

TORBAY COUNCIL

Outline Action Plan

Torbay Adoption Service Review

Graham Puckering Interim Service Manager

6/1/2012

A detailed review of Torbay's current policies, processes and procedures has taken place and its compliance has been matched to the National Minimum Standards and Regulations, Adoption Guidance, An Action Plan for Adoption document and previous inspection reports. A further review of adoption practice in Torbay against nationally recognised standards is underway. This outline action plan has been drawn up and will be further developed as information and needs are identified.

Adoption Service Review

Outline Action Plan June 2012

Date	No.	Issue of Concern	Action	Person responsible	Date of expected completion	Review of action/outcome	Date of Review/ Outcome
29.05.12	1	<p>There is no permanent or clear temporary Responsible individual or registered Manager identified with OFSTED for Torbay Adoption Service.</p> <p>Unclear if OFSTED have been notified of changes to structure with respect to adoption support and adoption agency management. (s 18)</p> <p>OFSTED currently have the incorrect address for the service registered.</p>	<p>Identify individuals for responsible individual and registered manager positions.</p> <p>Notify OFSTED of interim arrangements and change of office.</p> <p>Inform OFSTED of changes to structure of the team.</p>		Within 1 week		
29.05.12	2	<p>Data collection and presentation for the Adoption scorecard assessment MAY not be accurate.</p> <p>At least one child placed and adopted earlier this year has not had all work completed on the systems and may not have shown</p>	<p>Review the information that was gathered for the scorecard and review figures accordingly. This won't change scorecard but can be reflected to inspectors and give Torbay a clearer understanding of</p>		By end June 2012		

		<p>as a completed adoption.</p> <p>A second child's case has not been closed on PARIS following a completed adoption.</p>	<p>where they are at.</p>				
29.05.12	3	<p>Recommendations from previous adoption inspection November 2009 may not be fully addressed and adhered to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. endeavour to widen the diversity of approved adopters available locally so that there is a wider choice available when matching children with adopters who can best meet their needs b. continue to develop effective strategies to ensure that children are matched and placed without delay with adopters who best meet their assessed needs c. ensure that there is evidence on staff files to confirm that telephone enquiries were made to each referee to verify written references 	<p>Review each of the recommendations in detail and indentify evidence to demonstrate. If recommendation is not met then add key issue to action plan and address fully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify how this occurs currently and how this has changed since the last inspection. Check whether diversity of carers has increased. b. In view of scorecard look at current strategies for identifying and placing children promptly and the process for matching. Identify any disruptions or adoption 		By end June 2012		

		<p>d. ensure that there are sufficient resources in place to respond promptly to the requests of and work with people affected by adoption</p> <p>e. ensure that, in all cases, birth parents have access to a support worker independent of the child's social worker from the time adoption is identified as the plan for the child</p> <p>f. ensure that there are no potential conflicts of interest in management roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to the role of agency adviser to the adoption panel</p> <p>g. continue efforts to recruit sufficient staff to meet the needs of the service (breach of national minimum</p> <p>h. ensure that all staff involved in adoption work are receiving appraisals,</p>	<p>breakdowns and review circumstances. Consider issues of matching in breakdown.</p> <p>c. Review staff HR files and evidence of telephone checks. Set up a document and system for these checks if not in place.</p> <p>d. Identify current support and resources available. If deficit identified then look at need and identify resource implication.</p> <p>e. Identify the current practice and policy in respect of Birth parents allocated support. If deficit identified then look at need and identify resource implication.</p>				
--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--

		<p>which identify training and development needs</p> <p>i. ensure that personnel files for all staff contain all the required information detailed in Schedule 3, including a full employment history and proof of identity</p> <p>j. review the premises available to ensure that they are suitable for purpose, particularly in relation to storage space for archived records, interview facilities for adults affected by adoption and premises used for adoption panel meetings</p> <p>k. implement plans for safeguarding and backing-up archived records.</p>	<p>f. Urgent review of panel and roles required. Identification of an appropriate panel advisor needs to occur promptly. Review other management responsibilities and potential conflict of interest.</p> <p>g. Review current staffing, vacancies and use of temporary staff. Ensure there is a clear strategy in place to address any issues.</p> <p>h. Check that all staff involved in adoption work have received appraisals, which identify training and development needs. Consider current policy and ensure that any non compliance is</p>				
--	--	--	---	--	--	--	--

			<p>addressed.</p> <p>i. Check that personnel files for all staff contain all the required information detailed in Schedule 3, including a full employment history and proof of identity. If deficits are identified then action to remedy should be taken quickly.</p> <p>j. Review suitability of accommodation in respect of the adoption service and particularly around the storage of archived files.</p> <p>k. Review plans for safeguarding and backing-up archived records. Ensure these are appropriate and compliant.</p>				
29.05.12							

		<p>Children's guide to adoption agency is not reflective of current legislation/addresses and contact details. (S18.5)</p> <p>Only one children's guide to adoption is available and does not fully reflect differing ages and abilities of children. (s.18.5)</p> <p>There is no children's guide to adoption support. Any completed should be reflective of the children's age and abilities who may need to use it. (S18.6)</p> <p>No evidence of children (where appropriate) being given a copy of the children's guide of the adoption agency and adoption support agency.</p>	<p>Set up a working group to develop a new set of guides for the adoption agency and adoption support. Young people should be involved in this development.</p> <p>Consider children's rights service involvement in the development of the guides.</p> <p>Children's guides should be reflective of the services and the diversity of the young people using them.</p> <p>Once completed evidence of distribution to children and young people should be available.</p>		<p>To commence within 1 week and complete in six weeks.</p>		
29.05.12	4	<p>Statement of purpose is out of date and does not reflect fully the correct information in line with schedule 1</p> <p>Formal approval of the statement of purpose is required and should be evidenced accordingly.</p> <p>No evidence of birth families and children (where appropriate) being given a copy of the statement of</p>	<p>Set up a working group to develop a new statement of purpose which is reflective of the adoption service and meets the criteria and guidance set out in the standards.</p> <p>Review similar agency documentation.</p> <p>Formal approval of new</p>		<p>To commence within 1 week and complete in six weeks.</p>		

		purpose of the adoption agency.	statement of purpose to be made and evidenced Once completed evidence of distribution to service users should be available.				
29.05.12	5	<p>Adoption policies and procedures are generally out of date and are not fit for purpose or adhere to the Adoption guidance Feb 11 in terms of content or process development or review.</p> <p>There are missing policies not available to the adoption service. These are numerous and include adoption recruitment, Medical advisor's role, detailed adoption support policies, relinquished child, IRM, adoption by foster carers or family members revocation of Placement Order and information to the adopted child.</p> <p>Adoption panel policy and procedure documents do not fully reflect the recent changes and are not detailed enough to ensure clear understanding of responsibilities and roles.</p>	<p>All current policies that are not compliant with current standards and regulations and guidance should be removed</p> <p>New policies should be drawn up to reflect all areas of adoption practice and should be compliant with guidance and standards</p> <p>Panel policies and guidance should be drawn up once changes to panels and its membership have been agreed.</p>		<p>Removal of obsolete policies to occur within 1 week.</p> <p>New policy development to commence within 1 week and to be completed by end July 2012</p> <p>Panel policies to be completed within 4 weeks</p>		
29.05.12		Adoption panel has not been progressed in line with recent	Review of adoption panel roles and functions,		Commence urgent		

	<p>statutory changes.</p> <p>There is currently no independent adoption panel chair.</p> <p>No clarity on the links between panel and court creating potential for delay for the child.</p> <p>There is no central list for the current adoption panel.</p> <p>No policies or procedures on the recruitment to and maintenance of the central list.</p> <p>No evidence of Quality Assurance feedback from the panel to the agency (17.2)</p> <p>Monthly panels take place on the majority of occasions however there is an anomaly in August when panel doesn't sit for 6 weeks which takes it out of the standard (17.3)</p> <p>There are not two independent vice chairs.</p> <p>No evidence of induction, training of panel members.</p> <p>No annual joint training with panel</p>	<p>membership and full compliance with current regulations to be undertaken within 1 week.</p> <p>Specific action plan to be drawn up to address all areas of need to meet requirements.</p> <p>Prioritise and implement progress of outstanding work.</p> <p>Quality assurance feedback to be drawn up from panel business over the last 6 months.</p> <p>Consider the formation of an adoption and permanence panels.</p>		<p>review with 1 week.</p> <p>Complete review and actions within 6 weeks</p>		
--	--	---	--	--	--	--

	<p>members and the adoption service. 23.15 (chapter 1 section 3)</p> <p>No evidence of annual review and associated processes.</p> <p>The timing and completion of minutes and decision making are not within the guidance.</p> <p>No clarity in policy regarding approval and matching at the same panel</p> <p>No identified line management responsibilities for the panel.</p> <p>No clear panel advisor with appropriate skills and no conflicts identified.</p> <p>No clear policy or procedural guidance in relation to complaints regarding the adoption panel</p> <p>Adoption panel minutes of poor quality.</p> <p>Adoption panel membership and roles not clear and raise some concern around legality.</p> <p>Appears to be some disconnect</p>					
--	---	--	--	--	--	--

		between agency decision maker decisions and panel. Minutes and decisions are separate.					
29.05.12	6	Management information expected on a six monthly basis as part of guidance has not been produced in recent months.	<p>Provide a report to the executive of the Local Authority of up to date management information.</p> <p>Consider whether this should be done retrospectively.</p> <p>To demonstrate</p> <p>The number, type and age of children waiting for an adoptive placement.</p> <p>How long they have been waiting</p> <p>The agency's responsiveness in relation to applications to adopt (timescales chapter 1)</p> <p>Progress in relation to recruitment</p> <p>The number of children placed for adoption since the last six monthly report</p>		To complete and produce management information within 1 month		

			<p>(need to agree a six monthly reporting system)</p> <p>The number of children who have experienced disruptions</p> <p>The number of children where there has been a change of plan</p>				
29.05.12	7	<p>IRO role in reviewing adoption plans is not cohesive or clear and may not adhere fully to the care planning regulations 2011.</p> <p>Documentation and process within the independent reviewing officer role are not reflective of the specific adoption plan</p>	<p>Review the role of IRO's in adoption planning in line with 2011 regs.</p> <p>Consider the twin or multi track planning processes where adoption is part of the plan. Clarify the agreement and notification of these processes.</p> <p>Link in with regulations and IRO functions and ensure compliance</p> <p>Provide specialist training to IRO on their role within adoption in line with recommendations of the IRO handbook if not already undertaken</p>		To be completed by the end of August 2012		

29.05.12	8	Recording and information management is not consistent across the service with some elements of recording being completed electronically and others not.	Review current recording mechanisms and identify those which can be changed or developed. Be mindful of current corporate policies and systems regarding recording.		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	9	Adoption assessment process for new applicants has potential significant delays built in. There is not always a level of consistency in approach.	Review current practice and process. Ensure that the process is in keeping with new adoption timeframes set out in the guidance. Develop a policy and procedure which reflects more fully the issue of timeliness in assessment		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	10	Participation of children and young people is lacking in a number of area's of practice.	There should be "a sharper focus upon the child" throughout the adoption service. Identify current practice around children and young people participation and where areas should be more evident.		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	11	Children are not routinely referred to the Adoption Register at the latest by 3 months of the decision to place for adoption. There is no cohesive process in place.	There needs to be a review of the current process and protocol. Referral to adoption		To be completed by the end of July 2012		

		Currently approved adopters are not being referred to the Adoption Register before three months in any event. (standard 13.2) Unclear if adopters are informed of their rights and consent with this issue.	registered should be considered earlier and recorded appropriately Clarify and record consent process for adopters being referred to the adoption register and that they are given appropriate information				
29.05.12	12	No identified liaison officer for the IRM (chapter 1 guidance)	Identify a liaison officer and clarify roles and responsibility. Complete appropriate documentation for liaison and associated policy documents		To be completed by the end of July 2012		
29.05.12	13	Feedback is not clearly identified or recorded with respect to adoption support from adopters. S15.6	Identify system for recording feedback from service users. This should include recording on the service users form and should be also held centrally		To be completed by the end of July 2012		
29.05.12	14	Adoption support services adviser role is not identified within the service. S.15.4 There is no clear evidence of appropriate service advice around	Clarify the role and responsibilities within the adoption service for the advisor role. Ensure information is		To be completed by the end of July 2012		

		tax credits benefits and services that are available. S.15.4	included within appropriate information provided				
29.05.12	15	<p>The existing adoption recruitment strategy is out of date and does not fully reflect the needs of the service currently. S.10.1</p> <p>The existing strategy has not been reviewed in line with the standard.</p>	<p>Monitor and evaluate the appropriateness of the current strategy and then identify a new strategy that meets with the guidance and needs of the service.</p> <p>Identify and set up a monitoring and evaluation of the recruitment strategy on an ongoing basis.</p>		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	16	<p>Standard 16 Intermediary Services and responsibilities are not currently being addressed.</p> <p>Section 98 (children and Adoption Act 2002) requests not being addressed in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Review intermediary support services in detail. Check that they are compliant with the standards regulations and guidance.</p> <p>Consider current workload and backlog in relation to Section 98 requests.</p> <p>Identify a strategy for addressing the backlog and ensuring that future requests are dealt with in a timely manner.</p>		To be completed and backlog of requests cleared by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	17	Timescale for adoption panel considering plans for children	Identify the number of cases not meeting the current		To be completed		

		within six weeks of statutory review decision not adhered to. (17.8)	timescales and identify cause for delay. Link to IRO role and create policy/ procedure to ensure this is meeting the standard.		by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	18	Sharing agency decision makers decision with parents and applicants not within identified timescale (S17.11)	Identify how this information is communicated and then how it is recorded. If necessary create policy and/or procedure and documentation to ensure this is meeting the standard.		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	19	Staff employment and recruitment issues need to be carefully reviewed to ensure compliance with all area's of s.21. Compliance with telephone checks on references and recording of these to be clarified in line with the last adoption inspection recommendation. S.21	Liaise with HR and undertake audit of staff recruitment records and processes. Ensure checks processes are clear within recruitment policy and guidance. Ensure system and recording process for telephone checks on references.		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	20	No clear policy or procedural guidance in relation to complaints regarding the adoption agency. S.27.5	Develop a clear complements and complaints policy and guidance specific for		To be completed by the end of August 2012		

			<p>adoption.</p> <p>Ensure this is centrally recorded.</p> <p>Identify where possible how complaints and allegations regarding the adoption agency are currently recorded.</p> <p>Policy which reflects how children are consulted and given information about how to complain.</p>				
29.05.12	21	No clear policy or system in place for notification of significant events to appropriate authorities.s.29 (schedule 4 2003)	<p>Consider whether all events that require notification have been notified.</p> <p>Any outstanding notifications to be sent</p> <p>Identify process and procedure for recording both on individual files and centrally.</p>		To be completed by the end of August 2012		
29.05.12	22	No evidence of a business continuity plan. s.28.3	Draw up a business continuity plan to include both provision of premises and safeguarding/backup of records		To be completed by end August 2012		

			Ensure plan is available to all staff to access				
29.05.12	23	<p>No clear policy on the format and content of agency files on children and prospective adopters.s.27.1</p> <p>Data protection, confidentiality and process of managing information and files has no policy. S.27.2</p>	<p>Create a written policy that clarifies the purpose format and content of information to be kept on the agency's files, on the child's file and prospective adopters case file</p> <p>Ensure a policy is available for removal of files from the premises is put in place and all staff including panel members are aware of this.</p> <p>Develop a system for monitoring the quality and adequacy of record keeping</p>		To be completed by end August 2012		
29.05.12	24	<p>Unclear how children are given information about advocacy services and access to the children's Rights Director S.1.4</p> <p>Unclear how children's wishes and feelings are gathered recorded and addressed within the process. S1.1 1.2</p> <p>Unclear how the agency records children's wishes feelings and views</p>	<p>Develop information and recording opportunities to demonstrate this occurs.</p> <p>Identify resources which will meet this standard and the needs of children involved in adoption.</p> <p>Identify mechanisms for children to gain feedback on concerns or complaints.</p>		To be completed by end August 2012		

		and how these are taken account of for the purposes of agency monitoring and service development.	Demonstrate how children's views are taken into account in monitoring and developing the service.				
07.06.12	25	<p>Life Story books are not given in stages within the timescales set although they are generally completed by the Adoption Order. S.2.7</p> <p>There is no clarity on who should be completing them and there is differing practice evident. S.2.5</p> <p>Later life letters are generally completed on time although there are a small number out of date. S.2.8</p>	<p>Develop clear policy on timescales for completion of life story work and later life letters and identify key responsibilities for completion.</p> <p>Consider and review standard of life story books and later life letters and consider training needs if necessary</p>		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	26	<p>Oral and written communications are not available in a format that which are appropriate to the physical, sensory and learning impairments; difficulties; and language of the individual.S.25.12 and S.26.7</p>	<p>Address current communication processes and develop a policy to reflect the needs of this standard.</p> <p>Identify if there are resources available to meet the standard</p>		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	27	Adoption support policy relating to children living outside of the area	Policy to be developed to set out clearly		To be completed		

		<p>within three years of an adoption order being made is not evident.</p> <p>Liaison between Local Authorities in line with adoption guidance is not clear.</p>	<p>responsibilities and understanding of processes in line with standards.</p> <p>Consider processes for liaison between Local Authorities when a child(ren) are placed out of the area and there may be more than one Local Authority involved.</p>		by end August 2012		
07.06.12	28	Step-parent adoption policy is not reflective of practice.	Review step-parent adoption processes and develop a coherent policy.		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	29	Policy with regard to financial support in all areas of pre adoption and adoption support needs to be clarified in line with statutory guidance and standards.	Review all financial policies and processes and develop a coherent policy and process that is reflective of guidance.		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	30	Detailed information processes and policies are not evident on specific areas of intermediary services.	Consider policy and protocol for various area's of intermediary support. This will include veto by an adopted person, consent to disclose information, provision of information where consent is refused.		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	31	Detailed information, processes and policies are not evident on specific areas of Access to information in post-commencement adoptions	Consider policy and protocol for various area's of Access to information in post-commencement adoptions		To be completed by end August 2012		

			including responsibility for keeping information, information to be kept, storage and manner of section 56 information, disclosure of information.				
07.06.12	32	Detailed information, processes and policies are not evident on all areas of overseas adoption, children being brought to the UK for adoption, section 83 and 85.	Consider policy and protocol for various area's of all areas of overseas adoption, children being brought to the UK for adoption, section 83 and 85.		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	33	To develop process maps to illustrate the processes within adoption and use as a guide for the development of policy and procedure.	To create accurate process maps and link to standards and regulations. Develop links through process maps to IT systems and policy development		To be completed by end August 2012		
07.06.12	34	Consider statistical neighbours, strengths and challenges and identify key messages to inform development of the adoption service.	To gain an understanding of services and processes that are going well. Use the information gained to inform the development of the service in Torbay.		To be completed by end August 2012		

Notes: There are a range of child focused standards which need to be evidenced through a review of childcare services work with children. S.1 to 7.