

## Appendix 1

### TORBAY COUNCIL

### SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE ADOPTION SERVICE

*This Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, and fulfils the Agencies duties and responsibilities as set out in Standard 1 of the accompanying Adoption National Minimum Standards, published under the provisions of Sections 23(1) and 49(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000. It will be reviewed annually.*

#### Aim

Our overall aim is to help children and young people to attain the highest possible standards of health, development and educational attainment. We do this by providing a range of services, which includes adoption.

#### Aims of the Adoption Service

- To ensure that the needs, wishes, welfare and safety of the child are at the centre of the adoption process.
- To ensure that where it is not possible for looked after children to be reunited with their birth families they are provided with a permanent, stable, alternative family. One way of achieving this is through adoption.
- To ensure that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents (including those wishing to adopt a child from overseas) are welcomed without prejudice, responded to promptly and given clear information about recruitment, assessment, approval and support services.
- To ensure that birth families are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process and have access to adoption support services.

## **Objectives of the Adoption Service**

- To ensure that adoption is considered as an option for every child who is unable to live with their birth family.
- To increase the number of children adopted from the care system, in line with government targets.
- To recruit a sufficient pool of prospective adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children needing adoptive families.
- To develop a range of adoption support services, including practical, financial and therapeutic services, in partnership with other relevant agencies.
- To ensure that the adoption agency employs staff with appropriate and sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the adoption service.
- To ensure that applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

## **Principles**

- The child's welfare is paramount in all decisions about her/his future.
- The child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account according to their age and understanding.
- Every child is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, which should meet all the needs of the child in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, physical, social and emotional development and that promotes a supportive lifelong relationship.
- All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.
- Children and young people should not be in public care throughout their childhood.
- A child's birth heritage, religious, cultural and linguistic background are all important factors to consider in finding a new family. The adoptive family should reflect this, if this can be found without unnecessary delay. No child should be denied loving adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and parents do not share the same racial or cultural background.
- The local authority will work in partnership with birth families to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented for their child.

- Every effort will be made to find adoptive homes where brothers and sisters can live together, unless this will not meet their individually assessed needs.
- Drift is not acceptable. Delay may be unavoidable but should be accounted for.
- Every child is entitled to information about her/his birth family in order to promote her/his sense of identity.
- There will be arrangements for ongoing contact, direct or indirect, between the child and birth family or significant persons, where this is in the best interests of the child.
- The local authority will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that the needs of all parties in the adoption process are met.
- All the parties to the adoption process will have access to the Department's Complaints procedure.

### **Organisational Structure in Torbay**

- The manager with overall responsibility for the adoption service, the Agency Decision Maker and the Adoption Support Services Adviser is the Assistant Director of Children's Services.
- The adoption service is delivered through :
  - Childcare teams whose responsibilities include making and implementing plans for looked after children and the provision of reports in non-agency adoptions. These teams are managed by Operations Managers, through Service Managers.
  - The Adoption Team, whose responsibilities include the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, adoption support functions and the central adoption agency functions. This team is managed by the Adoption Service Manager, who is managed by the Operations Manager, Accommodation Services. Adoption support functions include acting as the first point of contact for accessing adoption support, advice and information, assistance to access services, the management of contact arrangements and post adoption counselling of adopted adults and their relatives, including access to records and intermediary services. The team also has a role in providing advice and guidance to Childcare Social Workers making adoption plans for children. The Adoption Service Manager manages the archived adoption records, access to, and disclosure from closed adoption files.
  - The Independent Review Team has a responsibility, alongside Childcare Service Managers, for monitoring the implementation of adoption plans for children and ensuring that timescales are adhered to.

## **Staffing**

- The designated manager of the Adoption Service for the purposes of Regulations 5 to 8 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 is the Operations Manager, Accommodation Services - Georgina Dunk, Parkfield House, 38 Esplanade road, Paignton, TQ3 2NH
  - Georgina Dunk has worked for Torbay Council since Local Government Reorganisation managing the Fostercare Service. Her experience prior to that includes work in childcare teams and in a fostering and adoption team. She has a recognised social work qualification (Dip SW H.E. with distinction) and a diploma in Management. In her current role of Operations Manager, she manages the Service Managers for Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services and the Specialist Assessment and Therapy Service. She is line managed by the Assistant Director, Children's Services.
- The Adoption Service Manager, also based at Parkfield House, has worked as a qualified social worker within Torbay since 1981, and has worked specifically in the field of adoption since 1994. She holds a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and is commencing training for an NVQ in Management in December 2004, to comply with requirements. The Adoption Service Manager has managed Torbay Council's functions as an Adoption Agency since 1998 in her previous part time role of Childcare Officer and as a full time Service Manager now also manages the Adoption Team.

The team comprises:

- Three Adoption Social Workers, with primary responsibility for the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters and adult post adoption counselling.
- One half time Post Adoption Social Worker, with responsibility for adoption support assessments and developing post adoption services, in line with the Adoption Support Regulations 2003. She also has responsibility for managing all "letterbox" and direct contact arrangements.
- All the Adoption Social Workers have a recognised social work qualification and many years experience of childcare social work, including adoption experience.
- One full time Adoption Co ordinator, with responsibility for the administration of the Adoption Panel, business support needs of the team, including the management of administrative staff, and taking referrals from prospective adopters. The Co ordinator's qualifications include NVQ level 3 business administration, NVQ level 3 IT, RSA level 3 typing and word processing and Pitmans shorthand.
- One half time Administrator. Qualifications include a GNVQ in business and GCSE in business that includes a typing qualification.

## **Professional Advisers**

Specialist advisors to the adoption service include:

- Legal adviser - a Torbay Council Childcare Solicitor.
- Medical adviser - carries out medical assessments of children and reviews medical reports on prospective adopters, providing written advice to the Local Authority in every case. The medical adviser is also a member of the Torbay Adoption Panel and that of another Local Authority and has many years experience of adoption.

## **The Adoption Panel**

Torbay Council's Adoption Panel is constituted in accordance with the adoption agency regulations 1983 (as amended).

- The Agency's Adoption Panel has three main functions:
  - Recommending that adoption is in the best interests of a child.
  - Recommending the approval of prospective adoptive parents.
  - Recommending the 'match' of a child with prospective adopters.
- The membership of the Adoption Panel comprises:
  - An independent chair – who has previously worked as a Social Worker and Social Work Manager, with a vast experience in all aspects of work, including adoption. He has also worked as a Guardian ad litem, investigated complaints as an independent person and had been a panel member, vice chair and chair of another Adoption Panel, prior to becoming chair of Torbay Council's Panel.
  - 1 Social Work Manager – the current member will need to be replaced in January 2005 as they are leaving Torbay Council. She will be replaced by another manager with experience in adoption work.
  - 1 Social Worker – works as a Senior Practitioner in the Child and Family Guidance Clinic. Has previous experience as a Childcare Social Worker and has worked in a Fostering and Adoption Teams.

- 3 Independent Members
  - an adoptive parent of four children who has 25 years of working with children, mainly with special needs in both residential and day-care settings.
  - an adopted person whom in adulthood made contact with birth family members.
  - a birth mother who relinquished a baby for adoption and has since had a successful reunion. She was also adopted by her stepfather when she was a child and experienced a separation from a sibling.
- 1 Councillor - who has personal experience of adoption within the family.
- 1 Medical Adviser (who is vice chair) - a community paediatrician who undertakes adoption medicals and also is a member and vice chair of another Adoption Panel.
- 1 Health Visitor - who has a long career in nursing with a variety of experiences and is now also involved in training.
- 1 Educational Psychologist - employed in this capacity by the Local Authority for 15 years with previous experience in both teaching and research.
- In addition, the Panel has:
  - A Legal Adviser - a Solicitor from the Council's Legal Department attends panel and provides legal advice, such as when children's plans are first considered by Panel.
  - A Professional Adviser - the Adoption Service Manager, who attends panel and liaises between the Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.
  - A minute taker - the adoption co ordinator, who records the issues discussed by the panel members and their recommendations, as required.
- Torbay is a member of the South West Adoption Consortium, which comprises of 14 local authorities and 3 voluntary adoption agencies. SWAC is used to increase the range of placement possibilities for children and adopters, and for the sharing of good practice. The Adoption Service Manager is the link person with the Consortium.

## **Services Provided**

- A range of information is being developed for the general public, prospective adopters and birth parents. Leaflets will include:
  - Information for birth parents.
  - Information for prospective adopters.
  - Adoption Letterbox Service – leaflets for different parties involved.
  - Torbay's Adoption Panel.
- The Adoption Team recruits, trains, assesses and provides support to prospective adoptive parents, including those wishing to adopt a child from overseas.
- Childcare Social Workers undertake the task of planning for permanence and preparing children for adoption, in conjunction with the Adoption Team.
- Childcare Social Workers work with the child's birth parents during the decision making process for adoption and childcare workers and the Adoption Team collaborate in homefinding, matching, supporting adoptive placements and in contact arrangements, at least until the Adoption Order is made.
- The Adoption letterbox service and direct contact is managed in the Adoption Team to enable adopted children to maintain contact with their birth families.
- A counselling service for adopted adults who wish to find out about their birth parents and details about their adoption is provided through a variety of ways. Some under a contract with a voluntary adoption agency, Families for Children, some by the Adoption Team and some under a contract with South West Adoption Network (SWAN).
- Support services to adoptive families are provided by the Adoption Team, including an assessment of need for post adoption support services.
- Financial support is provided to adoptive families in accordance with the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities)(England) Regulations 2003. This includes single sums and where necessary, regular payments.
- Children and adopters are actively referred to the National Adoption Register and the South West Adoption Consortium, if it has not been possible to find a local or a regional placement. National advertising is used when necessary to identify a suitable placement.

- A contract with an independent provider, SWAN, provides services which include:
  - A helpline.
  - Counselling for adoptive parents.
  - Counselling for adopted children.
  - Counselling and support for birth families.
  - Training events for adoptive parents.
- The Department works within the requirement of relevant policies that it produces e.g. Complaints Policy, Recording Policy, Access to Records Policy, Supervision and File Auditing Policy.

### **Systems for Monitoring and Evaluating Service Provision**

- A six monthly report on adoption activity is written, including statistical information, and is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Adoption Panel.
- There is a 3 yearly review of the Adoption Service undertaken, with recommendations for improvements to the service.
- The Adoption Panel receives regular reports every two months on the progress of children with a plan for adoption whether placed or not. Reports are also made on approved prospective adopters.
- Adoption Team staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals of their performance. Training needs have been identified and will be met either through in-house training or through the use of a trainer from the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)
- There is an annual training day for the Adoption Panel, sometimes facilitated by BAAF, which helps to ensure Panel members are kept up-to-date with current issues in adoption.
- The Spring and Autumn 'Position Statements' for the DFES provide information on the achievement of government adoption targets.
- The Adoption Panel reports back to the Agency Decision Maker on any cases involving poor practice, so that these can be taken up through the line management system.



- The South West Adoption Consortium produces six monthly reports of its work, which are circulated to all member agencies, including information on the number of children and adopters from each agency for whom a placement is achieved.
- Opportunities to publicise the adoption service will be developed to raise public awareness of the children needing adoption and the sorts of support that adoptive families can expect to receive in order to help them with this challenging task.
- A Management Information System is in place, which ensures reporting of accurate information about adoption to Managers and the government.
- Multi-agency involvement in the provision of adoption support services will be developed and encouraged. For example to improve the access of adopted children and adoptive parents to the CAMHS service.

### **The Service to Prospective Adopters**

The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters are set out in detail in our Adoption Agency Procedures.

- The Adoption Social Workers will look at ways of encouraging people to consider adoption.
- All enquirers are sent an information pack about adoption.
- Enquirers are invited to attend an open session about adoption to meet adopters and Adoption Team staff to learn more about adoption.
- An appointment is made where appropriate, with a Social Worker from the Adoption Team for a personal discussion.
- Those who wish to proceed are invited to attend a Preparation Course, which provides more detailed information and helps people decide whether adoption is for them.
- The next stage, where it has been agreed that it is appropriate to proceed, is to complete a formal application form. An Adoption Social Worker is allocated to work through the process with applicants. This involves a number of home visits, CRB and other checks, references and a medical.
- Applicants receive a copy of their assessment report and are invited to comment on it.

- Applicants are invited to attend Adoption Panel when their approval is being considered. Written information is given to them about what this involves and it is made clear that a decision not to attend will not prejudice their application. Their approval terms set out the number, age range and gender of the children for which they are considered suitable.
- Following approval, the Adoption Social Worker will keep in touch with them and ensure they have access to information about the children needing placements, locally, regionally and nationally.
- There are reciprocal arrangements in place with neighbouring local authorities to take up applications from Social Services staff who wish to adopt, thus ensuring independence and confidentiality.

### **The Complaints Procedure**

A copy of the Department's complaints procedure is available on request. All parties to the adoption process can use the complaints procedure if they have a dissatisfaction or concern with the service provided.

The introduction of the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) will provide prospective adopters with an opportunity to have their case heard by an independent body where they have been turned down for approval by Torbay Council.

## **The Registration Authority**

The Commission for Social Care Inspection is an independent non-governmental public body responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services, under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The addresses of the Commission for Social Care Inspection are:

### **Head Office**

Commission for Social Care Inspection  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Unit 1  
Tustin Court  
Port Way  
Preston  
PR2 2YQ

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### **Local Office**

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Linhay Business Park  
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Fax: 01364651856

## **Appendix**

Information to be included in the Statement of Purpose extracted from the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) regulations 2003.  
Schedule 1

1. The aims and objectives of the local authority in relation to the adoption service.
2. The name and address of the Manager.
3. The relevant qualifications and experience of the Manager.
4. The number, relevant qualifications and experience of the staff employed by the authority for the purposes of the adoption service.
5. The organisational structure of the adoption service.
6. The system in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure that services provided by the adoption service are effective and that the quality of those services is of an appropriate standard.
7. The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters.
8. A summary of the complaints procedure established in accordance with section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989(a) and the Complaints Procedure Directions 1990(b).
9. The address and telephone number of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.