

Briefing notes on Issues included in the Forward Plan Issue 6 2004/05

SERVICE AREA: Social Services

Report ref	Adoption and Permanency Policy
Summary / Nature of Decision to be taken/Intended Outcome	
<p>The Government has set new national adoption targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To increase by 40% the number of looked after children who are adopted, and aim to exceed this by achieving, if possible, a 50% increase, up from 2700 in 1999-00;• To increase to 95% the proportion of looked after children placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision that adoption is in the child's best interests, up from 81% in 2000-01. <p>The policy is designed to support staff in Children's Services in achieving the government's targets and achieving good outcomes for children and young people by offering the best possible service to children who cannot be cared for by their own parents.</p> <p>Where children cannot be cared for by their own parents, the Council safeguards their welfare by looking after them. There are currently 383 children looked after by the council. Many of these children will in time return to live with their families with the help of social services. Where this is not possible, Children's Services is responsible for finding alternative permanent family homes for children.</p> <p>The following principles underpin the policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delay in settling a child's long term future can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and will be avoided wherever possible.• A first class adoption and permanency service requires effective corporate working between Council departments, in particular Education and Housing and good partnerships between agencies.• Services should be provided efficiently and represent good value for money.• Services are improved by the use of research evidence.• Outcomes are improved by the provision of high quality permanency and adoption support services for parents, children and birth families. <p>Although the government's targets emphasise adoption, there are in fact four different routes to secure permanence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Long Term FosteringAdoptionFamily and Friends carersResidence Orders	

In the first instance, Brent Council explores the possibility of finding a permanent home within their extended family or with any member of their community with whom they may have a special relationship. Where it is not possible to place a child within his own family or community, the Council will look to finding carers outside of the child's community through adoption or long term foster care – to meet the child's needs for protection and permanency.

In providing an alternative permanent home for a child, Children's Services endeavours to give full and thorough consideration to establishing the best possible permanency plan for each child in accordance with each child's needs, wishes and feelings and identity. However, it will not deny a child a chance of a permanent home if it proves impossible to find a family matching its ethnicity and culture within a reasonable period of time.

The same thorough assessment process is used for kinship carers, prospective adopters or long term foster carers. Adopters are eligible for adoption allowances and receive post adoption support. Financial support and the support of an officer from the Placements Service are given to kinship carers and long term foster carers. Carers who are successful in applying for residence orders are also eligible for financial support.

Timescale for decision: Report scheduled to go to the Executive on 13th December 2004.

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