

Adoption and Permanence Statement of Purpose April 2019 - March 2020



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Adoption and Permanence Statement of purpose 2019-2020

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1. Introduction

This statement of purpose has been produced by Tower Hamlets' Permanency and Adoption Support Service under the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2013 (amendments Adoption Support 2014), the Special Guardianship (Amendments) Regulations 2016 and the National Adoption Standards.

The statement aims to give all stakeholders and service users a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the Permanence and Adoption Support Service in Tower Hamlets, as well as to detail the services that are provided.

This is a key document against which the Adoption and Permanence Service is inspected by Ofsted. It has been endorsed by the senior management group for children's social care and is reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis to reflect local targets as well as national priorities for adoption as set by the government.

In February 2017, Ofsted judged Tower Hamlets adoption performance as 'requires improvement'. Over the past two years the Permanence and Adoption Support Service has worked hard to improve overall performance and ensure children at placed in their permanent places in a timely manner and in accordance to the adoption threshold.

The most recent Adoption Score Card published in March 2019 for the period April 2015 to March 2018, indicates an improvement in average time for placing children with prospective adopters, albeit still higher than the national average. The annual scorecard for 2018/19 demonstrates a much improved picture with the A1 figure at 401 day average time between children entering care and moving in with their adoption families, which is 86 days less than the threshold. The A2 average was 207, which is 86 day more than the threshold however in line with the national average.

2. Role of the Adoption and Permanence Service

The main role of the Permanency and Adoption Support Service is to provide high quality adoptive placements, a wide range of adoption and special guardianship support, and other permanency options, including long term placements with family and friends carers, for children who are looked after by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and are unable to live with their birth families. Children will be placed with families and carers who can offer them safe, stable care and promote their individual needs, consistent with statutory obligations and regulations regarding adoption and placement of children.

The Permanency and Adoption Support Service has identified the following strategic goals for the forthcoming year:

- To actively work towards the launch of Adopt London East as part of the government's agenda of regionalisation of adoption (which currently have a forecast launch date of summer 2019). In the meantime, to maintain recruitment activities, assess, prepare and support a range of adopters to

ensure a diverse and confident mix of adoptive families is available to meet the needs of those children who are waiting for permanent homes. Tower Hamlets adoption service is particularly looking for prospective adopters who are able to take on a level of uncertainty and complexity such as sibling groups, black and minority ethnic children, older children, children with disabilities and young children with complex background factors such as drug and alcohol misuse and mental health problems.

- Assess, prepare and support family and friend carers to ensure that placements of children within their families are enduring.
- To provide a high quality support service to those affected by adoption and special guardianship.
- Ensure continuity and stability for each looked after child by planning for their future needs in a timely manner, exploring all permanence options available and planning effectively for these.
- Meet the requirements of adoption and special guardianship legislation, government regulations and standards, and corporate policy through continuous monitoring of service standards and practice.

3. Principles and core values

Tower Hamlets believes that all children and young people who need permanent substitute care should have an opportunity to grow up as part of a loving family who can meet their individual needs during childhood and beyond. The Permanency and Adoption Support Service is therefore based on the following principles:

- The child's welfare and safety should be the main focus throughout the adoption and permanence planning process. Children's rights should be respected at all times.
- Children have the right to family life, stability and continuity throughout their lives so that they are able to maintain their identity and develop their full potential.
- Decisions taken about placing children should consider all aspects of the child's needs.
- Relationships that are important to the child should be sustained and developed where possible and where this is assessed as appropriate.
- Children, birth parents, adoptive parents and long term carers should have access to all relevant information and be encouraged to participate in any discussions and decision-making processes.
- All decisions should be taken in a manner that is fair and transparent, and individuals should be given an opportunity to challenge decisions. Services should be administered in a fair manner and in keeping with the Council's equality and valuing diversity policies.
- Decisions about the child's future should be taken in a timely manner that minimises delay. Tower Hamlets adoption service fully embraces Foster for Adoption, so that for children who require adoption can be placed with their permanent family as early as possible.
- Adoption is a life-long commitment that has far-reaching consequences for those who are affected; this is recognised by staff involved in delivering adoption services, and services are delivered in a sensitive way.

- The confidentiality of all those involved in the adoption and permanence process is respected at all times.

4. Aims and objectives of the service

Tower Hamlets Council's Permanency and Adoption Support Service aims to provide an efficient service that meets the needs of those children in the borough who require permanent substitute care by identifying their individual needs and finding families to match their needs within agreed timescales as set by the government or family courts.

The service aims to continue to improve and increase timely adoption, make appropriate use of Special Guardianship Orders and, where appropriate, Family and Friends care.

The service will comply with the following legislation and government regulations and standards:

- Children Act 1989
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and 2014
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and accompanying statutory guidance
- Friends and Family Care statutory guidance for Local Authorities 2011
- National Minimum Standards for Adoption and Fostering Services 2011 (updated 2014) and related statutory guidance.

Early involvement of the Permanency and Adoption Support Team in child care planning is crucial to minimise disruption and avoid delay.

The service has employed an interim Permanence Improvement Manager who carefully monitors children's care plans and also acts as the professional advisor to the Fostering and Adoption Panel. The Permanence Improvement Manager provides consultation to children's social workers to enable them to discuss individual cases, explore permanence options and plan effectively to achieve this. This process ensures that all permanency options are considered for every looked after child and that parallel planning is taking place in a timely manner.

The Permanency and Adoption Support Team also ensures that a child's friends and family network is fully explored and/or assessed in relation to capacity to provide a stable, loving and permanent home to a Tower Hamlets looked after child. These assessments will be completed alongside planning for adoption.

Providing support services to children, adopters and permanent carers as well as birth families is another key aim of the service. These include social work support, training, support groups, special events, counselling and/or signposting to independent advice.

The service also aims to provide a culturally sensitive service for adoptive parents, birth parents and adopted adults who wish to contact family members from whom they were separated following adoption. Support will be offered via access to adoption files, provision of advice, counselling and information on how to access birth and adoption records, or by acting as an intermediary agency for adopted adults and birth relatives of the adopted adults.

5. Service users

Adoption and Permanence Services are provided to:

- Children who are to be adopted or need substitute permanent care
- Birth parents
- Prospective and approved adopters
- Prospective Special Guardians
- Children and adoptive parents who require adoption support services
- Children and Special Guardians who require support, where the child was a looked after child in Tower Hamlets immediately prior to the Order
- Adopted adults and members of their birth families.

6. Multi-agency and joint working

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets aims to work with our partner agencies and organisations to improve the range and quality of adoption and permanence services. Although East London Permanence and Adoption Consortium (ELPAC) disbanded at the end of 2018/19, Tower Hamlets has remained committed to working with partners from London Adopt East Regional Adoption Agency to ensure a smooth transition of adoption services.

London Adopt East boroughs are:

- London Borough of Havering at the host authority
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- London Borough of Newham

All local authorities are continuing to work with Barnardos to deliver adopter preparation training and with PAC UK to provide adoption and special guardianship support.

In providing adoption and permanence service, the Adoption and Permanence Teams work closely with all staff involved in the process Children's Social Care as well as outside partners such as health, education partners and national organisations. Details concerning service and agency partners can be found at the end of this document under Useful Addresses and Contacts.

Tower Hamlets has a service level agreement with the Intercountry Adoption Centre, who provide the training, counselling and assessment of inter-country adopters.

7. Services for prospective adopters

7.1 Recruitment

Tower Hamlets Council has developed a comprehensive recruitment strategy, currently based on the needs of the service as well as working collaboratively with our RAA partners. Recruitment campaigns are carefully targeted to achieve the provision of adoptive placements that match the needs of the children waiting for adoption. Whilst a recruitment target has not been set for 2019/20 due to the implementation of the RAA, Tower Hamlets will continue to actively recruit.

Monthly open evenings run to enable prospective adopters to find out more about adoption and to answer any queries they may have. Tower Hamlets also runs a number of other recruitment activities throughout the year, including recruitment events during National Adoption Week in October, and is involved in a wide range of community events to raise awareness of adoption.

Prospective adopters can get in touch by our website, freephone number and email inbox. The service operates a duty system in order to process enquiries and allocate initial visits in a timely fashion. The team provide clear, written information for prospective adopters about the assessment and approval process.

A full information pack is sent out within one working day of an initial enquiry. Enquiries and applications are welcomed from all sections of society, including single people, same sex couples and unmarried couples and people from a wide variety of races, religions and cultures.

Following a positive initial home visit, applicants are invited to complete a Registration of Interest form. On the basis of this information the application can be progressed.

7.2 Assessment

All applicants are encouraged to view the website and attend an information evening. They will also have the opportunity to discuss their personal circumstances with a social worker either via telephone or during an office appointment. This ensures that adopters have a clear understanding of the types of children that are currently awaiting adoption. If adopters are able to consider the profiles of children waiting both locally and nationally, they will be encouraged and supported to begin the assessment. The adoption assessment is structured as follows:

Stage 1

Prospective adopters complete a Registration of Interest form, once received this marks the beginning of Stage 1. This stage should last two months.

Applicants are allocated a social worker to support their learning and a Stage 1 Agreement plan is made.

During this stage, the following must be completed:

- Applicants to attend training including a parenting and loss day and three days of preparation training

- All statutory checks including DBS, medicals, background checks and references.
- Workbook: this is an assessment tool which applicants are supported to complete prior to moving on to Stage 2.
- Stage 1 can be extended for up to six months for legitimate reasons, without having to restart the process.
- At the end of Stage 1, a review meeting is held with the adopters to review the outcome of Stage 1 with a view to progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2

All the applicants' learning and information gained in Stage 1 (including the workbook) form the basis of the Home Study and support completion of the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR). At the beginning of Stage 2, applicants are invited to sign a Stage 2 Agreement.

Stage 2 should be completed within 4 months, including being presented to Panel and the recommendation being ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

As part of the assessment process, the social worker will also interview family members, friends and others in the prospective adopter's support network, and any person with whom someone has had a significant relationship, particularly if there were children as part of that relationship.

All prospective adopters have the opportunity to read the assessment report prepared by the assessing social worker and make their own comments for the panel. A midway meeting is occasionally held during the assessment.

It's general practice that adopters are involved in these meetings. Once the report has been agreed it is formally submitted to the panel for a recommendation for approval.

7.3 Approval

Recommendations about whether prospective adopters should be approved to adopt are made by the Tower Hamlets' Adoption, Fostering and Permanence Panel, which meets at least monthly but in busy periods will meet once a fortnight.

The panel will read the report of the assessing social worker, and any other information that may be presented, and will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker about approval as a prospective adopter.

Prospective adopters will be invited to attend the panel meeting.

Panel recommendations are passed to Richard Baldwin, Divisional Director of Children's Social Care, who is the designated Agency Decision Maker (ADM). He will consider the recommendation made by the panel and decide whether or not to approve the prospective adopters.

The ADM makes a decision on all panel recommendations as soon as receiving the final set of minutes and recommendations but not later than 7 working days. Applicants whose approval is not agreed by the panel or the ADM can ask for their

case to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Details of this process together with timescales are made available to the applicants during the adoption process.

The IRM works to the following timescales:

- Applicants have 40 working days from the decision to decide to contact the IRM
- Tower Hamlets Council will be required to produce relevant documentation within 10 working days
- The IRM will set up a panel within 3 months of the application.
- The IRM is currently operated by CoramBAAF Academy for Adoption and Fostering.

7.4 Matching

Approved adopters are given clear information about the matching, introduction and placement process. The matching process is designed to ensure that children are placed with adoptive families who are most likely to be able to meet the child's needs. All aspects of the child's history and development will be considered as well as how adopters may meet their needs.

Matches will be considered from a number of sources, which include Tower Hamlets children, Adoption London East authorities and recourses like the Link Maker. Adopters are also invited to attend Adoption Exchange Days, where children from a number of local authorities are profiled.

Activity Days are also periodically held across all London boroughs.

In considering a match with an identified child, adopters are given a copy of the Child's Permanence Report which contains full information about the background and needs of the child, including health, educational and therapeutic needs and other unique characteristics such as cultural or religious background. The adopter will be able to meet with the child's social worker and any other professionals who are working with the child, such as the medical advisor or the child's foster carer, to discuss these needs.

Once it has been agreed to proceed with the match, the social worker will prepare an Adoption Placement Report which the adopters will have an opportunity to both contribute to and consider before agreeing the final report with the social worker.

Once agreed, this is sent to the Adoption and Permanence Panel along with a comprehensive Adoption Support Plan, in order to make a recommendation to the ADM as to whether the child should be placed for adoption with the proposed adopter(s).

The Panel may also give advice on arrangements regarding contact, adoption support services and the extent to which prospective adopters will be able to exercise parental responsibility once a child has been placed with them.

7.5 Placement

Once a child has been placed for adoption, the child's social worker and the adopter's social worker will visit the placement regularly to monitor the child's progress and support the placement. Review meetings will be held and chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer, as part of the requirement to review Looked After Children's care and adoption plans.

Adoption Support Plans and services are reviewed at this meeting; once the adoption order is granted, such services continue to be reviewed annually.

7.6 Support

During the assessment and matching process, the support needs of the adopters and child are fully explored and considered. Within Tower Hamlets and the ELPAC there is a range adoption support services available for adoptive families. These could include:

- **Information, advice and counselling**

The team can offer advice, information and counselling to adoptive parents, or can refer them on to more appropriate resources. Tower Hamlets also has access to counselling services provided by the Post-Adoption Centre.

- **Therapeutic services for the child**

Tower Hamlets has access to a range of therapeutic services for children, including CAMHS, and PAC-UK.

- **Financial support**

Financial support can be provided to help adoptive parents with any additional costs in caring for the child, in particular where the child has specific on-going needs. There is no automatic entitlement to financial support and support will be subject to a means test and reviewed at least annually.

- **Mediation around contact issues**

The team runs a letter-box contact scheme that enables birth families and adopted children to exchange letters and birthday cards. The service is confidential and is normally agreed and set up as part of the adoption planning for the child.

The team can also facilitate direct contact between the adopted child and their birth family where this has been agreed and deemed in the child's best interests.

Post placement, Tower Hamlets organise training and/or events for adoptive families that give them an opportunity to meet other adoptive families and can also help them in accessing support groups.

Adoptive families have the right to request an assessment for adoption support services. Where they consider they need to have support services, they can contact a social worker from the support service based in the Permanency and Adoption Support team for information and advice on the types of services available.

The Adoption Support team will respond to any new requests for adoption support from adoptive families who live in the borough. Tower Hamlets is responsible for supporting families with whom they have placed children for a period of three years, following the granting of an adoption order. Tower Hamlets Council is able to offer adoption support services to any adopters and children/young people who reside in Tower Hamlets.

7.7 Overseas adoptions

Applicants wishing to adopt from another country are referred to the Intercountry Adoption Centre (ICA), a contracted agency who undertakes this work on behalf of Tower Hamlets Council. ICA also provides a service that monitors and reviews intercountry placements, once a child enters the UK.

7.8 Non-agency adoptions

People who are resident in Tower Hamlets wishing to adopt a child they are caring for must notify the department of their intention to adopt. These notifications are logged and monitored within the Permanency and Adoption Support team by the team managers.

The Permanency and Adoption Support team can offer support and guidance on such specialist adoption issues. Such assessments are allocated within the Permanency and Adoption Support team for the preparation of the Annex A report required by the court in all adoption applications.

8. The Fostering and Adoption Panel

Since January 2018, Tower Hamlets has been running a joint Fostering and Adoption Panel, which is an independent panel, set up to oversee Tower Hamlets Council's fostering and adoption service as set out in the Children Act 1989, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The panel's overall functions and purpose are:

- To consider and make recommendations about whether a child should be placed for adoption in those cases where there is no court involvement.
- To consider and make recommendations about the approval of prospective adopters and long term foster carers, including family and friends carers who wish to be considered as long-term carers for a child they are currently looking after.
- The continuation of foster carer's approval terms at the first annual foster carer review and then at intervals of 3 years or as requested by the Fostering Service. To also review prospective adopters' approval on an annual basis.
- The termination of approval of adopters and foster carers.
- To consider and make recommendations about the proposed matches between children and prospective adopters and long term foster carers, and make recommendations on support plans.

- To consider any adoption support plans submitted as part of the proposed placement.
- To consider and give advice on contact arrangements, the exercise of parental responsibility post-placement and the numbers and types of children a prospective adopter may be suitable to adopt.
- To provide a thorough and critical consideration of all cases presented to it in order to make sound and appropriate recommendations to the agency decision maker who makes the final decision.
- To consider and provide advice on any other issues affecting Tower Hamlets Council's Fostering and Adoption Service.

The panel consists of a central list of panel members who have been recruited because they have the necessary experience and expertise to contribute effectively to the discharge of the panel functions. Tower Hamlet's panel aims to ensure that the panel reflects the diversity of the borough and includes representation from as wide a field as possible in terms of professional knowledge and experience of adoption and fostering.

The panel also works to ensure that panel membership is gender-balanced and reflects the ethnic and cultural composition of Tower Hamlets as much as possible. The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) makes the final decision. Tower Hamlets' ADM is the Divisional Director of Children's Social Care.

Should any adopters disagree with the panel recommendation and the agency decision maker's decision, they are able to make representation to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism.

The composition of the Panel is made up as follows:

- An independent chairperson who has appropriate skills and experience in adoption and permanence work
- Two independent vice chairs who can, if required, chair the Panel
- A councillor who serves on a full and equal basis as other panel members
- A medical adviser who makes a full contribution to the wider aspects of the panel as well as providing advice and comment on medical issues
- At least 3 other independent persons who include, where reasonably practical, two people with personal experience of adoption.
- Two social workers, each with at least 3 years' relevant post-qualifying experience.
- Education specialist

In addition the Panel has:

- A Legal Adviser
- An Agency Adviser
- A Panel Administrator
- All children's plans for adoption are considered by Tower Hamlets Council's Agency Decision Maker.

9. Services for Prospective Special Guardians

The Adoption and Children's Act 2002 provides the legal framework for special guardianship under the Children Act 1989. In addition to these, the Adoption and Permanence Service closely follows the statutory guidance for local authorities on the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 (as amended in 2016). The Special Guardianship Orders were introduced to meet the needs of children for whom adoption is not appropriate, but who could still benefit from a legally secure placement.

The Permanency and Adoption Support Teams provides an assessment and support service to prospective special guardians for a Tower Hamlets looked after child, or for a child who resides in Tower Hamlets and has been in placement with the proposed carer for at least 12 months. On receipt of a notice of an application for a special guardianship order, the team prepares a report for the court on the suitability of the applicant to be a long term carer for the given child.

In assessing a prospective special guardian, the following are considered:

- The child's individual needs including their background, age, gender, health, behavioural and identity needs, and any harm they have previously suffered
- The wishes and feelings of the child and others
- The nature of the prospective special guardian's relationship with the child, currently and previously
- The prospective special guardian's ability to meet the child's needs in the short term and into adulthood
- The prospective special guardian's ability to keep the child safe and protect from any harm and/or abuse
- Contact arrangements based on the child's need
- Robust background checks on the prospective guardian(s) including an enhanced DBS, medical, local authority checks, references, etc.
- Support needs and subsequent support plan, during assessment as well as post order

In addition to assessment, the Permanency and Adoption Support teams also provide:

- Information and advice to prospective special guardians
- Support for special guardians, including financial support
- Assistance with managing contact, subject to regular reviews
- Access to social work support either by allocated social worker or the adoption and special guardianship duty line
- Access to additional training and support via the East London Adoption Consortium
- Letterbox service, if needed, to facilitate correspondence between birth parents, children and the new family
- Reviews of support needs, at least annually

- Special Guardianship allowance, which is means tested and reviewed annually

The Permanency and Adoption Support team is responsible for providing support services for those affected by special guardianship orders that live in the borough, including the child, their parents and the special guardian for a period of three years following the granting of the Special Guardianship Order. After three years, the responsibility for support (except the allowance) is transferred to the local authority in which the special guardian lives.

10. Services for children, adoptive parents, birth families and permanent carers

10.1 Consortium services

The East London Adoption and Fostering Consortium have been working closely together for over 10 years to provide a wide range of adoption services in the consortium, in addition to those provided by each individual Adoption and/or Permanence Support Team.

The consortium adoption support services are summarised as follows:

- Training:
 - Post approval training
 - Specialist parenting training if required
- Commissioned support services, for example, PAC-UK, which offers advice, counselling, therapeutic family work, training and support groups for all parties to adoption and permanent care. They also support adopters in relation to the education of adopted children.

10.2 Services for children

The Permanency and Adoption Support Team liaises closely with those professionals working with children who have been identified as requiring an adoptive placement. Once the ADM approves an adoption plan, the child is allocated a family finding social worker and six weekly permanency planning meetings commence to ensure ongoing scrutiny of this plan. The family finding social worker works with the child's social worker in the selection and matching process and can remain involved until the second review.

Following a match being made, an adoption support social worker is allocated to monitor the adoption support plan and support all parties, including the birth family.

10.3 Adoption Support Fund

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has worked with consortium partners in developing a comprehensive range of adoption support services.

Tower Hamlets Council has been proactive in ensuring that adopters and special guardians (as of April 2016) are aware of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). Carers are able to access the ASF once an adoption or special guardianship support assessment has been completed by an allocated social worker within 6-8 weeks. A

good level of scrutiny is provided to all applications prior to them being submitted to the ASF.

10.4 Adoption information

The Permanency and Adoption Support team provides intermediary services to assist adopted adults who are trying to trace birth relatives, and to birth relatives who are trying to trace an adopted adult.

The team can:

- provide counselling to the individual wishing to trace a relative
- access information from a variety of sources to help individuals begin the tracing process
- act as an intermediary between the individual, other adoption agencies and the person being traced to establish whether or not that person wishes to have contact.

10.5 Services for birth parents

Birth parents, relatives and others who had a significant relationship with an adopted child can request support for information, advice and counselling around adoption, as well as to seek assistance around contact issues. The service offers a comprehensive support package, which is provided via a service level agreement with PAC-UK.

The team can help birth parents, relatives and others to access counselling via a range of independent adoption support and voluntary agencies.

11. Long Term Fostering

For some children, long term fostering is the preferred permanence option, particularly older children who maintain close and significant relationship with birth parents and relatives. Changes to care planning regulations mean that long term fostering is now considered a statutory permanence option for looked after children. Presently, the framework for decision making around long term fostering is dependent on where the child will be placed. The Children's Placement Team will conduct external searches for suitable placements based on the information provided by the child's social worker. In-house matches are led by the child's social worker along with the foster carer's supervising social worker. Matches for children 15 and under go to the Fostering and Adoption Panel for a recommendation before a final decision is made by the ADM. The process closely follows adoption procedure and practice as described above.

Tower Hamlets Council remains committed to fully explore and support all permanency solutions for children. As such, the current policy framework for long term fostering will be revised and updated in line with new legislative changes. The proposed framework for decision making will need to address the following:

- decision making regarding long term fostering as the child's permanence plan
- assessing the suitability of carers to be long term foster carers
- deciding on the suitability of proposed matches
- deciding on what level of delegated authority should be given to permanent carers, the frequency of visits and LAC reviews

12. Organisational structure and management of the Permanency and Adoption Support Service

Tower Hamlets is continuing to work towards improving its permanence planning for all looked after children. Tower Hamlets is committed to achieving the appropriate care plan for each child, whether that be to return home to their birth family, to be cared for by Family and Friends carers under a child arrangement or special guardianship order, long term fostering or adoption.

The Permanency and Adoption Support Team is located within the Children and Culture Directorate, the Director of which has overall responsibility for Regulated Services and Resources.

The Permanency and Adoption Support teams offer three distinct areas of work:

- Adoption work,
- Connected Persons and Special Guardianship assessments,
- Adoption & Special Guardianship Support.

This ensures the teams are able to maintain specialisms and much needed expertise in adoption and permanence. The current structure also allows for work to be completed in a flexible manner across the sub-teams to ensure good and timely service is provided in all areas according to service need.

The Permanency and Adoption Support teams undertakes family finding for all children in Tower Hamlets who require an adoptive family. The family finding social worker presents matches to the Adoption, Fostering and Permanence Panel in partnership with the child's social worker and the adopter's social worker. The family finding social worker has a role to co-ordinate and support introductions and placements.

The Permanency and Adoption Support Teams offer adoption support services. The teams are able to provide adoption support services from the second review following placement and remain involved for as long as is appropriate after an adoption order has been made. The teams are responsible for adoption support assessments and applications to the ASF.

The teams are responsible for reviewing all the adoption support plans as appropriate. A review of the financial support offered to families is carried out annually.

Staff within the Permanency and Adoption Support teams work closely and in partnership with other teams across the department, offering social workers advice and consultation.

All staff has access to training courses and are kept updated on developments in practice and legislative changes.

Adoption and Permanence Service management structure is detailed below:

Name	Designation
Richard Baldwin	Agency Decision Maker
Lissa-Marie Minnis	Service Manager
Sharon Vickers	Panel Advisor and Permanency Improvement Manager
Phil Morgan	Group Manager
Tina Coburn Silvius Brasville Paula Lyttle	Permanence and Adoption Support Team Managers
Eric Obeng Lesley Fraser Nadia Patel Rachel McNamara	Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Workers
Louise Goligher Kate Donald Jacqui Le Vailant Casey Gilbeau	Advanced Social Workers
Janat Wallace Sybil Seungdamrong Lucy Apaloo-Cupid Mary Fernandez Eric Obeng Sandra Garner Ziona Donker Sandra Garnder (Life Story Social Worker)	Social Workers
Vicky Seyforth	Family Finding Coordinator
Margaret David	Panel administrator

13. Quality Assurance

The Permanency and Adoption Support Teams are monitored regularly to ensure that performance adheres to the standards set out by legislation and council policies. The service's aims and objectives are also reviewed as part of the Children and Young People's Plan by both Service and Divisional managers.

An annual report on the work of the Adoption Panel and the Adoption and Permanence Service is produced for the senior management group and the Corporate Parenting Board.

The mechanisms for quality assurance are:

- All staff in the Permanency and Adoption Support Team receive regular supervision and training, as well as an annual appraisal. The team managers are supervised by the Service Manager or the Group Manager of Regulated Services and Resources.
- The teams present their performance at monthly meetings with the Divisional Director.
- Children's cases are regularly reviewed, with statutory child care reviews chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers who are attached to the Division's Quality Assurance Unit.
- Management information is collected regularly to ensure performance indicators are met, to deliver efficient provision of the service and to set targets for the service.
- The Permanency and Support teams operate in accordance to written policies and procedures, legal and regulatory framework and is subject to corporate policy that sets out clearly its role and responsibilities, and provides a reference for good practice.
- Prospective adopters are effectively recruited, prepared, trained and supported so that the adoptive placements available are of a high quality and able to meet the needs of the children.
- Prospective special guardians are effectively assessed, trained and supported to ensure placement stability and longevity.
- All adopters approved for over a year and who have not been matched with a child are reviewed annually by the Permanency and Support team managers and the recommendation is presented to the Adoption and Fostering Panel.
- The Adoption and Fostering Panel is independent of the Council management structure and is responsible for scrutinising applications from prospective adopters and adoption plans for children.
- Service Managers for Regulated Services and Looked After Children convene a monthly Permanency Summit which tracks and monitors all looked after children including children with a plan for reunification, connected persons placement, adoption, long term fostering, residential or staying put.
- Where an adoptive placement breaks down, a disruption meeting is held, chaired by an independent person and the findings are fed back to the Adoption and Fostering Panel.

14. Complaints

At Tower Hamlets Council we aim to provide the best possible service. If a service user, or someone planning to use our service, is unhappy with any aspect of our service or a decision we make, they can make a complaint. This is important as it helps us to improve our services.

It is the responsibility of the staff and their managers based in the Permanency and Adoption Support Teams to try to put right any concerns raised by service users

when a problem first arises. This local resolution is the first stage of the complaints process.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the first stage, it may be necessary for it to progress to stage two, where it is formally investigated. Service users have a right to go straight to this stage of the process, if they wish.

If the complaint is still unresolved after the formal investigation at stage two, a Review Panel may be requested, which is chaired by an independent person. This is stage three of the process.

If a child or young person makes a complaint about services provided for them, then the Children Act complaints procedure must be followed. In this event, a child or young person involved in the complaint will be entitled to an advocate to support and represent them in the process.

For complaints about Children's Service, such as child social care and child protection, use our online children's social care complaints form.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/complaints

If you'd prefer to make your complaint in writing, contact:

Freepost Plus - RRBZ-UCYT-ZLRX

Tel: 0800 374 176.

15. The Registration Authority

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The address of the registration office is:

Ofsted

National Business Unit,
Royal Exchange Building,
At Ann's Square,
Manchester M2 7LA
Tel: 08456 404045

Children's Rights Officer

Roger Morgan
Ofsted
Alexander House,
33 Kingsway,
London WC2B 6SE

16. Other organisations and useful links

CORAMBAAF Academy for Adoption and Fostering
Coram Campus,
41 Brunswick Square,
London WC1N 1AZ
Tel: 020 7520 0300

Department of Education Adoption Web Pages
Adoption - The Department for Education

Adoption UK
46 The Green, South Bar Street,
Banbury OX16 9AB
Tel: 01295 752240
Fax: 01295 752241
Website: www.adoptionuk.org

PAC-UK (Post-Adoption Centre)
5 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue,
London, NW5 2RZ
Tel: 020 7284 0555
Website: www.pac-uk.org

Inter-country Adoption
22 Union Street,
Barnet
Hertfordshire, EN5 4HZ
Website: www.icacentre.org.uk
Tel: 0208 447 4753

Tower Hamlets Council's Permanency and Adoption Support Teams are based at:

Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG
Tel: 0800 279 9850
Email: adoption@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Website: www.fosteringandadoptionc.co.uk

If any stakeholders have any feedback or comments about this document or the role of the Permanency and Adoption Support Team, then please contact us on 0800 279 9850, or please contact:

Lissa-Marie Minnis – Service Manager, Regulated Services and Resources
Tel: 0207 364 2129
Email: lissa-marie.minnis@towerhamlets.gov.uk



London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Adoption Services

Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent

London, E14 2BG

0800 279 9850

www.fosteringandadoption.co.uk