

REPORT OF THE ADOPTION PANEL TO THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON ADOPTION AGENCY.

Period 1/4/2018- 30/09/2018

Introduction

All Adoption Agencies have to set up an Adoption Panel. The Agency has to create a 'Central List' of people who have experience, expertise and knowledge about adoption matters who will make up the Adoption Panel. The three main functions of the Adoption Panel are to make recommendations to the Agency about the suitability of potential adopters, to recommend the placement of a child with specific adopters and to recommend an adoption plan for a relinquished child. The Adoption Panel has an independent status and a role to assure good standards of practice, consistency of approach and fairness in the adoption service. The National Minimum Standards for Adoption require a report to be made by the Adoption Panel to the Agency on the local authority's adoption service.

The Adoption Panel

The Adoption Panel has functioned well and efficiently during this period. The panel members are committed to ensure that the work of the panel is conducted with due care and professionalism. I would like to thank my colleagues for their commitment to complete the duties required of them. The contribution of panel member's to the consideration of the cases shows the importance with which they approach the business of the panel. The level of attendance by members is excellent and their attention to the reports they are required to read and consider is worth mentioning. The panel meets twice a month and there is always a willingness to convene quickly or in addition if delay needs to be avoided. The varied skills and experience of panel members strengthen the contribution of the panel to the adoption service.

The Agency Adviser to the panel has continued to be diligent to ensure that the reports to the panel are prepared correctly and that she exercises an active quality assurance function. The long standing advisor has recently departed and we thank her for her service to the panel. Legal advice is available should an issue arise on a particular case and this has been available when needed or when a particularly complex case is being considered. The Medical Adviser to the Agency attends the panel meetings and Health Summaries on the child or potential adopters are provided.

The Panel Administrator continues to provide an efficient standard of administration of the panel business. The reports arrive with members in good time and the production of the minutes is timely and accurate.

Panel Statistics

During this period there were eight meetings of the Adoption Panel. There were no extra panel meeting needing to be convened to avoid delays.

Applicants Data	
Panel Meetings	8
Suitable to Adopt Recommendations	10
Not Suitable to Adopt Recommendation	0
Recommendation to Terminate Approval	0
Brief Reports	0
<i>Applicant's Ethnicity</i>	

Number of White British Applicants	6
Number of South African Applicants	1
Number of Asian/Mauritian Applicants	1
Number of White European Applicants	2

There were five couples approved as suitable to adopt in this period.

Children's Data	
Number of Children Recommended to be Placed (Matched)	7
Number of placements made with Croydon adopters	
Number of Disruptions	0
Number of Relinquished Children	2
Number of Sibling Groups	0
Number of children placed in foster to adopt scheme	2
<i>Ages of Children at the time of Placement</i>	
Number of Children Placed Aged 0-2 years	4
Number of Children Placed Aged 2-5 years	2
Number of Children Placed Aged 5+	1
<i>Ethnicity of Children Placed</i>	
Number of White UK	4
Number of Black Caribbean	1
Number of Gypsy Roma Heritage	1
Number of British Asian. Heritage	1

Panel Feedback

The Adoption Panel has to monitor the quality of the agency's work and pay attention to the issues of delay in the placement of children. There are requirements to prescribe those who may write adoption reports and the agency has ensured that these are met.

The standard and quality of the Prospective Adopters Report is consistently good. The quality of the Child Permanence Report is generally adequate to good and where the panel has comments for improvement these are positively received and acted upon. In an effort to improve the quality and standard of these Reports specific training has been provided in the past and it may be appropriate to provide it again as the workforce has changed and those social workers likely to have to complete them may benefit..

When asked by panel to comment on their experience of the assessment many adopters comment constructively on their experience. The adopters value the commitment and professional relationship they have received from their assessing social worker. Many consider they have been well prepared to be adopters. It is perhaps an indication of the level of approval that adopters hold the agency in that the annual Adoption Fun Day is very well attended by adopters and their children.

National Minimum Timescales

The Adoption Panel has to measure some aspects of the work against the Adoption National Minimum Standards to see how far the standards are met. The National Standard for the assessment and approval of adopters is six months.

National Minimum Timescales – Approval of Adopter’s	
Number of adopters approved	5 couples
Number of adopters approved within the timescales	1 couple

There is a National Standard that prospective adopters need to be approved within six months of their application. The reasons for the delays were for one couple they asked for a break between Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the adoption process and also some feedback from their training needed to be followed up. Another couple required more time to obtain further medical information and enquiries needing to be made that arose from that information. For two couples there was a freeze on the recruitment of adopters due to a drop in numbers of children to be adopted. These were understandable reasons for the delays. The agency generally endeavours to complete the assessments of adopters within the National Minimum Timescales.

The National Standard for the placement of children with adopters is six months from the date of the decision that the plan for the child is adoption to the date when the decision to match the child with a new family is made.

National Minimum Timescales – Placement of Children	
Number of Children Recommended to be Placed	7
Number of Children Placed within timescales	1

It is important to avoid delay in the placement of children for whom the plan is adoption. The reasons for the delays in the six Matches were; a failed SGO placement and a failed adoption placement prior to this adoption placement, protracted legal proceedings, a delay in making the decision as to whether the siblings were to be placed together or apart, difficulties in placing a child of black ethnic origin and for the two Relinquished Children, the Cafcass officer did not feel the birth mothers were ready to relinquish their respective child and requested that they each needed to seek legal advice, which took longer for their agreements to be made..

The agency may wish to review these outcomes and establish whether there needs to be any changes made to the monitoring process or the family finding activity.

Quality Assurance Monitoring.

The agency and the panel introduced a system in May 2017 to collect and monitor feedback in a more systematic manner. Comments were elicited from adopters and social workers about their experience of attending the panel. Panel member’s views about the quality and content of the Child Permanence report (CPR) and the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) were also collected.

Panel Feedback on the Quality of PAR’s Presented

Excellent	3
Good	1
Adequate	1

The PARs were generally of a good standard and some analyses of the adopter's strengths and vulnerabilities were very thorough.

Panel Feedback on the Quality of CPR's Presented	
Excellent	3
Good	2
Adequate	1
Poor	1

The CPRs generally require a little more attention and consideration to create a document that will be of value to the adoptee in the future. There is a need to review the contents, update the information and ensure the document is presentable from its first presentation to the ADM to when it is provided to the panel for a matching recommendation. They did set out the child's needs well and the child's identity needs were also well addressed. The descriptions of the birth parents could benefit from more attention to not portray the parents, their histories and personalities in a harsh light.

It is a strength to note were that the majority of Adoption Placement Reports provided good or excellent evidence of the child's current needs, and evidence that the adopters were able to meet the child's needs.

Prospective Adopter and Social Worker feedback

Three prospective adopters gave feedback on their experience of attending the panel. They felt positive about their experience of attending and being interviewed. Their evaluation of the process was that it was excellent for two and good for one respondents. There were no critical comments.

Feedback on the panel from seven social workers attending to present cases was received. Their evaluation was that one rated their experience as excellent, six as good. Generally, they felt the questions put were clear, relevant and that the panel listened to them. Most considered that the adopters found the experience to be excellent or good.

During this period, the number of children for whom the Agency Decision Maker decided that the preferred plan for them was adoption was four.

The Agency is currently looking for new adoptive families for nine children.

Currently, the Agency has nine approved adopters waiting for a placement.

For those adopters approved and awaiting a placement a number of training courses and groups have been provided to support and enhance their skills in parenting adopted children.

There were no training sessions for panel members during this period.

The Government's adoption reform agenda continues. The intention to establish a regional London adoption service continues to be developed. The change in the court's attitude to agreeing to adoption plans continues to have an impact on the number of children available for adoption placements.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernard Monaghan".

Bernard Monaghan.
Independent Chair Adoption Panel