



## **Children's Safeguarding and Family Help**

### Adoption procedures for children's social workers

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.

## Adoption for children's social workers

### 1. Purpose of policy

- Adoption is the process that transfers all the rights and responsibilities in respect of a child from their birth parent to their adoptive parent, ending the birth parent's legal relationship with the child.
- This policy sets out how Camden will work with the Adopt London North Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and provides an overview of the statutory process required in order to secure adoption for a looked after child.

### 2. Roles and responsibilities

- Responsibility for the adoption process is shared between the child's allocated social worker, the Family, Friends and Fostering service and the Adopt London North Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).
- The RAA is responsible for:
  - assessing and approving prospective adopters, including foster carers wishing to adopt the children in their care
  - liaising with social workers to match children with suitable adoptive families (family finding)
  - providing post adoption support to adopted children, adoptive families and birth families.
- The Family, Friends and Fostering service is responsible for providing social workers with advice on the best permanence option for children and, where adoption is the chosen permanence option, providing advice on the process and signposting to the RAA.
- Social workers are responsible for:
  - deciding on adoption as the child's permanence option following attendance at a permanence planning meeting (PPM);
  - assessing the child's permanence needs and completing the child's permanence report (CPR);
  - gaining authorisation or consent to place the child for adoption and seeking a Placement Order;
  - referring cases to the RAA for family finding;

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- liaising with the RAA social worker in order to select the most suitable adoptive family (family finding) and assessing the child's adoption support needs;
  - working with the RAA social worker to arrange the child's placement with their adopters and reviewing adoptive placements;
  - preparing the child and birth family for adoption and supporting them through the process.
- Full details of how CSFH and the RAA share responsibilities for adoption processes can be found in the RAA/CSFH terms of reference available at: <https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/3415/raa-cssw-terms-of-reference.pdf>
  - The child's permanence report must be completed by a social worker with 3 years qualifying experience including direct experience of adoption work or a student who is supervised by a social worker with 3 years qualifying experience including direct experience of adoption work.

### 3 Adoption policy framework

- Adoption is one of many permanence options available for children and the first task for social workers is to decide if adoption is the best option for that particular child. Social workers should refer to the *Permanence planning policy* for further guidance on choosing the best permanence option and refer to section 4 of this policy for details of how the Family, Friends and Fostering service can support social workers when making is decision.

#### [Permanence Planning Guidance](#)

- Social workers in the CLA teams and the Family, Friends and Fostering service working to pursue adoption for a looked after child should follow the RAA policy *Placement for adoption* which covers all the necessary steps for adoption by Camden staff in partnership with the RAA.

#### [Placement for Adoption \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

- Where a child is placed for adoption, the framework for monitoring and supervising the placement and placement visits will change. CLA social workers should refer to the RAA policy *Monitoring and Supervision of Adoptive Placements* for details of the policy on visiting adoptive placements.

#### [Monitoring and Supervision of Adoptive Placements \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

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- CLA social workers should refer to the RAA policy *Adoption Reviews* for details of the policy on reviewing adoptive placements.  
[Adoption Reviews \(trixonline.co.uk\)](https://trixonline.co.uk)
- In the event of an adoptive placement breaking down, CLA social workers should refer to the RAA *Disruption of Adoptive Placements* policy for details of the procedures to follow.  
[Disruption of Adoptive Placements \(trixonline.co.uk\)](https://trixonline.co.uk)
- In order to avoid delay and reduce disruption to the child, the Family, Friends and Fostering service together with the RAA will help social workers to look at options for early permanence including concurrent planning and Foster to Adopt placements. For further details please see the *Early Permanence policy*.  
[Early Permanence: Fostering for Adoption, Concurrent...](#)
- Where parents have agreed for a baby to be placed for adoption, social workers should refer to the *Relinquished children* policy. [Relinquished Children](#)
- Social workers pursuing adoption as a child's permanence plan should carry out life story work and prepare a later in life letter. Further guidance is available at: [Life story work and later in life letters | Children's Policy & Practice Hub \(camden.gov.uk\)](#)
- Social workers should refer to *Health care assessments and plans* policy for the procedures for arranging CLA medicals, including guidance on obtaining parent's consent to sharing medical information.  
[procedures-for-cla-health-assessments.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](#)

## 4 Permanence planning clinics and meetings

- The Family, Friends and Fostering service holds a permanence planning clinic once a fortnight to provide advice to social workers on permanence options and how best to pursue the chosen option. Social workers should book to attend the clinic as soon as possible to discuss potential permanence plans and plan efficiently for any work required to implement the child's permanence plan.
- Where adoption is chosen as the child's permanence plan, regular permanence planning meetings will be held to monitor the implementation of the plan and a Camden-nominated lead social worker from the RAA will attend these meetings in order to ensure a family finder is allocated and the work towards finding a suitable adoptive placement is commenced as early as possible.

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- The service will also support the social worker to make a referral to the RAA to commence the required work towards securing the plan of adoption for the child/ren.

### 5 Placement orders

- Placement orders authorise a local authority to place a child with a prospective adopter and will only be granted where:
  - the child is subject to a care order or conditions for granting a care order are met or the child has no parents **and**:
  - parents have consented to the child being placed for adoption or their consent has been dispensed with.
- Consent may be dispensed with if the Agency Decision Maker has agreed that adoption is the preferred permanence plan for the child and this decision must be made prior to any application for a placement order. A placement order may be applied for within care proceedings.
- Under a placement order the local authority shares parental responsibility with birth parents and adoptive parents (once the child is placed) but can decide on how each will exercise this and may place restrictions on how it is exercised.
- Once a placement order is made:
  - any previous child arrangement order or supervision order ceases to have effect
  - a care order is suspended until the placement order is revoked
  - there are restrictions on what other orders can be applied for by various parties
  - it continues in force until revoked or an adoption order is granted in respect of the child.
- For further information on placement orders, please refer to the Children Act 1989 court orders guidance available at:  
<https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/3406/children-act-1989-legal-framework.pdf>

### 6 Adoption Orders

- Prospective adopters can apply for an adoption order after the child has been living with them (or at least one of them if it is a couple) for at least 10 weeks. In practice, this decision is made in consultation with social workers in Camden and the RAA.
- Applications for adoption orders can be contested by parents and guardians only at the final hearing and only if they have the leave of the court. Leave to apply is only likely to be granted if there has been a significant change in the parent's circumstances.
- If leave to oppose is given, the court will decide on whether adoption is in the child's best interest or whether parental consent can be dispensed with. At this hearing, parents or guardians may, (if they have leave of the court,) apply for a Child Arrangement order or Special Guardianship order.
- Adoption orders extinguish the parental responsibility of everyone except the adopters, all orders that may have been made previously under the Children Act 1989 and any Special Guardianship order.
- Once an adoption order is made, Camden's role in the child's life changes as parental responsibility passes to adoptive parents. All adoption cases should be closed to the CLA team within 3 months of the Adoption Order being made.
- This is to allow social workers to finish off work such as later in life letters or to complete life story work or just to support the adoptive parents.

### 7 Recording adoption processes on MOSAIC

- To ensure transparency on how decisions on adoption were made social workers should ensure the process is clearly recorded on MOSAIC. Most work with the child and birth parents will be recorded on the child's CLA file but once a decision has been taken to pursue adoption as the permanence option and the case is referred to the RAA for family finding, the allocated social worker should create **an adoption file** on MOSAIC for the child. The Adoption file should be named with the acronym 'AF' appended to the last name e.g. *Jane Smith AF*.

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- Once adoption is agreed as the preferred permanence plan, the child should have an adoption plan that sets out the decisions and tasks needed to carry out the steps in the adoption process. The adoption plan is part of the child's overall care plan and will be recorded on the care plan set out in the *Chair's Report* following the LAC review.
- The Adoption file will be accessed only by the social worker, their manager, the manager of the Family, Friends and Fostering service, the finance officer and the RAA Family Finder; it is therefore important that the following documents are uploaded onto the file by the social worker using the **Adoption** document category:
  - updated assessments and chairs reports from the second CLA review and any subsequent review of the care and adoption plan;
  - child's medical reports;
  - the child's permanence report;
  - information relating to the ADM/RAA panel adoption decision;
  - family finding referral;
  - placement orders;
  - minutes of family finding criteria meetings and family finding review meetings;
  - minutes of selection meetings;
  - prospective adopters report;
  - minutes of matching meetings;
  - matching reports and documents relating to the RAA Panel and ADM decisions on matching;
  - minutes of introductions meetings;
  - introductions plan;
  - adoption placement report;
  - adoption placement plan;
  - adoption support plan;
  - minutes of transition planning meetings and reviews;
  - adoption order;
  - later in life letter;
  - life story book;
  - letterbox contact details/contract.
- All case notes recorded on the Adoption file should use the case note type **Adoption**.

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- Once the adoption order has been made, social workers should set up rename the child's adoption file under their new adoptive name and ask for the file to be restricted by the MOSAIC team. Social workers should ensure that the child's previous name is retained on the file as an alias.

### For further guidance

RAA *Adoption Case Records* policy:

[Adoption Case Records \(trixonline.co.uk\)](https://trixonline.co.uk)

MOSAIC Adoption processes guidance.

[Adoption processes | Children's Policy & Practice Hub \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://camden.gov.uk)

CLA workflow process overview.

[lac-workflow-process-overview-version-20.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://camden.gov.uk)

The CLA MOSAIC manual.

[lac-manual-final.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://camden.gov.uk)

Other CLA guidance:

[mosaic-guidance-request-for-initial-placement-and-matching.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://camden.gov.uk)

[request-for-placement-change-mosaic-guidance.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://camden.gov.uk)

[mosaic-managers-guidance-discharge-from-care.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://camden.gov.uk)

Support is available to social workers from the MOSAIC team.



## Adoption for children's social workers

### Appendix 1

#### Adoption processes flowchart

