



August 2025

# PERMANENCY PLANNING

Getting it right for children!

## **Introduction**

### **Permanency Planning**

Permanency planning is the process of securing a long-term, stable living arrangement that provides children with a sense of belonging and supports their overall well-being. It aims to minimise disruptions and promote security.

Effective permanency planning considers the child's:

- Social and emotional needs
- Educational and health requirements
- Cultural and religious background
- Sense of identity and belonging

### **Key Aspects of Permanency**

- **Legal Permanence:** Involves legal arrangements such as living with birth parents, adoption, or orders like Child Arrangements or Special Guardianship.
- **Physical Permanence:** Refers to the stability of the child's home, neighbourhood, and access to resources that support their development.
- **Psychological Permanence:** Involves forming secure attachments with caregivers, feeling loved, and experiencing a sense of belonging.

### **Importance of Permanency Planning**

Children need stability to thrive. A safe and consistent home environment is essential for meeting their developmental needs and helping them reach their full potential. The uncertainty during care proceedings can be distressing, making it crucial to engage in direct work with children to help them understand the concerns and what steps are being taken to ensure their safety and well-being. Capturing the child's wishes and feelings is a vital part of this process.

In Haringey we carefully consider permanence planning early on, which is best practice for children who may come into our care. Permanence planning discussions are not just undertaken in a multi-agency forum, practitioners and managers discuss permanence all the time, looking at all possible options for a child.

## Legal Framework

The **Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Section 8)** expanded the definition of permanence under the **Children Act 1989** to include living with parents, family members, friends of the family, adoption, and other long-term care arrangements such as foster care.

Courts are required to consider:

- The impact of any harm the child has suffered or is likely to suffer.
- The child's current and future needs.
- How the long-term care plan addresses those needs.

Social workers must also apply the principles from the **Re B-S (2013, EWCA Civ 1146)** judgment, which emphasises the need for robust evidence and thorough analysis of all care options. This judgment is particularly significant in adoption cases and in presenting care recommendations to the court.

### Haringey Ofsted 2023

*“Social workers are creative and committed to helping these children overcome trauma and in trying to mitigate the impact of these moves, sometimes becoming the child's most constant relationship. Recently, systems and plans have been developed to improve matching and permanency, but these are not fully embedded to ensure that all children benefit. Recent permanence planning and matching for some younger children leaving care through adoption has been more effective.”*

Haringey received a positive outcome in its 2023 Ofsted inspection, moving from *Requires Improvement* to *Good* overall. At the time, the borough was in the early stages of embedding new permanency processes. Consequently, Ofsted identified permanency planning as an area requiring further improvement.

## Progress in Permanency Planning

Since the inspection, Haringey has significantly strengthened and embedded its permanency processes. Key developments include:

- **Monthly Permanency Panel**  
Chaired by a senior manager, these meetings monitor the progress of plans for all children for whom permanency is being sought.
- **Permanency Planning Meetings**  
Held every eight weeks within respective teams, these meetings focus on

children and young people who have not yet achieved permanency. They ensure a robust and consistent approach to planning.

### **Purpose of Permanency Planning Meetings**

The Permanency Planning Meeting (PPM) is a formal meeting convened to determine the most appropriate and permanent plan for a child who is or may in the future be unable to live with their parents, or previous carers. The child's long-term stability, security, and well-being is discussed by considering all viable options and making a timely decision. The emphasis on early consideration of permanence plans and avoidance of drift has led to the development of parallel planning for children, where efforts are made to rehabilitate children back to their birth parents as the primary plan, but the necessary information is gathered ready to put in place an alternative plan e.g. kinship care or adoption, if this fails.

### **Routes to Permanency**

The following pathways are actively pursued:

- **Return to Parents**
- **Special Guardianship**
- **Connected Carer** – Placement with someone known to the child or family
- **Long-Term Foster Care**
- **Adoption**

### **Inclusion of Key Stakeholders**

The views of significant individuals in the child's life are actively sought and incorporated into the planning process:

- **Birth Parents**  
Where appropriate, their views are considered, particularly when a child is being matched for long-term foster care.
- **Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)**  
IROs contribute their views to both the tracker and individual meetings.
- **Adopt London North (ALN)**  
For children with adoption plans, ALN reports on family finding progress to the permanency panel and planning meetings.

### **Leadership and Oversight**

A newly appointed **Service Manager for Court Service Assurance and Progression** is now in post. This role ensures that families, children, and young people are tracked from the early stages of the Public Law Outline (PLO) process through to the achievement of permanency.

**Team Managers** are responsible for implementing regular permanency planning meetings within their respective teams.

**Service Managers** for each of the service areas have oversight of all children and are responsible for presenting updates on where we are at in achieving permanency for each child in their service area at the monthly Permanency Panel.

The Permanency Panel is co-chaired by the **Director** of Children's Safeguarding and Social Care and **Head of Service** for Children in Care.

### **Special Guardianship**

A **Special Guardianship Order (SGO)** is a formal legal order granted by the Family Court that places a child in the care of another individual—typically someone with a close relationship to the child, such as a grandparent, relative, or family friend. The order confers **parental responsibility** to the special guardian.

An SGO is a **permanence order**, intended to last until the child reaches adulthood. The Special guardian is responsible for making day-to-day decisions about the child's care. While birth parents and others with parental responsibility should be consulted on significant decisions, the special guardian has the authority to make final decisions when necessary.

This arrangement allows children to grow up **outside the care system** and within their **family network**, preserving relationships with birth parents and extended family members. It supports the child's connection to their **cultural and familial heritage**, fostering a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

Although there is currently **no conclusive research** demonstrating improved outcomes for children subject to SGOs, it is well established that children in care generally experience **poorer outcomes** than those raised outside the care system.

### **Special Guardianship in Haringey**

Since **2020–2021**, the number of SGOs granted in Haringey has steadily increased, reaching **national levels** in **2024–2025**.

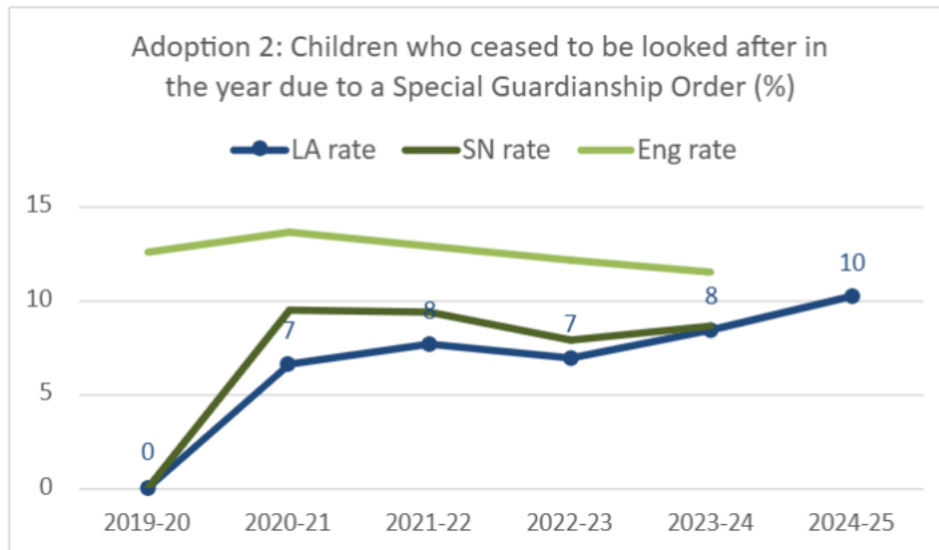
Haringey's **SGO Support Team** currently supports:

- **38 special guardians** residing within Haringey

- **84 special guardians** living in other areas
- **Total: 122 special guardian families**

This total includes families living in Haringey where the child was previously looked after by another local authority. In such cases, responsibility for post-order support transfers to Haringey after **three years**.

The table below shows the number of Special Guardianship Orders granted:



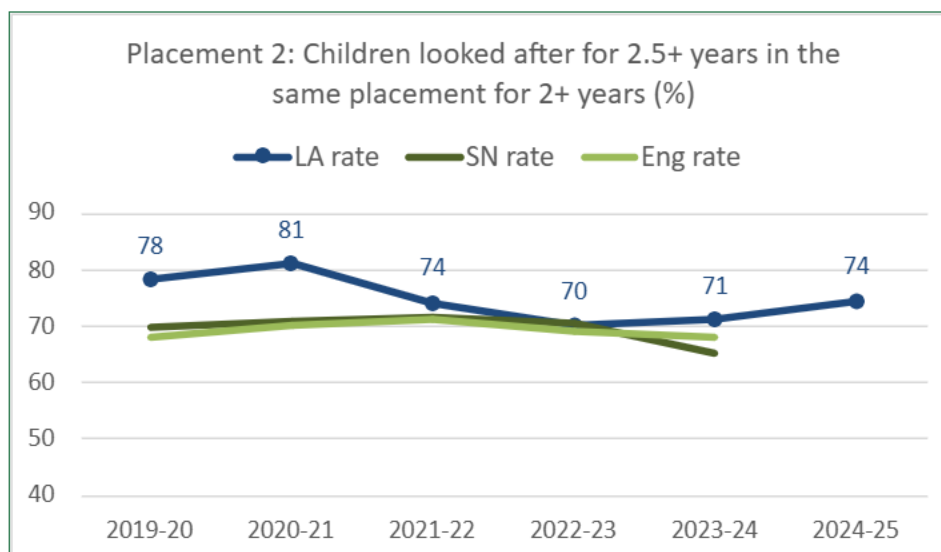
### Long-Term Foster Care

**Long-term foster care** refers to an arrangement where a child or young person lives with a committed foster family until they reach adulthood. This pathway is typically pursued when a child cannot return to their birth family, and adoption is either not possible or not appropriate. It provides a stable, nurturing environment that promotes a sense of belonging and supports the development of healthy attachments.

### **Legal and Placement Process**

When a care plan for long-term foster care is presented to the court and a **Care Order** is granted, it establishes the legal foundation for the child's placement. However, this does not signify that permanency has been achieved—it reflects that the permanency plan has been agreed.

The table above shows the number of children in the same placement for over 2.5 years. Initially, foster placements are short-term. Even if identified as a potential long-term option,



the child should be experiencing stability and settlement within the placement. Typically, children are

considered for **long-term matching via the fostering panel** after approximately **9 to 12 months** in placement.

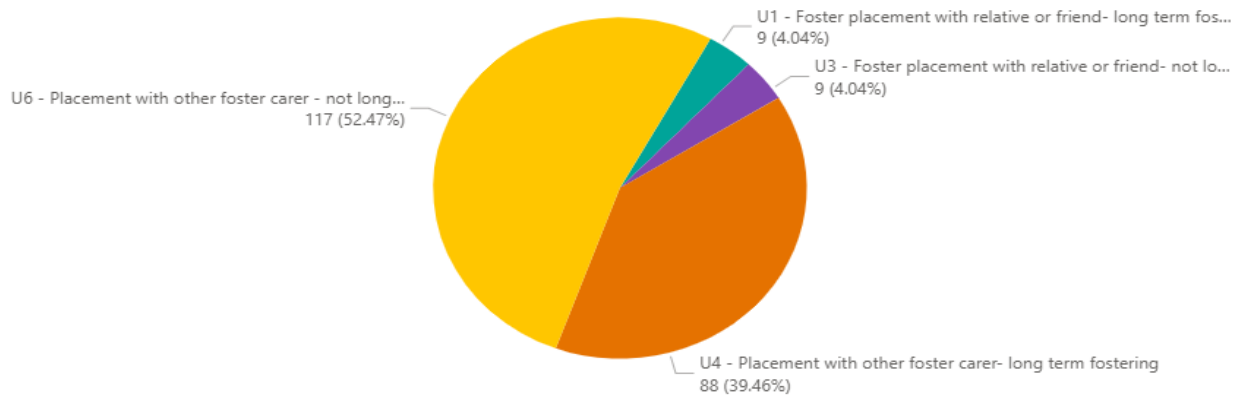
### Placement Stability and Performance

Haringey has shown strong performance in placement stability compared to national averages and statistical neighbours. A **Placement Stability Panel**, comprising representatives from education, First Steps, and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service, meets regularly to assess and support placement stability. This multi-agency approach ensures that all services are aligned in maintaining consistent and supportive placements for children.

- In **2023–2024**, **35%** of foster placements were long-term matched.
- In **2024–2025**, this increased to **40.6%**.
- Current data indicates a further rise to **42.9%**.

In Haringey we currently have **303** children in our care, with **223** of our children in care living in foster care arrangements including connected carers.

### All current fostered by Current Placement Type



42.9%

% Open Long Term Matched

**These figures above reflect Haringey's commitment to securing stable, long-term placements for children in care.**

### Considerations and Limitations

It is important to note that not all foster placements can be long-term matched immediately. Reasons include:

- Ongoing care proceedings
- Short duration in current placement
- Carers committed only to short-term fostering
- Active searches for alternative long-term carers
- Efforts to maintain school placements for continuity and stability

### Connected Carer Placements

Currently, **8.08%** of Haringey's children in care are placed with **Connected Carers**—individuals within the child's extended family or social network. Although these children remain under local authority care, such placements positively impact their **identity, sense of self, and emotional well-being** by preserving familial and cultural connections.



## **Adoption, Including Early Permanence**

### **Early Permanence**

In some cases, it becomes evident early on that a child may require adoption. This may occur when a parent decides they are unable to care for their child, the identity of the father is unknown, or no suitable alternative carer is identified within the mother's network.

In such circumstances, **Early Permanence** placements—also referred to as *Concurrency* or *Foster for Adoption*—may be considered. These placements involve foster carers who are also approved adopters. Their foster care approval is specific to the individual child.

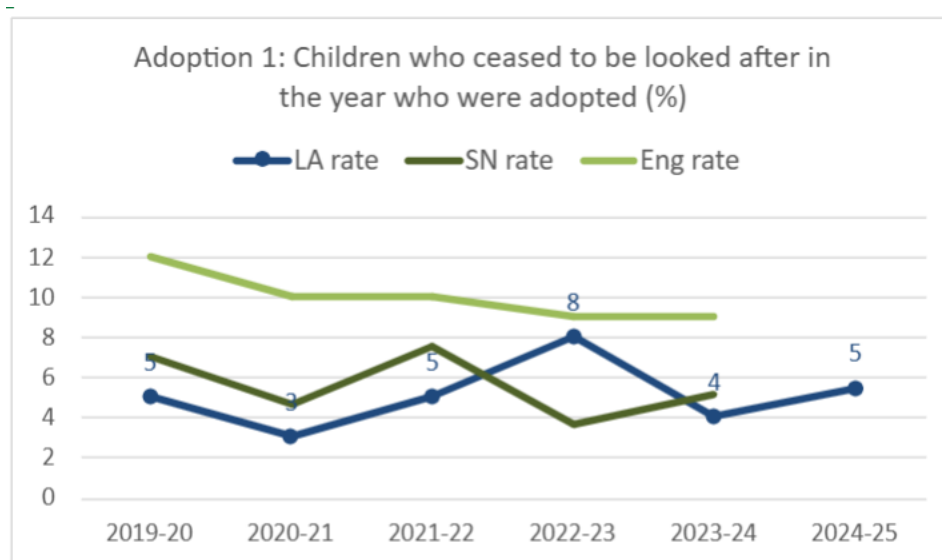
Children placed in Early Permanence arrangements are cared for in foster placements while care proceedings are ongoing. If the court ultimately approves a care plan for adoption, the foster placement transitions into a permanent adoptive home. This approach benefits the child by reducing changes in primary carers and, in many cases, allows the child to remain with the same carers throughout.

If the court grants a Placement Order, Early Permanence carers become **prospective adopters** and may apply to adopt the child in their care.

Nationally, **Adopt England** has recognised Early Permanence as a strategy to reduce delays and uncertainty for children. According to **Adoption and Special Guardianship data (October 2024)**, the average time from entry into care to adoption was **20 months**. Early Permanence placements have been shown to reduce this timeframe by **9 months**.

### **Adoption**

Since April 2025, Haringey has had **nine Adoption Orders granted**, with **three additional hearings scheduled before December 2025**. There are **three children currently placed with prospective adopters**, whose applications can be submitted once the children have been in placement for ten weeks. Additionally, **family finding is actively underway for six more children**.



## Performance Overview

**Table 1** presents Haringey's adoption figures compared to national averages and statistical neighbours. Historically, Haringey has averaged **five adoptions per year**, with a peak of **eight in 2022/2023**. In 2025/2026, we are already exceeding this figure. However, this increase is partly due to delays in court hearings, which postponed the granting of Adoption Orders for children already matched.

Over the past 18 months, there has also been a noticeable rise in **applications for leave to oppose Adoption Orders by birth parents**. This trend may be linked to changes in **Legal Aid eligibility**, as only **one of the nine Adoption Orders since April 2025** has not been opposed.

## Legal Aid and Adoption Proceedings

The **Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (Legal Aid: Family and Domestic Abuse) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2023** introduced significant changes. Since **1 March 2023**, individuals applying for leave to oppose an Adoption Order are eligible for **non-means and non-merits tested Legal Aid**, increasing access to legal representation.

## Global Majority Children and Adoption

### Definition and Context

**Adopt England** defines **transracial adoption** as a family arrangement where adopters are of a different racial or ethnic background than the child. This includes:

- Cultural differences within Asian, Black, and White communities
- Religious heritage, such as Islamic faith, which may be considered part of a child's identity

There is ongoing debate around terminology. Recently, the term “**global majority**” has been used to describe children of Black, Asian, and mixed heritage backgrounds who have been previously racially minoritised in the UK.

### **Challenges and Disparities**

Children from global majority backgrounds are **over-represented in the care system** and are **less likely to be adopted** compared to their peers. These children are more frequently recorded as having a change in care plan due to the reason: “*prospective adopters could not be found.*”

### **Initiatives and Funding**

To address these disparities, **Adopt England** has funded the **Black Adoption Project**, a collaboration with **Laurelle Brown Training & Consultancy**. The project aims to:

- Explore structural and socio-economic barriers in adoption processes
- Improve the family finding journey for Black children and adopters
- Enhance retention of Black adopters during assessment
- Create peer support and educational groups for Black adopted children and young people

### **Call to Action**

It is essential to understand and address these barriers to improve adoption outcomes for global majority children. Ensuring culturally appropriate matches and equitable access to adoption opportunities is a critical priority for our children.

### **Progress Since the Ofsted Inspection (2023)**

Since the full Ofsted inspection in **February 2023**, Haringey has made significant strides in strengthening its approach to **permanency planning** for children in care. The introduction and refinement of **permanency planning meetings** and the **permanency panel** reflect the growing confidence of practitioners in exploring all parallel planning options and ensuring that robust contingency plans are in place.

## Support for Social Workers

Haringey social workers have been supported through a range of targeted initiatives, including:

- **Workshops** on the adoption process and writing high-quality **Child Permanence Reports (CPRs)**
- **Joint training** with adoption and legal colleagues to embed understanding of legal processes
- **Revised permanency guidance** to clarify expectations and best practices
- **Process maps** outlining the adoption pathway to support timeliness and consistency
- **Consultations** with the Panel Advisor for adoption and the Kinship Team Leader to support case planning

## Impact and Recognition

As evidenced by the data presented throughout this report, there has been a **notable improvement in achieving permanency** for children in Haringey. This progress was acknowledged during the **Ofsted focused visit in February 2025**, which highlighted the improvements made since the previous full inspection.

The table below shows the number of children where permanency was achieved through either Special Guardianship Orders, Long Term Matching to carers or Adoption; demonstrating the continued progress we have made in ensuring children's permanency needs are met in a timely manner:

2024/25	No. of Children	Since April 2025	No. of children
Special Guardianship Orders granted	10	Special Guardianship Orders granted	3
Long Term Matched to carers including connected carers	13	Long Term Matched to carers including connected carers	16
Adoption Orders granted	5	Adoption Orders granted	9

Permanency remains a **core priority** for Haringey, ensuring that all children in care are supported to thrive and reach their full potential in **stable, loving, and permanent homes**. In Haringey we are passionate about achieving permanency for our children and young people and we continue to prioritise permanence for the children we support and care for.

### **Key Priorities for 2025/26**

- **Voice of the Child** - Children and young people must be listened to, respected and supported to contribute to discussions about permanence wherever possible. We in Haringey are committed to children being involved in their plans.
- **Keeping families together where safe** - Permanence starts with helping children, young people and families to live together in their communities and with their support networks. We will endeavour to look at creative solutions for children to maintain their family links.
- **Senior Management oversight** - Continue to track progress of permanency plans through the permanency panel maintaining senior management oversight.
- **Skilled Workforce** - Continuation of regular roll out of training as refresher courses for existing staff and new staff joining Haringey.