



Statement of Purpose 2022/23

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adopt London South is a specialist adoption agency partnership of Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston, Richmond, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Sutton, Southwark and Wandsworth councils. It is hosted by Southwark Children and Adult's services. The Head of Service reports to a Management Board, made up of Directors from each local authority. The Chair of the Management Board is the Southwark Director of children's services. The service is overseen by a Quality Assurance Group, made up of senior managers from the nine local authorities.

The Regional Agency is operated under the terms of a Partnership Agreement, which confirms the legal and governance arrangements; the budget; staffing and funding contributions.

The London Regional Executive Board oversees effective collaboration across the four Adopt London Regional Agencies to promote best practice across the 24 London boroughs, including a shared Adopt London website -

www.adoptlondon.org.uk

Adopt London social media also provides information about adoption for London children and for all adoption services. Recruitment campaigns focus on finding the adopters for the South London children waiting, in particular black children, older children, sibling groups, and children with additional needs. Additionally Adopt London South is seeking adopters who can consider Early Permanence Placements.

This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with:

- The National Adoption Strategy, achieving excellence everywhere July 2021
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011;
- Care Planning Regulations 2010;
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013;
- Local Authority Regulations 2005;
- Adoption Agencies & Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- Adoption Agencies (Panel & Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012;
- Care Planning, Placement and Case and fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013;
- Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- Care Standards Act 2000.

Adoption Agencies are inspected against these standards by Ofsted.

2. ABOUT ADOPT LONDON SOUTH

We aim to provide the best practice for children, families and adults affected by adoption within our South London community. We hold relationships as central to everything we do.

Adopt London South finds families for children from our South London communities. Each child is unique and special. We aim to provide the best adoption journey for every child to their new family, working together with children's social workers, their foster carers, medical advisors and other professionals. We are committed to reducing delay for all children.

We offer advice and guidance to people resident in our 10 South London boroughs and we will accept potential adoption enquirers who live beyond these boroughs in the Home Counties South of London who can meet the needs of South London children. We especially welcome applications from single people, couples and families who are able to positively meet the needs of black children and children with a dual black heritage, who wait the longest. We guide and support people who wish to adopt through our assessment process. This includes individual advice and preparation to enable prospective adopters to meet the needs of their child.

We aim to ensure that more children benefit from Early Permanence placements, where the child is cared for by potential adopters to enable the earliest attachment to

the child's new family. An Early Permanence group enables peer support to the families.

Post adoption, we provide adoption support services to adopted children and families, to birth parents and adopted adults.

This includes:

- A post adoption helpline to offer advice and support:
- A commissioned PAC-UK Advice Line 5 days a week for anyone affected by adoption
- Groups for children to meet together for informal peer support
- Adoption specific training and support at all stages in the adoption journey
- Adoption support assessment to access funding from the Adoption Support Fund for therapeutic support
- Webinars, podcasts and training in partnership with WAF Talks
- Partnerships with We Are Family and New Family Social to encourage mutual support and friendship between adoptive families, children and young people
- Adopter voice feedback through We are Family
- Birth parent counselling and Adopted Adults counselling through PACUK

3. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 underpin the principles and values of our service:-

Values:

- All adoptive children are found permanent loving families as quickly as possible where they will be safe and secure.
- Adopters are recruited directly from South London communities so that we have a range of adopters well prepared to meet the needs of children waiting.
- Prospective adopters are warmly welcomed and supported and are not deterred because of their ethnicity, sexuality, age or social background
- Children are supported to bond with their new family
- The child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality will be valued and promoted when decisions are made
- Professionals understand the profound impact of care and adoption on children's wellbeing
- Children and families get the support they need when they need it
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many organisations, professionals and individuals working well together.
- Birth parents and families will be treated fairly, openly and offered a support service that recognises the lifelong implications of adoption.
- Adopted adults will receive advice, guidance and information from their adoption file.

Equal Opportunities.

Every attempt will be made to secure an adoptive family which meets a child's identity, emotional and developmental needs taking into account their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability while reducing undue delay.

The service works positively and respectfully with all service users and partner agencies regardless of race, colour, religion, language, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age.

4. THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE AGENCY

The agency is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 by:

- i. ensuring the provision of a high quality adoption service which guarantees the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for children or young people who are looked after and who need adoptive placements.
- ii. ensuring that all those whose lives have been affected by adoption are helped to identify and receive appropriate services.
- iii. working in partnership with adoptive families & other agencies ensuring the service is based on statutory requirements & good practice within the principles of value for money for the agency.

Objectives of the agency

- i. To recruit, assess and provide adopters who meet the needs of the South London children to be placed for adoption within the timescales laid down by National Adoption Standards.
- ii. To provide information about the process to applicants interested in becoming adopters and about the children requiring adoption.
- iii. To ensure that adopters receive appropriate preparation, training, support and advice to enable them to offer the best possible standards of parenting, safety and protection for children or young people in their care.
- iv. To minimise delay in family finding, paying attention to the needs of the child at all times.
- v. To provide information on the services available to all those affected by adoption in particular for birth parents, relatives, and adopted adults. We recognise that as adoption has lifelong implications for all those involved, their needs will change over time.
- vi. To provide a range of adoption support services to birth relatives, adopted adults, adopters and their children in partnership with other agencies.
- vii. To provide information on Inter Country Adoption services through icacentre.org.uk
- viii. To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair.

- ix. That concerns about the service are addressed and that information about the complaints procedure is made available.
- x. That the organisation regularly reviews the services it provides, consults with, and learns from, those in receipt of their services through comments, compliments and complaints.

5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Adopt London South has a registered base at 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH but most staff undertake visits from their home base since March 2020. Staff work closely with the 10 partner councils and have access to all these offices.

Head of Service is Susanna Daus: Service Manager is Audrey Bouazizi

Team Managers

- Adopter Assessment: Nicola Sadler(SW) and Lucy Macharia (SE)
- Family Finding: Kirsteen Lowrie
- Adoption Support and (ASSA): Sarah Tulloch
- Adoption Recruitment: Candice Siddle
- Adoption and Permanence Panel Lesley Hazlehurst and Laurice Harris
- Business and Performance manager: Lorraine Miller

Adopt London South holds 4 adoption and permanence panel days per month. There are 2 Independent Chairs. The panels make recommendations about the suitability of adopters and as Early Permanence carers and make recommendations about matching children with new suitable adoptive families.

6 THE WORK OF ADOPT LONDON SOUTH

The service undertakes the following tasks:

- Family finding for children who may need a permanent home through adoption.
- Planning for each child's adoption journey with the child's social worker
- Advice for people considering adoption
- Recruitment of prospective adoptive families and Early Permanence carers.
- Assessment and preparation of adoptive families and Early Permanence carers, including training, visits to the home, taking up references and statutory checks . This includes adoption preparation for foster carers adopting and adoption for children already known to the family.
- Support for families waiting for a child to be placed with them
- Support for Early Permanence placements in the adoption process.
- Advice, guidance and support to adoptive families during the matching process and after placement.
- A range of adoption support services for children and families affected by adoption including assessments for therapeutic help through the Adoption Support Fund.

- Adoption letterbox service, contact support service to enable adopted children to maintain contact with their birth families.
- The post adoption support team offers support and signposting to counselling services for adopted adults wishing to find out about their own history.
- Birth parent and Adopted Adult counselling services are provided by PACUK
- Those wishing to adopt from abroad are referred to the Intercountry Adoption Centre (ICA) who offer specialist advice and support.

7. NUMBERS, QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF

Susanna Daus, Head of Service, has overall responsibility for **Adopt London South**

The agency employs 60 staff and there are some independent social workers. All adoption social workers are experienced and registered with Social Work England. The Head of Service acts as the Agency Decision Maker for Adopter approvals.

8. CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Adopters who wish to complain about their own adoption journey should firstly contact the Assessment Team Manager.

If the complaint is more specifically about the child's social work service before the child is adopted, this complaint may be addressed to the original Local Authority from which the child was placed.

All young people, for whom there is an adoption plan and who are of an appropriate age and understanding are entitled to make complaints.

All birth parents of children for whom the Agency is planning adoption are entitled to make complaints either with their child's social work service or with the adoption Team Manager. Letterbox service users and adopted adults may complain to the Post adoption Team Manager.

If unhappy with the response contact the Service Manager = Audrey.Bouazizi@southwark.gov.uk

The complaint process is finalised by the Head of Service - susanna.daus@southwark.gov.uk