

LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING

ADOPTION SERVICE

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
2018-2019**

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
1. Legal Framework.....	2
2. Value Statement	3
3. The Overall Aims and Objectives of Ealing Council.....	3
4. The Organisational Structure of the Service	5
5. Planning for Looked After Children.....	7
6. Procedures for Recruiting, Preparing and Assessing Adopters and Supporting Adoptive Parents	8
7. The Adoption and Permanency Panel	11
8. Adoption and Special Guardianship Support (SGO)	11
9. Procedure for Monitoring and Controlling the Activities of the Adoption Service and Ensuring the Quality of Performance	13
10. Ensuring Accountability of Staff	14
11. Financial Procedures.....	15
12. Complaints.....	15
13. The Registration Authority	15

Introduction

The National Minimum Standards for Adoption set out the requirements for adoption agencies to compile a statement detailing what services are provided, the governing principles and who manages and provides the services.

A copy of this will be available to:

- Children and Young People
- Any birth parent or family members of a child placed for adoption
- Prospective and approved adoptive families
- All staff working for the adoption agency
- Adoption and Permanence Panel Members
- Councillors
- OFSTED
- Members of the public

This Statement of Purpose sets out the broad aims and objectives of the service, the management structures, the services provided, the principles and standards of care that are expected, the procedures for recruiting, approving, training, and supporting adoptive families and special guardians, and the procedures for complaints.

1. Legal Framework

The London Borough of Ealing, through the power delegated to the Director of Children's Services, undertakes to provide a comprehensive Adoption Service. It seeks to operate within the legislative requirements of the following:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children Act 2008
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 and 2014
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption National Minimum standard 2011
- Fostering National Minimum Standard 2011
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Acts 1998 & 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

2. Value Statement

London Borough of Ealing shares the values and principles that underpin the National Minimum Standards for Adoption.

- The Child is the focus of the service and the child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children, birth parents and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- All decisions will be taken in a way that is fair and transparent.
- Adoption services are delivered in a sensitive way and confidentiality is respected.

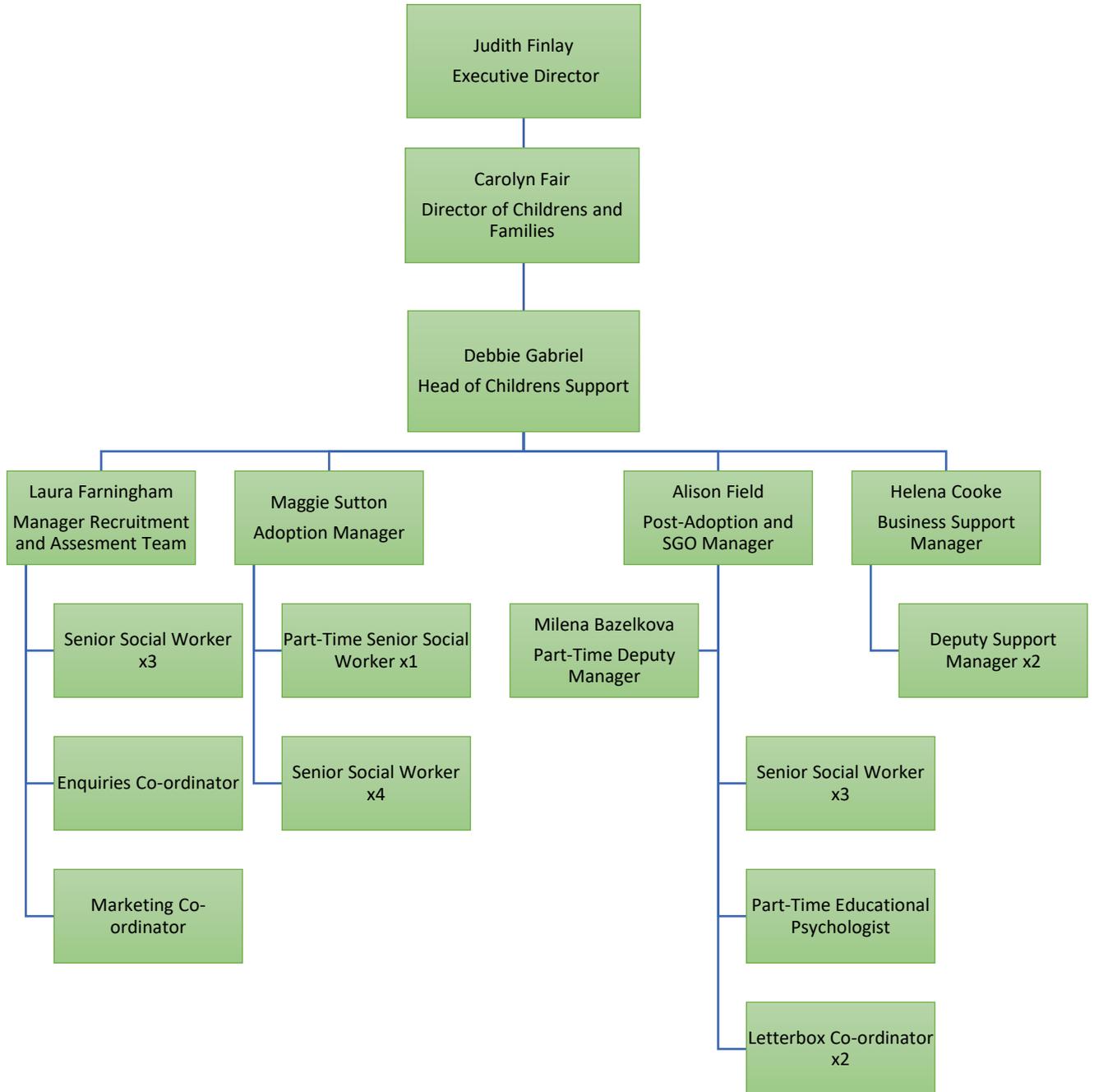
3. Overall Aims and Objectives of the Ealing Adoption Service

- To provide a high-quality adoption service for children that ensures their assessed needs, wishes, welfare and safety are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adoption will be considered as a positive option for all looked after children who are unable to return to live permanently with their birth family.
- To ensure that children with disabilities and additional needs will be entitled to the same opportunities for adoption as non-disabled children.
- To identify the needs of looked after children waiting for adoption and to recruit the maximum number of adopters who can meet the diverse needs of Ealing's children.
- To listen to children and support them to express their views and wishes.
- To actively prevent delays for looked after children being placed for adoption and to place children within the required timescales.
- To consider Early Permanence for children where it is appropriate.
- To welcome applications from people wishing to be assessed as prospective adopters regardless of marital status, ethnicity, disability, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

- To assess, prepare and support prospective adoptive families to meet the needs of children who are waiting for adoption.
- To work in partnership with prospective adopters, children and their families, other professionals and agencies.
- To provide written information to adopters, birth parents and children on the adoption process.
- To provide an advice service on adoption and permanency issues to other professionals within the Department and within professional networks.
- To place children with adopters who can provide safe, nurturing care in order to enable each child to achieve his or her full potential.
- To ensure that placements will reflect the child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language unless this is not possible within a realistic timescale for the child, in which case the reasons why will be explained to the child having regard to his or her age and understanding and adopters will be given guidance to ensure the child's heritage and identity is supported.
- To ensure that children will be placed with their brothers and sisters unless this does not meet their assessed needs. Where this is not possible within a realistic timescale the reasons why will be explained to the child and contact between them will be promoted.
- To ensure that each child and family is prepared for adoption and that a suitable period of introductions occurs and that the settling in period is fully supported.
- To promote and facilitate post adoption contact between children and their birth parents and relatives where it is assessed as being in their best interests.
- To provide a comprehensive Adoption Support Service in line with the Adoption legislation, Regulations and Guidelines.
- To offer training to Ealing's Adoption & Permanency Panel.
- To provide advice and information to those seeking to adopt from overseas by sign posting them towards a specialist assessment agency
- To provide a sensitive response to adults seeking information about their adoption and birth families wishing to contact adults who were placed for adoption as children

4. The Organisational Structure of the Service

The Adoption Service is part of Ealing's Children & Families division. The structure of the service and how it relates to the business group is shown in the diagram below.



- The Head of Children's Placements and Support is Ms Debbie Gabriel she is responsible for the Adoption Service.
- The Adoption Service has two team managers of the Adoption and Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Teams (SGO). There is a Deputy Team Manager in the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Team.
- The Adoption Team is staffed by one Team Manager and 4.5 Senior Social Workers.
- The Post Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Team is staffed by one part time Team Manager, one part time Deputy Team Manager, three Senior Social Workers and two Contact Co-coordinators. An Educational Psychologist is based in this team two days a week.
- Alison Field is the Team Manager of The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Team and is the Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA).
- The Adoption and Post Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Teams have access to a designated Clinical Psychologist, Medical Advisors and Virtual School Teachers.
- The Adoption and Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Teams are supported by one Administrator.
- All managers within the service are qualified Social Workers with extensive experience in children and families social work and are registered by the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC).
- Qualified social workers within the adoption service are similarly registered with the HCPC.
- Workers within the service who do not hold a social work qualification are supervised by qualified social workers
- The service is based at:

2nd Floor, Perceval House,
14-16 Uxbridge Road,
Ealing,
W5 2HL
- The Adoption Service works in collaboration with the Care Planning and Connect Teams within the Ealing Brighter Futures framework to ultimately ensure the welfare of all children placed. The Brighter Futures Model involves intensive multi-agency work with children in care to help improve the stability and quality of support they receive. We aim to work together with other professionals within and outside the council to achieve the best outcomes for

looked after children in Ealing. We work within a child-centred, multi-disciplinary and anti-discriminatory framework.

- The recruitment team undertakes all publicity and marketing to recruit prospective adopters and takes responsibility for running monthly information sessions for potential adopters, which are attended by social workers from the adoption team.
- The adoption team receives all referrals for adoption placements and is responsible for facilitating effective and timely permanency planning and family finding for looked after children.
- The adoption team assess prospective adopters and support placements until Adoption Orders are granted.
- The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Team provides a comprehensive support service for adopters, special guardians, children and birth family members, including facilitating any post order contact, post order assessment of support needs, and direct work with children and families. In addition, the team undertakes access to birth records and offers intermediary services for adopted adults and birth family members.
- Ealing is a founder member of the West London Adoption and Permanence Consortium and we work closely with our partner agencies. This is made up of eight West London boroughs and two voluntary agencies.
- The Consortium aims to develop joint initiatives to improve practice and to speed up the process of adoption for children in member boroughs. These arrangements include sharing information about children and details of approved adopters waiting for placement, participation in joint advertising, recruitment and training initiatives, as well as developing and sharing good practice. The members also pool resources to enable the provision of a more comprehensive range of adoption support services for children and for adults

5. Planning for Looked After Children

- A child's need for a permanent home will be considered no later than at the child's second Statutory Looked After Review. If the decision is made that an adoption plan is appropriate, a referral will be made to the Adoption Team. An initial permanency-planning meeting will be arranged within three weeks of the referral being received by the Adoption Team. Following this permanency planning meetings will take place at a minimum of six weekly intervals.
- Early referral for permanency planning meetings is crucial in ensuring that delay for children is avoided. In cases where early referral to the Adoption team might be appropriate the Adoption Team Manager will attend the Legal Planning Panel which meets once every two weeks. Early Permanence is considered for all

children upon referral to the Adoption Team and a decision made about whether this is appropriate.

- The Agency Decision Maker will consider and agree an Adoption Plan when all other possibilities of return to the birth family have been ruled out. The service aims to match children with prospective adopters within 12 months of the adoption plan having been agreed.
- Permanency planning for children is monitored at the Permanency Planning Panel which meets every month.

6. Procedures for Recruiting, Preparing and Assessing Adopters and Supporting Adoptive Parents

The recruitment and assessment policy details the procedures for the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters.

Recruitment

- The team has written plans for the implementation and evaluation of effective strategies to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children waiting for Adoption locally. Further details can be found in Ealing's Foster and Adoption Recruitment Strategy

Initial Enquiries

- Written information is sent in response to all initial enquiries and monthly information sessions are held to which all applicants are invited to attend. A follow up telephone discussion will be offered to any families who wish to consider adoption further. An initial visit may then be undertaken and a decision made as to whether the application (Registration of Interest (ROI)) will be accepted.

Assessments

- An adopter's assessment will be completed within the timescales outlined in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Adoption Guidance and Regulations.

Stage one assessment

- This stage will be completed within 8 weeks and is adopter led. Adopters will be supported to complete this stage and checks will be undertaken. It allows prospective adopters to explore in more detail what is involved in adoption. Adopters are offered a Cornerstone Mentor who is an experienced adopter who will offer additional support during the adoption process. Prospective adopters will be invited to attend a one-day preparation group training during this stage where they will learn more about the needs of children who are adopted.

Stage two assessment

- This stage will be completed within 16 weeks. During this stage, prospective adopters will work closely with the allocated adoption social worker and will be supported to reflect on their background, motivation to adopt and whether they can meet the needs of an adopted child both in the short term and throughout their childhood. Prospective adopters will be asked to attend three days of preparation group training during this stage.

Fast Track Assessments

- For families who have previously adopted a Fast Track assessment will be completed within four months. Fast track assessments will also be completed when it has been agreed that a foster carer will be considered to adopt a child in their care.

Early Permanence – Concurrency and Fostering For Adoption

- All prospective adopters will be given information about Early Permanence from the early in the process. For families who wish to consider Early Permanence this will be explored in detail during the assessment to ensure that they understand what is involved. An additional one-day training course will be offered to families who wish to consider this option. Ealing has access to this training via the West London Consortium and through the Coram Early Permanence Forum.

Adoption and Permanence Panel

- At the end of this assessment the social worker will complete a Prospective Adopters Report which will be presented to the Adoption & Permanency Panel to make a recommendation to the agency (London Borough of Ealing) as to whether prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child. Prospective adopters will be notified of this decision in writing within 7 days. All Prospective Adopters will be invited to attend panel.
- Approved adopters who have not had a child placed within one year will be reviewed annually.

Independent Review Mechanism

- Should the adoption panel not recommend approval and the Agency Decision Maker agrees with this the applicants can apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for this to be reviewed. Written information about this process is given to all applicants during their assessment.

Matching and Placement

- Once approved, the social workers will work in partnership with prospective adopters to identify a suitable child, starting with local children, and then

extending the search through the West London Adoption and Permanence Consortium and Adoption Match (the National Adoption Register) and Link Maker. Families will be encouraged to attend Exchange and Adoption Activity Days.

- Once a family has been selected for a child, details of this match will be presented to the Panel who will make a recommendation and the Agency Decision Maker will in turn make a decision about ratifying that recommendation within 7 days of the date of the panel.
- Families will be provided with full written details about the child and will have the opportunity to discuss this with their social worker. They will be able to meet with the Agency Medical Advisor and when appropriate a Clinical Psychologist. For children over 18 months or sibling groups a Child Appreciation Day will be held.
- If the match is approved there is a planning meeting and a period of introductions. The child will then be placed in accordance with the Adoption Regulations.
- The child's placement will be reviewed in accordance with the requirements of the Looked After Children's Statutory Reviewing process. The prospective adopter's social worker and the child's social worker will provide on-going support for the placement until the Adoption Order is granted. The adoption social worker will continue to provide support as needed.
- The adoption agency has access to specialist advisors. These include psychologists for looked after children, a medical advisor, looked after children nurse, substance misuse advisor and a specialist education team. In addition, the service has commissioned a counselling service by subscribing to the PAC and Inter-Country Adoption Centre (IAC), Ealing families and children can access a range of additional services. Where necessary other specialist services are also accessed often through applications to the Adoption Support Fund. The agency also has an agreement with the Cornerstone Partnership which offers additional support through mentoring and training.
- The adoption service has a clear policy for the support of adopters ensuring each adopter is allocated a social worker up until the adoption order is made and beyond when appropriate and in line with any adoption support plan.
- A separate adoption file will be created for every child once an adoption plan has been approved by the Agency. Once an adoption order is made the file will be placed in the Records Archive for 100 years.

Step-parent Adoption

- Ealing residents who enquire about other non-agency adoptions are given information by the Adoption Duty Officer. If appropriate they are offered an

appointment to discuss their specific circumstances and advised about procedures and about the status of non-related children.

- In order to complete a step-parent adoption assessment statutory checks will be undertaken and court reports will be completed when the applicant has given notification of their intention to apply to adopt.

7. The Adoption and Permanency Panel

- Ealing Council's Adoption & Permanency Panel meet every three weeks to make recommendations to the Director of Children and Families in respect of the approval of prospective adopters and the placement of children with specific families. The panel also makes recommendations to the Director of Children and Families about a placement for adoption in cases which involve relinquished babies. Additional panels are convened as necessary.
- The composition of the panel is in line with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2011 and includes independent members. The chair of the panel is an independent person with significant experience of adoption work and skills to ensure that the panel's work is carried out efficiently and sensitively.
- The Adoption & Permanency Panel receives all necessary information on prospective adopters within 6 weeks of the completion of the assessment report.
- Panel recommendations are conveyed orally to all those involved within 24 hours. The Agency decision maker makes a decision within 7 working days of the adoption panel recommendations. Decisions are conveyed orally to all those involved within 2 working days and confirmed in writing within 7 working days.
- Applicants or birth parents will have 28 days to raise any objections to the Agency Decision Maker. All correspondence will be acknowledged within 3 working days and answered formally within 14.
- There is an established Central list for membership of Adoption Panel. The Independent panel chair and all members of the central list are annually appraised and training is identified as part of that appraisal

8. Adoption and Special Guardianship Support (SGO)

- The supervising social worker will continue to support the prospective adopters until an Adoption Order has been made.
- An assessment of the need for adoption support will be completed for all children for whom adoption is the plan and will be presented with the proposed match to

the Adoption & Permanency Panel. The adoption support plan will be reviewed at the child's initial statutory review and at every subsequent review until the Adoption Order is made or if there is a significant change in circumstances. The review of adoption support plans following the adoption order will be by request from adoptive parents.

- Adoptive families, adopted adults or birth relatives can request assessment of support need at any time pre or post adoption. The Adoption Support Social Worker undertakes the assessment and draws up a support plan. The range of services that we offer include:
 - Advice, guidance and, counselling
 - Direct work with individual children, sibling groups, adoptive parents and family members.
 - Therapeutic services for the child.
 - An independent counselling service for birth parents.
 - Help with facilitating contact,
 - Workshops and training on key issues adoptive parents face when parenting an adopted child.
 - Opportunities to meet with other adoptive parents.
- Where appropriate the Adoption Teams make referrals to the Adoption Support Fund to put in place additional support.
- Financial support may be available to support adoptive and special guardianship placements. This is means tested and consideration is given to the circumstances of the adoptive family and the needs of the child. The scheme aims to facilitate the adoption of children whose needs may involve additional costs. It is not applicable to all children. Financial support is reviewed each year.
- A full assessment of the child's need for post adoption or special guardianship contact will be undertaken. Decisions about contact will always be based on the best interests of the child, in consultation with and agreement of the adoptive or special guardianship family. This is normally a voluntary agreement.
- The birth family and adoptive family may exchange letters by agreement, via a service called "letterbox". The adoption support team will act as the post box and forward correspondence to the families. If direct contact is to be maintained between the children and his or her birth parents or family, if assessed as necessary the Adoption Support team will help facilitate this by providing

support and/or supervision

- A support and counselling service for birth parents and relatives is available within Ealing, through the PAC UK Service, which the London Borough of Ealing has commissioned to provide this service

Access to Records

- A comprehensive service is available to adopted adults requesting access to their records. Further details can be found in the procedure Access to Records and Information for Adopted Adults and Birth Relatives.
- An intermediary service is provided to assist adopted adults and their birth relatives to obtain the information they need to trace a relative and establish contact.

9. Procedure for Monitoring and Controlling the Activities of the Adoption Service and Ensuring Quality of Performance

The following systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the service:

- An annual report on the activity for the adoption service is submitted to the Director of Children and Families. This report is presented at corporate Parents Committee.
- Annual report of the adoption panel is presented to the Agency decision maker and adoption panel members.
- A quarterly report is presented to the Head of Children's Placements Services and to the Adoption Panel detailing the numbers of children waiting for a permanent placement, matching and placement dates, Adoption Order dates, any breakdowns in placements, and timescales achieved. A quarterly Report submitted to the London Adoption Board.
- A six-monthly report on team activity and outcomes is presented to the lead member and a quarterly update on adoption performance is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council.
- Management information is correlated and there are monthly reports on all aspects of performance in Ealing Children's Services which includes the numbers of children placed for adoption, numbers adopted, ethnicity, and timescales.
- A database is maintained of adoption applicants, ethnicity, responses, outcomes and timescales.

- Systems are in place to monitor the department's need for placements. The recruitment strategy is reviewed six monthly. This information is used to inform recruitment and contracting with providers.
- There is a Permanence Panel which meets monthly to monitor the progress of permanency plans for any Looked After Children.
- Audits of files are undertaken quarterly to ensure that they are up to date and maintained to an appropriate standard.

10. Ensuring Accountability of Staff

- There are clear lines of accountability and management of the service.
- There are annual performance appraisals for all staff, setting and reviewing targets, which are in line with departmental, and service targets and objectives. These appraisals ensure that staff are well trained and competent in delivering a quality adoption service.
- Each member of staff is given supervision by their line manager on a three- four weekly basis, with a review of tasks and monitoring of targets.
- The Brighter Futures Model includes group supervision where all children's cases are considered monthly.
- The adoption service ensures that there are comprehensive and up to date records on all children placed, prospective and approved adopters with whom Ealing has worked. This information is accessible in line with data protection requirements.
- There are clear written policies and procedures for staff within the adoption service including the adoption panel. These are available on request to service users.
- Written information is given to birth parents about adoption and contact with their birth children; all children receive a leaflet which explains adoption to them and adopters are given written information both before and after approval.
- All staff and adopters and panel members have a valid DBS check.
- Allegations against adopters/staff are investigated under departmental procedures.
- The Customer Care and Complaints Section maintain records of complaints, their outcomes, and praise.

11. Financial Procedures

- Regular budget monitoring information itemises amounts paid for a variety of services and totals paid in adoption allowances. Expenditure and budget allocation information is updated monthly in the Finance Section.
- Adoption allowances are paid weekly using an electronic payment system, and amounts and any changes are checked and signed for by managers. Adoptive families are informed by letter of any changes in payments.
- All families in receipt of financial support undergo an annual financial review.
- Inter-agency financial agreements are made and charges and expectations of timescales for payment are recorded on Coram BAAF Form IA1

12. Complaints

- All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Departmental and national requirements. Children, their birth family and adopters will all be given a copy of Ealing Council's complaint leaflet.
- Ealing's Complaints Procedure can be found on:
<https://www.ealing.gov.uk/complaints>
- Children will be made aware of the national telephone help line, 'Talk Adoption', the complaints procedure, children's rights services and of their right to make representations and complaints. Birth families and adopters will be advised of the complaints procedure and their right to make representations and complaints.

13. The Registration Authority

OFSTED (Office for Standards and Education) is an independent, non-governmental body responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services under the provision of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The address for OFSTED is:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel No: 0300 123 1231
E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

13. Other Organisations

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3TT
Tel 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

The Department for Education Adoption and Fostering

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/.../adoption-fostering>

Independent Review Mechanism

In cases where adoptive applicants or matching decisions are turned down either through a recommendation by the Adoption Panel or by a decision by the Agency Decision Maker an application can be made to the Independent Review Mechanism.

The Independent Review Mechanism
Contract Manager
Unit 2, Pavillion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley
Leeds
LS1 6AJ
Tel: 0845 450 3956
Website www.independentreviewmehanism.org.uk/adoption

CoramBAAF Academy for Adoption and Fostering

Coram Campus
41 Brunswick Square
London
WC1M 1AZ
Tel: 020 7520 0300

Adoption UK

48 The Green,
South Bar Street,
Banbury OX16 9AB
Tel: 01295 752240
Website: www.adoptionuk.org

PAC-UK (Post Adoption Centre)

5 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue
London NW5 2RZ

Tel: 020 7284 0555
Website: www.pack-uk.org