

ADOPTION AGENCY

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Statement of Purpose relates to the Adoption Services provided by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Children's Services & Safeguarding and is a requirement under the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.

1. Aims and Objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the Adoption Service

The Royal Borough of Kingston aims to provide a full and comprehensive range of Adoption and Adoption Support Services, available to all parties affected by the adoption process, that is consistent with best practice and national and departmental standards and requirements.

The objectives of the service are:

- To maximise the contribution adoption can make to promoting permanent, secure and loving adoptive families for children unable to remain in their birth families.
- To enshrine in practice the belief in the right of every child to a permanent, secure and loving family which embraces their individual needs and differences and reflects their ethnicity, culture and identity.
- To provide consistently high quality services and support to individuals and families who wish to adopt, domestically or from overseas, through the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames as an Adoption Agency or for Borough residents in non-Agency adoptions.
- To provide a service that is open and reflects the diversity of all sections of the community.
- To deliver a comprehensive range of adoption support services for adopters, adopted children and young people and birth families in partnership with other services.

2. Name and Address of Manager

Jennifer Rigby
Family Placement Team
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Kingston upon Thames KT1 1EU
☎ 020-8547-6088

E-mail: jenny.rigby@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

The Adoption Manager is responsible to the Strategic Manager, Looked After Children's Services. The Strategic Manager is responsible to the Directorate Head of Children's Services and Safeguarding.

3. Qualifications and Experience of Manager

Jenny Rigby, the Family Placement Team Manager holds the following qualifications:

- Diploma in Management Studies Level 4
- BSc Hons Degree Psychology
- Diploma in Applied Social Studies
- CQSW (Certificate of Qualification in Social Work)

1972 – 1976 4 years working as a generic social worker within local authorities.

1978 – 1987 Visiting social worker for a national charitable trust

1987 to current Children and Families Family Placement social worker and 4 years managing a Family Placement Team

4. Number, relevant qualifications and experience of staff employed for the purposes of the Adoption Service (as at 23 July 2007)

The Family Placement Team has a staffing equivalent of 8.5 full-time, permanent qualified Social Workers, including the Team Manager. At present 7 full-time equivalents are employed – the Team Manager, 1 full time and 2 half time, 1x4 days and 1x3 days adoption workers and 2 full time and 3 part time fostering workers. There is a half-time Publicity and Recruitment Officer and the equivalent of 2.2 full-time Administrative Officers. The Family Placement Team also employs 3 named sessional qualified adoption Social Workers as required. Qualified Agency workers may be engaged to cover vacancies as necessary.

The Adoption section consists of a half time Practice Supervisor (vacant), 1 4 day Adoption Support Service Advisor (ASSA), 1 full time Senior Adoption Practitioner, 1 3 day Adoption Senior Practitioner and 1 half time Adoption Senior Practitioner. The Senior Adoption Practitioner qualified as a social worker in 1981, the ASSA in 1974, the Adoption Senior Practitioner qualified in 1975 and the 2 half time senior practitioners qualified in 1982 and 1990.

All social work staff, including sessional staff, are CQSW or DipSW qualified and are registered as social workers with the GSCC.

The half-time Adoption Senior Practitioner holds PQ Childcare. The Senior Adoption Practitioner and one half-time Adoption Senior Practitioner hold the PQ1.

The task-centred Fostering Practice Advisor holds PQ Childcare. Two half-time Fostering Senior Practitioners have completed PQ1.

Staff are regularly supervised and appraised annually. All social work staff are suitably experienced in the field of Childcare social work and Family Placement.

5. The Organisational Structure of the Adoption Service

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Adoption Service is located within the Family Placement Team. The Family Placement Team also provides the Council's Fostering Service. The Team is managed on a day-to-day basis, by the Family Placement Team Manager. The Practice Supervisor (Adoption) deputises for the Team Manager and supervises an agreed number of adoption workers.

- The Family Placement Team is located within the Looked After Children's Services section.
- The Looked After Children's Services Section is a service group within Children's Services and Safeguarding, Learning and Children's Services Directorate, managed by the Directorate Head of Children's Services and Safeguarding..

6. The system in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure that the services provided by the Adoption Service are effective and the quality of those services is of an appropriate standard.

There are several components to monitoring the Adoption Service. The Permanency Planning process ensures that monitoring an individual child's progress towards adoption is part of the Royal Borough of Kingston's scrutiny programme for Children's Services. The services provided for adults and children - prospective adopters, adopters seeking support, birth families, adopted children and adults, etc - are regularly monitored in a variety of ways to determine the application of initial response times, completion of assessments and the quality of support offered.

The services provided are subject to three yearly inspection by Ofsted against National Minimum Standards for Local Authorities Adoption Agencies in England and Wales.

Services for Children and Adults

- Case management and supervision systems.
- Statutory review arrangements.
- Permanency Action Planning – a monthly case planning meeting.
- The Overview Commission of elected members examines and reviews the activity of the Service through receiving the annual report of the Adoption Agency and Adoption Panel Report as part of the Looked After Children Service Report.

- The Executive of the Council makes any decisions it is required to in respect of the Adoption Service under the Council's own standing orders or as prescribed by legislation or regulation.
- As a department of the Local Authority, Learning and Children's Services operates within the framework of regulation and statutory guidance that applies to all local Authorities. Children's Services and Safeguarding also make annual returns to the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required concerning the adoptions of Looked After Children.
- The Adoption Panel is independently chaired as required, receives relevant reports concerned with whether a child should be adopted, the suitability of prospective adopters to adopt a child and the placement of a child with particular prospective adopters. As such, the Panel is able to scrutinise on a case by case basis the effectiveness of the adoption service in terms of seeing the best possible outcomes for adopters and for children who cannot remain with their birth parents. The Panel is required by legislation to monitor the outcomes for children for whom it has made recommendations. The outcomes are recorded in the Panel minutes.

7. The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting adopters

Recruitment

Applications to adopt through the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames as an adoption agency will be invited from those best able to meet the needs of Kingston children requiring an adoptive family. Applications are welcomed from all, irrespective of gender, marital status, sexual orientation or religious persuasion.

There are three initial stages in the adoption process. After initial enquiry prospective adopters are sent written information about the adoption process within 5 working days. The next stage is to be invited to an Adoption Information Meeting and the third stage is to be offered an individual Counselling interview with an adoption worker.

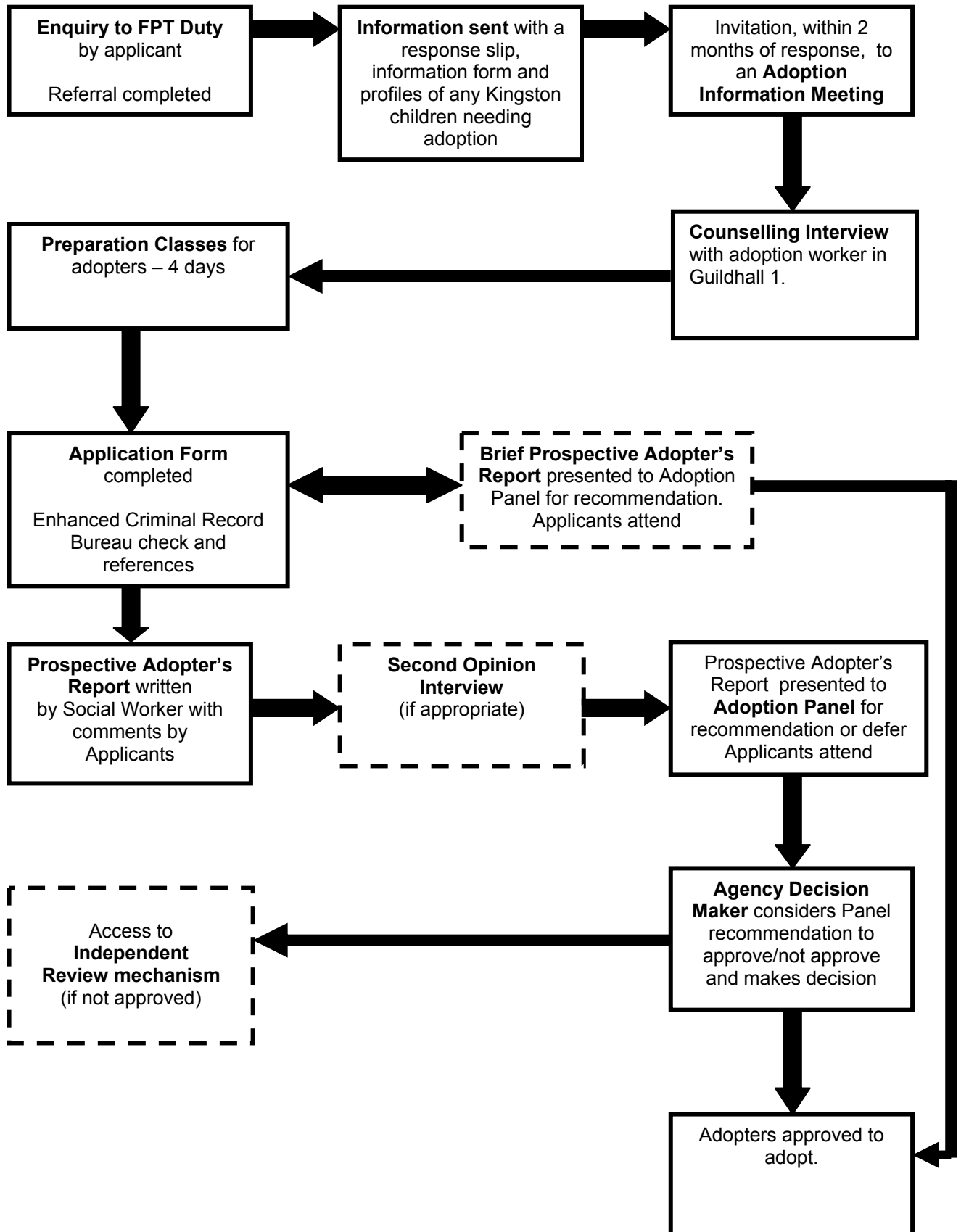
Borough residents who wish to be considered as intercountry adopters are given relevant information, invited to an Adoption Information Meeting and offered an interview to discuss their interest prior to taking an application. There is a charge for undertaking Intercountry Home Studies, details of current charges are published and sent out with information and a financial contract is entered into with the Agency at the time an application is made.

Details of services provided are available:

- **RBK website:** www.kingston.gov.uk
This allows for direct enquiry by email to adoption@rbk.kingston.gov.uk
- **BAAF website:** www.baaf.org.uk
- **Intercountry Adoption centre website :** www.iacentre.org.uk

Recruitment - see flow chart below.

Recruitment and Assessment Process for Prospective Adopters
With Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames



Recruitment (continued)

- NCH South East, a Voluntary Adoption Agency, is an associate member of the Consortium who work to recruit adopters for the more hard to place children in the Consortium Boroughs.
- General self-referral to Family Placement Team by telephone on 020-8547-6042, or by completing our on-line adopter enquiry form on the RBK website and e-mailing it to adoption@rbk.kingston.gov.uk, or by letter to Family Placement Team, Guildhall One, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 1EU
- Recruitment campaigns are not often necessary given the small size of the Borough and the considerable numbers of prospective adopters who self-refer. We do undertake specific advertising for children requiring an adoptive family for whom there are no suitable Kingston approved adoptive families in the Consortium. Fliers are produced and included with all information packs sent to prospective adopters. We recruit adopters through the Adoption Register. We advertise in specialist publications such as "Adoption UK" and "Be My Parent" and for each particular child we will consider other relevant publications if specific to the child's needs.

Preparation and Assessment

Adoption agencies assess the suitability of every person who is invited to submit an application to adopt a child, whether they are interested in adopting on a domestic or intercountry basis. This can be a difficult and intrusive process for the prospective adopter. However, it is absolutely essential for the welfare and safety of the child that a consistent and searching assessment is conducted.

Proper assessment should ensure that adopters have the capacity to meet the needs of any child placed with them and are able to respond to the lifelong issues associated with adoption.

- After completion of the three initial stages prospective domestic adopters who are likely to meet the needs of Kingston children needing an adoptive placement are invited to attend Adoption preparation classes. The prospective adopters are invited to submit a formal written adoption application, apply for an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check and references are taken up.
- Prospective Intercountry adopters submit a formal adoption application and enter into a financial contract with Kingston. Prospective intercountry adopters attend Adoption preparation classes run by the Intercountry Adoption centre.
- The Home Study assessment is completed to write the Prospective Adopter's Report. The aim is to meet the 8 months standard for completion unless there are evidenced reasons for delay.

Approval

All applicants are invited to attend the RBK Adoption Panel when their application is considered and are invited back into Panel to hear the Panel recommendation. The Agency Decision Maker makes decisions within 7 working days of Panel and decisions are confirmed in writing to applicants within 7 working days. This is the same for both domestic and intercountry adopters. A report is produced annually on the work of the Adoption Panel.

Intercountry adopters - following Panel recommendation and approval by the Decision Maker, papers are sent to the Department for Children, Schools and Families the relevant Central Authority for England. The Home Study and supporting documents are considered and if satisfactory a Certificate of Eligibility to adopt from overseas is issued.

There is a legal requirement that all approved adopters awaiting a placement are reviewed annually and the review is presented to the Adoption Panel if it is felt that the prospective adopters should no longer be approved to adopt. Three years after approval without a placement having been made a reassessment report is required.

Approved domestic adopters, with their consent, will have their approval details forwarded to the South West London Adoption Consortium and the National Adoption Register, thereby extending the range of potential placement matches for them

Support

- Following approval domestic adopters will receive a post approval information pack which includes three years subscription to Adoption UK.
- For domestic adopters there is a minimum 6-weekly contact by telephone or e-mail and a home visit or office interview every 3 months with their Family Placement Worker.
- Richmond run adoption mother and toddler groups for the consortium.
- All approved adopters are invited to adoption support groups and events run in the Consortium.
- All adopters are invited to attend the annual consortium adoption family day.
- On presenting a proposed match to the Adoption Panel an Adoption Placement Report is presented highlighting the placement support requirements, including financial support, contact with birth family, referral to any specialist agency, etc. This report is sent to the prospective adopters, prior to submission to Panel, for their comment.
- Adopters are invited to attend Kingston Foster Carer training.
- Anyone whose life has been touched by adoption, e.g. birth family, adopters, adoptees, has access to the RBK Post Adoption Support Service

which delivers some adoption support services or signposts to services provided elsewhere.

From 2007 we have also provided

- An annual adoption newsletter for approved adopters, and
- An consortium run adopted children group three times a year

Non-agency Adopters

Borough residents who enquire about non-agency adoptions are given information by the Duty Officer, can be sent an information pack where appropriate and are offered an office interview by appointment to discuss their specific circumstances and be advised about procedures, including the status of non-related children as Private foster children.

The relevant Court reports are undertaken in non-agency adoptions where Borough residents have given notification of their intention to apply to adopt to the Manager of the Family Placement Team. This includes step-parent adoptions, adopting a close relative such as a niece, nephew or grandchild, children who have been adopted overseas where the adoption is not recognised in the UK.

8. Procedure for assessing needs for Adoption Support Services

The family placement duty officer receives the enquiry and takes basic details to pass on to the Adoption Support Service Advisor (ASSA). The ASSA contacts the enquirer and takes a full referral. Following this, the ASSA or Adoption Support Worker undertakes an assessment and draws up a support plan if appropriate. Enquiries can be received from birth relatives, adoptees and adopters.

The service is provided for adopted Kingston children (children placed by the RBK) for up to 3 years from the date of the adoption order and RBK residents and adopters 3 years after the date has been made. However, invitation to attend support groups can be made prior to this time.

Services provided

A range of adoption support services is available for inclusion in Adoption Support Plans:

- Referral to support groups, mother and toddler, adoptees, birth parents', children's group
- Theraplay
- Family therapy
- Letterbox

9. Complaints

- Wherever possible complaints are dealt with informally. Where appropriate, in the first instance, any complaint by or against an adopter will be dealt with on a problem-solving basis. The Council has a corporate complaints procedure that operates if no resolution can be achieved at the problem-solving stage.
- Where a complaint against an adoptive parent constitutes a child protection allegation this is dealt with as a child protection enquiry and is investigated under the Council's own and Pan London Child Protection procedures.
- There is A Guide for Service Users to Guildhall One who are accessing services provided by Children's Services and Safeguarding located in the building. This leaflet includes details of how to complain. This leaflet is included in all adoption information packs, is available in Guildhall One reception and is available for service users at any time.
- RBK employs a Children's Participation and Development Officer who provides an advocacy service for children and young people living in the Borough. There is a specific leaflet advising how to contact this advocate which is included in the Children's Guide to Adoption.

Complaints are monitored by Complaints and Information Access Officer.

During the year 2006/07 the Adoption Service received the following number of complaints:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| • Informal (stage 1) | 0 |
| • Formal (stage 2) | 0 |
| • Review Panel (stage 3) | 0 |

Informal – the outcomes of the informal complaints received were:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Closed after satisfactory conclusion | 0 |
| On-going | 0 |

Formal - no formal complaints were made.

Review Panel - no Review Panels took place.

10. Address and telephone number of Ofsted

The Adoption Agency is subject to Inspection by Ofsted and they may be contacted concerning the service provision. Ofsted is concerned with ensuring the full application of required standards and good practice guidance and can also investigate matters referred to it under local complaints' procedures. Ofsted contact details are:-

Ofsted
NBU, 3rd Floor

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA
☎ 0845 404040
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

This Statement of Purpose is subject to annual review and endorsement by the Lead Member for Children and Young People. It is also reflected in the Team Plan of the Family Placement Team.

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Jennifer Rigby, August 2007