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## APPENDIX A



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

# Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee Review Scoping Report 2011/12

## **OBJECTIVE**

Adoption & Permanence of Looked After Children

### **Aim of review**

This review will examine the effectiveness of Adoption and Permanence arrangements in Hillingdon with a view to ensuring that all Hillingdon children that need a substitute permanent home are placed to meet their needs, within acceptable time-scales.

### **Terms of Reference**

*What areas will the review be looking at? Make sure that the areas are all within the remit of the POC.*

- To review the overall position of legal permanence options for children including Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)
- To explore the performance of LB Hillingdon against the national trends
- To discover obstacles to placing children for permanence in the context of national and local issues
- To review the value of recruiting local adopters to ensure that a “traded market” of adopters is economically viable to ensure faster matching of children to suitable placements
- To explore issues of matching in securing permanence for children against their dimensions of need in order to secure stability and longevity of placements.
- To explore barriers in the assessment of prospective adopters taking account of the program to reform Adoption announced in December 2011.

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- To review the associated costs of securing permanence for looked after children against the relative costs of them remaining looked after.
- To review the arrangements for post adoption support and the contribution to securing stability for children who achieve legal permanence against the likely costs of them returning to care.
- To make recommendations to Cabinet based on the outcome of this review.

#### **Reasons for the review**

Securing permanence for looked after children is of critical significance to them and their ability to grow up as well adjusted adults, able to become good citizens who enjoy relationships and family life.

Focus on adoption has become a national issue with Central Government recently producing league tables of performance aimed at driving up the number of children adopted and the delays they face in waiting for families. This review aims to look at that in the wider context of securing permanence for children.

In terms of pressures on Council resources, the cost of looking after children has also been a matter of concern locally and nationally. Securing permanence is a positive “exit from care” for children that co-incidentally relieves cost pressures both from the direct costs of looking after children and the indirect costs of providing a “looked after children’s service” for them. This review is aimed at looking at the costs of securing permanence against the costs of a rising population of looked after children.

#### **Supporting the Cabinet & Council’s policies and objectives**

This report will examine the performance of LB Hillingdon in relation to achieving legal permanence for all looked after children who need it. It will review the obstacles to achieving that aim and make recommendations to Cabinet.

### **INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **Key Issues**

This review could look at national performance in achieving permanence for looked after children (Adoptions & SGO) and Hillingdon performance against that backdrop. It will need to hear evidence from internal and external experts as to the current issues and obstacles recognised as contributing to delays in achieving those outcomes speedily.

The review could look at the resource context to examine the value of investing in achieving permanence as a measure of managing the overall pressure of the cost of looking after children in rising numbers.

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### **Remit - who / what is this review covering?**

The main services covered by this review would be those relating to Looked After Children, in particular Adoption & Permanence Team in Children's Resources Service,, Children in Care Social Work Teams, Legal Services and to a lesser degree Family & Community social work Services.

The review is within the remit of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services.

### **Connected work** (recently completed, planned or ongoing)

*To avoid duplication, provide details of any other work which has or is being carried out on the topic either internally by departments or by external organisations / partners. (TBC)*

### **Key information required**

National and local statistics regarding the numbers of children placed for Adoption (last 3 years and current year to 31 December), the number of Adoption Orders made (for the same time period) and the timescales for achieving placement after a Placement Order was made for the child.

Comparative data from other West London Consortium members about the numbers and FTE ratios of staff employed in Adoption and Post Adoption/ Adoption Support

The findings of the Adoption Research Initiative  
([adoptionresearchinitiative.org.uk](http://adoptionresearchinitiative.org.uk))

The findings of the Norgrove Family Justice Review in relation to Care Proceedings

Any publication of the review of adoption being undertaken by Martin Nary on behalf of the Government and the Give a Child a Home campaign.

## **EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY**

Scrutiny of the documents referred to above will be required

### **Suggested Witnesses**

LB Hillingdon Adoption Panel Independent Chair, Panel members and Legal Advisor

Children's Resources Service Manager

Team Manager Adoption & Permanence team

Service Manager for Children in Care Services

Head of QA and Safeguarding to represent Independent Reviewing Officers.

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Some Hillingdon adopters

A British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) representative

A representative from the review being conducted by Martin Nary  
(Government Advisor on Adoption)

A Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS)  
representative to discuss the delays in court processes

A representative from West London Adoption Consortium

### **Intelligence**

*Are there existing surveys, intelligence or feedback from service users or residents that can be used? (Seek advice from Customer Engagement Team / Policy Team). (TBC)*

*There should also be reference made to relevant literature and websites for background reading for Members.*

### **Consultation and Communications**

*Is there any consultation planned? A survey or any promotional activities to gain public interest in the review? (seek advice from Corporate Communications) (TBC)*

### **Lines of enquiry**

Questions relating to the current performance in relation to securing permanence and those relating to the investment in permanence required to avoid escalating costs for Looked After Children.

What is the impact on children and families of support after adoption and the consequences of not providing it?

What can be done to avoid delays and to secure permanence for children who need it?

How will we attract and recruit a sufficient range of carers and adopters to meet children's needs?

What are the key roles in the partnership required to secure timely and appropriate permanence for children?

## **PROPOSALS**

Recommendations will be put forward following the witness sessions to Cabinet.

## **LOGISTICS**

### **Proposed timeframe & milestones**

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Meeting Date *	Action	Purpose / Outcome
19 January 2012	Agree Scoping Report	Information and analysis
9 February 2012	Witness Session 1	Evidence & enquiry
20 March 2012	Witness session 2	Evidence & enquiry
24 April 2012	Witness session 3	Evidence & enquiry
June 2012	Draft Final report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report

*\* Specific meetings can be shortened or extended to suit the review topic and needs of the Committee*

### **Risk assessment**

*The review needs to be resourced and to stay focused on its terms of reference in order to meet this deadline. Is there a need for other Council officers and teams to support this review – if so, has this been factored into their work plans?*

*The impact of the review may be reduced if the scope of the review is too broad. What are the risks of the Council not reviewing this service or organisation. **(TBC)***