion on those issues from another experienced practitioner, before approving the report.

When the Prospective Adopter's Report is finalised, a copy will be sent to the applicants. The applicants should be asked to sign and return the report, if agreed, and/or send their comments in writing to the assessing social worker. It will be explained to them that they have 10 working days to do this, (or they can be asked to sign a disclaimer stating they do not wish to take 10 days to comment) and that any written comments they make will be circulated to Adoption Panel members, with the report. A copy of any disclaimer will be kept on the child's Adoption Case Record.

The time taken to complete the assessment and present the report to the Adoption and Permanency Panel after a formal application has been received will be no more than eight months from the receipt of the application unless the need for additional work with the prospective adopters is identified or recommended by the Adoption and Permanency Panel.

The applicants will be encouraged to attend the meeting of the Adoption and Permanency Panel, which considers their application.

The Adoption and Permanency Panel will clearly minute the strengths and areas for development and will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker whether to approve, defer, or not to approve the application. The applicants are informed about the decision of the Agency Decision Maker verbally within 2 days that it is made and followed up in writing within 5 working days.

Approved adopters are given clear written information about the matching, introduction and placement process.

The introduction and matching process include the clinical practitioner to work with the unit to ensure that a smooth and sensitive transition process has been achieved for both the child and the adopters.

## ADOPTION & PERMANENCY PANEL

Before an agency approves a family for adoption, places a child for adoption or agrees adoption as the plan for the child, the case is referred to the Adoption and Permanency Panel for a recommendation. This recommendation is then given to the agency decision maker who will make a final decision on the case.

This is an important step in the adoption process and is statutory under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The panel are independent of the agency and make recommendations solely on the merit of each case, without being held accountable for resources or practice etc. All panel members must have knowledge and expertise of adoption through professional and/or personal experience, and receive training and regular appraisals.

**Function & Remit:** The Adoption & Permanency Panel is a joint panel between the London Borough of Hackney and the City of London Corporation.

The panel make recommendations on:

- Approval of Adopters
- Approval of best interests plans for Adoption
- Approval of best interests plans for Long-term Fostering
- Approval of matching child/ren with adopter(s) / carer(s)
- Approval of Special Guardianship Orders
- Approval of Residence Orders
- Termination of Adopters approval
- Rescinding plans for Adoption
- Rescinding plans for Long-term Fostering

These recommendations are then presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision.

The panel may also advise on practical arrangements for specific cases (e.g. contact arrangements) and provide quality assurance on the policy and practice of the agency.

**Panel Membership:** This multi-disciplinary panel is made up of staff and independent members who have first-hand personal and/or professional experience of adoption and fostering, and includes representation from;

- Children's Social Care
- The Virtual School for Looked After Children
- LAC Health
- Elected Members
- Adopters
- Foster Carers
- Adults who were adopted as children

The current panel membership list is available from **Claire Chidzey - Corporate Parenting Adviser**; [claire.chidzey@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:claire.chidzey@hackney.gov.uk).

The panel is assisted by a number of personnel who attend panel and are able to provide additional specialist advice. They are;

<b>Agency Advisor</b>	This role is currently undertaken by the Group Manager for adoption and permanency. He advises on agency policy regarding specific cases, quality assures the paperwork presented at panel and provides feedback to panel on the progress of cases.
<b>Legal Advises</b>	Provides advice to panel members on specific and general legal issues.
<b>Medical Advisor</b>	Provides information on specific and general medical issues and is available to meet with adopters during and after the assessment process.

## THE AGENCY'S DECISION

The Adoption & Permanency Panel make recommendations to the agency. The final decision on whether, for example, a prospective adopter is approved, is made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

For the Hackney and City of London joint Adoption & Permanency Panel the current ADM is **Sheila Durr – Assistant Director of Children's Social Care, London Borough of Hackney.**

In order to make a final decision on a case the ADM must have the panel's recommendation, the final minutes of the panel meeting and, if requested, the full paperwork that was submitted to panel.

The ADM must make a final decision within seven working days of receiving the panel's recommendation and final minutes, and if the ADM does not agree with the panel's recommendation the reasons for this should be noted on the child/adopter's file and feedback given to panel at the next meeting.

The ADM's decision is verbally communicated to all relevant parties within two working days and confirmed in writing within five working days.

## MATCHING AND PLACING CHILDREN WITH ADOPTERS

Once an adopter is approved, they become part of our pool of prospective adopters who are waiting for placements. Approved adopters who wait for a match are reviewed on an annual basis, to update their records and check that they are still in a position to adopt. If there are significant changes we will re-assess and prepare a report for panel who will re-consider the application.

Once adopter(s) are approved by Hackney this does not mean that only children in care to the London Borough of Hackney can be placed with them. Hackney is part of a local consortium that manages a Joint Adoption Register with the other agencies in the North East of London region for adopters and children who are waiting. We review the children and families waiting regularly and can often identify potential matches through this pool. Many families and agencies subscribe to adoption periodicals – *Be My Parent* (published by BAAF) and *Children Who Wait* (published by Adoption UK) and matches are sometimes made through these links. Approved adopters can also be registered with the National Adoption Register, meaning they can be considered for children from any part of the country. However, we do ask

Hackney adopters to wait three months before registering, as we have many children in Hackney who need adoptive families.

If an adoptive family is identified as a possible match for a Hackney child then the family finding social worker and the child's social worker will exchange information. If they agree that the match is suitable, the adopter(s) will be given all the information we have about the child and invited to meet with the child's social worker to discuss this further and ask questions. Hackney does not withhold any information about the child when discussing a match with potential adopters and staff will always take the time to talk with adopter(s) about any reservations they may have. If adopter(s) do not feel the child is right for them this decision will be respected and will not affect any future family finding activity for that adoptive family.

If all parties are happy to proceed to the next stage, an Adoption Placement Report will be prepared jointly by the child's social worker and the family finding social worker with input from the adoptive family and, where possible, the child. The report will then be presented to the Adoption and Permanency Panel who will make a recommendation on the suitability of the match to the ADM and all parties will be notified of the decision verbally and in writing.

## **POST PERMANENCY SUPPORT SERVICES**

The role of the Post Permanency Unit is based on the provision of post placement and post adoption support services to children and families affected by adoption, special guardianship orders and residence orders.

The unit also provides information and services to adopted adults and their relatives to facilitate access to records, tracing and reunions.

The Post Permanency Unit becomes involved in the adoption process at early stages to ensure that effective adoption support packages are put in place. It works closely with the Adoption Family Finding Unit.

The unit has a full-time systemic psycho-therapist who assists the unit in providing counselling, information, advice and practical support to adopters, birth families and anyone affected by the adoption process.

The Post Permanency Unit provides guidance, information and advice to other members of staff and partner agencies to promote multi agency working in adoption process.

We provide regular monthly clinical sessions for adopters. This is delivered by our dedicated clinical practitioners. In addition, we have monthly health and education surgeries for adopters which is attended by the Medical Advisor to the panel and the Deputy Head for the Virtual School.

All local authorities must have an **Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA)** whose role is to provide advice and information to all parties involved in adoption. In Hackney the ASSA is the Group Manager for Fostering Recruitment, Adoption & Permanency Service but this role has also been delegate to the Consultant Social Worker of the Post Permanency Unit.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

In seeking to constantly improve the quality of the adoption service, Hackney welcomes and encourages feedback from service users, providers and partner agencies.

We recognise that children, their birth parents, adoptive parents and prospective adopters are best placed to identify the strengths and deficiencies of the adoption service and, therefore to inform the changes and developments needed to ensure continuing improvement.

There is a framework in place for responding to and ensuring that the views of the parties in the adoption process are heard. All parties are advised of Hackney's complaints procedures and given information on how to make a complaint. The Quality Improvement Unit, managed by the Head of Safeguarding Service, provides intervention, problem solving, independent investigation, mediation, review and independent advocacy services.

In most adoption situations, areas of potential tension or conflict can be minimised through careful planning, open communication and early discussion/negotiation involving the child's social worker and/or the adoption social worker, as appropriate.

Any of the parties in the adoption process can use the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and Children Act 2004 complaints procedure if they have a dissatisfaction or concern with the service provided. This includes a complaint by:

- Any child who has been placed for adoption by Hackney - including adults who were formally adopted.
- A birth parent of a child who has been or is being adopted.
- Adoptive parents.
- Prospective adoptive parents during the preparation and assessment process, and after approval whilst awaiting a placement.
- One person on behalf of another e.g. an adoptive parent on behalf an adopted child.

Applicants to become adopters who are turned down for approval on the recommendation of the adoption panel and/or the decision of the agency decision maker are able to ask for their case to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Details of this process with timescales will be made available to applicants during preparation and assessment.

The IRM has the following timescales:

- Applicants have 40 working days from panel decision to decide to contact the IRM.
- The adoption agency will be contacted to produce relevant documentation within 10 working days.
- The IRM will set up a panel within 3 months of the application.

Contact details for the IRM are as follows:

**The Independent Review Mechanism  
Contract Manager  
Unit 4  
Pavillion Business Park**

**Wortley  
Leeds  
LS12 6AJ**

**Tel: 0845 450 3956  
Email: [irm@baaf.org.uk](mailto:irm@baaf.org.uk)**

Information about the complaints procedure can be obtained from:

**The Quality Improvement Unit  
London Borough of Hackney  
Hackney Service Centre  
1 Hillman Street  
Hackney  
London  
E8 1DY**

**Tel: 0208 356 5800  
Email: [children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk)**

Information is also available on <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Childrens-Social-Care-Complaints.htm>

Hackney Adoption and Post-Permanency Services are inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

**Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD**

**Tel: 0300 123 1231 (Children's Services)  
Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Website: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>**

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Owner: Alison Bishop – Interim Head of Corporate Parenting Service