



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Corporate Parenting Services

Relinquished babies procedures

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

1 Introduction

This document sets out the local procedures to be followed whenever parents approach CSFH to request that a child is adopted and should be read together with the *Relinquished children* policy. [Relinquished Children](#)

2 Definition

- A relinquished baby is a baby whom parents have asked to be placed for adoption. This may be prior to the child's birth or shortly thereafter. Babies under 6 weeks old can be placed for adoption with the written agreement of the parent (if it is felt that this is in the child's best interests). However, parental consent to adoption cannot be sought or given until after the child is 6 weeks old.
- Birth parents can consent to their child being placed for adoption and can also give consent to a future adoption order being made. Consent can be given for the child to be placed with a specific prospective adopter or one identified by Camden at a later date.

2 Roles and responsibilities

In Camden, responsibility for relinquished babies is shared between CSFH and the Adopt North London Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).

- CSFH is responsible for providing the child with accommodation under the Children Act 1989 and for obtaining early consent from the parents allowing the child to be accommodated under section 20 and placed with a prospective adopter or in a foster to adopt placement.
- CSFH will work with the RAA jointly to provide parents with adoption counselling.
- The child's CLA social worker is responsible for carrying out assessments and preparing the child permanence report, obtaining parental consent to adoption (after 6 weeks), applying to the RAA panel for an "adoption as permanence plan" decision and matching and placing the child.

3 Working with parents

- It is important that when working with parents who are considering adoption for their child, social workers are sensitive to the parent's predicament. Many will be considering adoption because of difficult personal or financial circumstances and feel that adoption would give their child the best chance in life.
- From the outset social workers should help the parents to explore their reasons for considering adoption and what alternatives may be available to them. As part of this work, social workers should consider what support can be given to parents so that they are able to keep their baby or look at kinship care options so that the child can be cared for within the extended family.
- All kinship permanence possibilities should be explored and consideration should be given to approaching other agencies to gain information on birth families to see if any extended family could be identified to care for the baby. The decision to either force parents to disclose information on extended family members or seek this from the court should be reached having considered the work with the birth parents and the work of CAFCASS as it would need to be sensitively made.
- As soon as parents approach Camden, social workers should refer the case to the Permanence Clinic in order to obtain advice and to ensure parents are provided with information about adoption and given an opportunity to seek counselling.
- Social workers should work with birth parents and family members to collect as much information as possible for the child's life story book and gather any information that they may want the child to know about them and their circumstances.

4 Procedures for progressing adoption

- Where birth parents wish to continue with adoption, and adoption is agreed as the child's permanence plan, the social worker should:
 - begin gathering information for the child's permanence report, including medical reports
 - make arrangements for the case to be considered by the RAA Panel.

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- When the child is born, parents should be counselled further to establish whether they still want to relinquish the child for adoption. If they still agree to adoption, social workers may:
 - begin preparing the CPR
 - refer the case to the RAA Panel for a recommendation on placing the child for adoption
 - arrange for the child to be accommodated
 - refer the case to Cafcass to make arrangements for parents to sign consent to adoption (see below).
- At this point, parents will be signing to consent to the child being placed with a prospective adopter but consent to adoption cannot be obtained until the child is 6 weeks old.
- The child's social worker is responsible for making arrangements for the child to be looked after once a decision has been made on what contact parents should have with the child after the birth. The social worker should continue to provide support and counselling to the birth parents after the child is born.

5 Procedures for obtaining consent

- Section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 sets out the requirements for parents to give legal consent for their child to be placed for adoption. Consent must be on the specified form and signed in the presence of a CAFCASS officer as witness.
- The following sets out the outline procedure for obtaining consent to place a relinquished baby for adoption. Social workers should also refer to the ADCS/CAFCASS good practice guidance for further details of the process to be followed.
[Relinquished adoptions guidance.pdf \(adcs.org.uk\)](#)
- Where birth parents approach Camden before the child is born to ask about placing the child for adoption, social workers should refer the case to the permanence clinic immediately and inform the RAA.
- The allocated social worker should contact the CAFCASS office that is closest to the parent's address to notify them of the adoption and request an officer to be allocated to witness consent. The local office can be searched for at:
[Find your local office | Cafcass](#)

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- Social workers, in partnership with the RAA, have a duty to ensure parents receive counselling and information in the period prior to consent being signed. This is to ensure that they understand the nature of adoption and the consequences of giving consent. It also provides an opportunity for social workers to assess parental capacity to consent under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and explore whether the consent is freely given or given under duress. This is further explored in the ADCS/CAFCASS guidance. [Relinquished adoptions guidance.pdf \(adcs.org.uk\)](#)
- It is the responsibility of social workers to identify the birth father and establish if he has parental responsibility or if he intends to obtain parental responsibility and whether he should be included in the consent process. This is further explored in the ADCS/CAFCASS guidance. [Relinquished adoptions guidance.pdf \(adcs.org.uk\)](#)
- Social workers will need to provide the CAFCASS Officer witnessing consent with the following documents listed in Schedule 2 of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005:
 - a certified copy of the child's birth certificate
 - name and address of the parent
 - a chronology of actions and decisions taken by CSFH regarding the child
 - confirmation that the parent has received counselling and understands the legal implications of signing consent
 - any other relevant information about the parent that CSFH believes the CAFCASS Officer needs to know.
- Once these documents are available the social worker can contact the CAFCASS Officer and obtain an appointment
- During this time, parental responsibility remains with the birth parent; if they request the child's return, the child should be returned to their care unless an application has been made for an EPO, care order or placement order or any of these orders has already been made.
- Social workers can still pursue a date with the RAA panel for an adoption as permanence plan decision as the case can be taken to panel before the consent has been signed and witnessed by the CAFCASS Officer.

6 Effect of consent

- Once the child is placed with prospective adopters, parental responsibility is shared between the local authority and the prospective adopter only, and they should agree on how this responsibility is shared.

- Once parents have consented to the child being placed for adoption any contact orders that were made under the Children Act 1989 end, but parents and others can apply to the court for a contact order under the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- Once parental consent for adoption has been given, parents and guardians cannot apply for any order under section 8 of the Children Act except at the final adoption hearing if they have leave of the court (see below for details). This means that a father who obtains parental responsibility after consent to adoption has been given must wait until the final hearing before contesting the adoption.

7 Withdrawal of Consent

- Parents can withdraw their consent at any time before the prospective adopters make an application for an adoption order. Withdrawal must be in the manner prescribed in the Family Procedure Rules 2010 or in writing to Camden.
- If parents withdraw consent to adoption before the child is placed with the prospective adopter, the adoptive placement may not go ahead unless Camden obtains a placement order.
- If the child has been placed with the prospective adopter and parents request their return, Camden must return the child unless a placement order will be applied for.
- Once an application is made for a placement order, the child cannot be removed from Camden's care until the application has been heard.
- When consent is withdrawn, Camden will need to reconsider the adoption plan. The social worker should notify the IRO and make arrangements to convene a statutory CLA review to consider whether to continue to pursue adoption for the child and apply for a placement order. Parents must be notified of any decision to apply for a placement order, as should any prospective adopter with whom the child was placed.
- If the child is the subject of a care order, withdrawal of consent will not mean the child returns to their parents, but it may be worth considering applying for a placement order to legally secure the permanence plan.