



**Warwickshire County Council  
People's Group Safeguarding**

**Local Authority Adoption Services  
and Adoption Support Agencies**

# Statement of Purpose

*Working for  
Warwickshire*



## Warwickshire County Council

### Local Authority Adoption Services and Adoption Support Agencies

#### Statement of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose is prepared under the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 Regulation 2 and the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 Regulation 5, Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standard 18).

#### 1. Aims and outcomes of the Adoption Service

1.1 The aim of the Adoption Services is

**To provide a full and comprehensive range of adoption and adoption support services, available to all parties affected by the adoption process, that will be consistent with best practice and national and departmental standards and requirements.**

The Adoption Services aims to achieve the following outcomes

- **To ensure that children and young people are securely attached to adoptive parents where this is consistent with their assessed needs, views and wishes and best interests**
- **To inform, assess, prepare and support adoptive parents so that they are able to meet the needs of children and young people placed with them throughout the duration of their childhood and beyond**
- **To ensure that all parties affected by adoption including Adoption Services staff and other professional colleagues, understand the life-long implications of adoption, are informed and supported in providing services to adopted children and their adoptive parents that are safe, appropriate and meet high standards of professional practice.**

1.2 In providing adoption and adoption support services the agency objectives are to:

- (i) Respect the confidential nature of adoption

This will be evidenced by:

- Ensuring that adoption records are kept in locked cabinets and that adoption archives are maintained in secure fireproof cabinets.
- Only allowing disclosure of information from the adoption records as permitted by the Regulations.
- Sending all adoption related correspondence in sealed envelopes and marked 'confidential'.
- Only sending electronic information in password protected and by secure email.
- Providing training to staff and adoptive parents on internet security issues

(ii) To provide a child focused and integrated service.

The Adoption Service located within Warwickshire County Council's People's Group – Safeguarding, will have aspirations for children and young people who are adopted, and their adoptive parents that are consistent with the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes in the following ways:

#### Being Healthy

- Children who are to be adopted will have a full and thorough health assessment completed and access to health services which will meet their needs.
- Prospective adoptive parents will be given full information about the child's assessed health needs and will be advised and supported in meeting these and in accessing appropriate medical and health care services.
- Adopted children have equal access to targeted health and emotional health services that are available for looked after children and young people.

#### Staying Safe

- Prospective adopters will undertake a full and thorough assessment including full reference checks.
- Prospective adopters will be counselled regarding safe caring practices.
- Child Protection Procedures and arrangements will be followed where concerns are raised about the safety and protection of a child placed for adoption including the procedure of the management of historical allegations of abuse for those young people in receipt of adoption support services.
- Placement stability is promoted by having a comprehensive matching process which assesses the strengths, risks and vulnerabilities of the proposed placement; and through the provision of adoption support services as identified in an adoption support plan and through the subsequent assessment of need for adoption support services.

### Enjoying and Achieving

- Children and young people will be matched with prospective adopters who can provide them with the care and opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential.
- Adopted children and young people will have the opportunity to meet with other adopted children for mutual benefit and enjoyment.
- Children placed for adoption and their adoptive parents can receive advice and support through the Virtual School for looked after children.

### Positive Contribution

- Children and young people who are to be adopted will, according to their age and level of understanding, receive appropriate counselling and be involved in the adoption decision making process.

### Achieving economic well-being.

- The Adoption Allowance Scheme will be sufficiently flexible to allow any specific needs of the adopted child/young person to be met.

- 1.3 The Children's Teams within Warwickshire are primarily responsible for the assessment, care planning and decision making around adoption for children in care and relinquished children. This is underpinned by procedural and legal arrangements and processes that have to be put in place where it has been decided that adoption is the most appropriate long term plan for the child/young person that will meet their needs. Key tasks include counselling birth family members and completing counselling and direct/life story work with the child/young person that will ensure that they understand the meaning of adoption and why this is planned for their care.
- 1.4 The Adoption Service Team will work closely and collaboratively with the Children's Teams in ensuring that adoption planning for children is managed expeditiously to reduce potential delay. Adoption planning and placements will be in accordance with legal requirements, national standards and children in care guidance and procedures.
- 1.5 To ensure anti oppressive and non-discriminatory practice Adoption Services will be delivered without bias or discrimination. Particular difficulties encountered by some sections of the community in approaching the service are recognised and where necessary arrangements will be made to counter these difficulties.
- 1.6 The 'adoption checklist' as defined in the Adoption and Children 2002 Section 1 will be followed when making the decision that a child and young person should be adopted. The paramount consideration will be the child/young person's welfare throughout his life requiring the adoption plan to be based on a full assessment of the child's needs

and circumstances, having given consideration of the child views and wishes and placement options for the child/young person within the extended family.

- 1.7 To provide services effectively and efficiently, in responding to feedback the Adoption Service will look at new and better ways of providing services. Arrangements will be set up with voluntary, independent and statutory sector services where this is the best way to provide services. Adoption Services and developments are planned and reviewed annually through a 'team and unit' planning process and the Annual Adoption Development Plan. Annual reports are prepared summarising the work of the Adoption Team, the Adoption Panel and Adoption Support Service. A further 6 monthly interim report is also produced that is scrutinised by the Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group and Safeguarding Strategic Leadership Team.

## **2. Who are Adoption Services for?**

2.1 In Warwickshire the Adoption Services are for:

- children who are to be adopted and adopted;
- birth parents who are unable to permanently care for their children or meet their needs appropriately;
- prospective and approved adopters including applicants who seek to adopt from overseas and non agency applicants e.g. step parents;
- children and their adoptive parents who require an assessment of the need for adoption support services both prior to and after the granting of the adoption orders;
- adult adopted people and members of their birth families.

2.2 The Adoption Services Team provides the following services:

- information and advice on adoption related matters (duty service);
- recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters;
- overseas adoption home study reports and post adoption services;
- specific family finding activities for children with an adoption plan;
- joint work with the Children's Teams on adoption related issues (this can include time limited direct work or counselling);
- counselling, advice, court reports in respect of non agency adoption(step parent applications);
- input into the ongoing development of the service reflecting legal and regulatory guidelines and standards;
- services in relation to adoption support including training and support groups

## **3. Procedure for assessing the needs of those requesting adoption support services from the agency**

- 3.1 In relation to adoption support the district based Children's Teams complete the 'assessment of need for adoption support services' using the National Assessment Framework. Where a core assessment has been completed it may be appropriate for an adoption social worker to be invited to join the family assessment meeting held prior to finalising the adoption support plan. Following assessment referrals are made to other services and agencies as appropriate. The Children's Team remain responsible for the coordination and review of adoption support services.
- 3.2 In addition, Children's Teams provide the following adoption support services:
- financial support including adoption allowances, settling in allowances, applications for grants towards aids and adaptations and payments arising from adoption support assessments;
  - respite care services;
  - services and support in relation to face to face contact.
- 3.3 The adoption support services available through the Adoption Services Team provided primarily to adoptive parents include:
- post approval support, placement matching and adoption support – including support groups;
  - quarterly Newsletter to adopters;
  - training for adoptive parents;
  - organisation of events to enable adopted children to meet;
  - adoption support services as specified in the 'assessment of need for adoption support';
  - Letterbox Information Exchange Scheme and other services associated with post adoption contact;
  - Adoption Support payments such as transitional payments to foster carers who adopt, costs of therapeutic services, supplementary payments to prospective adopters to allow extended adoption leave, short term child care costs.
  - Independent adopter mentoring scheme
- 3.4 Other services provided by the Adoption Services Team are:
- Section 98 Birth Records Counselling and mediation services for adult adopted persons and their birth family members;
  - Services to birth relatives including initial counselling and referral to Adoption Support for mediation services;
  - Advice, support and training for social workers, foster carers and other staff on adoption issues;
  - Development work and services in partnership with other agencies;
  - Out of Hours Support Line for adopters;
  - Adoption Duty Service.

- 3.5 Other agencies commissioned to provide services on behalf of Warwickshire County Council through service level specifications and contracts are:
- Adoption Support (Birmingham) with the main emphasis being on mediation and tracing services for adopted adults and their relatives;
  - St Francis Children's Society – Birth Connections Service
  - Journey's – a targeted emotional health and emotional wellbeing service providing a range of services and training for adopted children, those placed for adoption and their adoptive parents. (This service is delivered by Coventry MIND and RELATE)
  - RELATE Adopters Mentoring Scheme

#### **4. Name and address of Manager of the Adoption/Adoption Support Service**

Lesley Malley  
Saltisford Office Park  
Ansell Way  
Warwick  
CV34 4UL

Tel no 01926743094  
Email: lesleymalley@warwickshire.gov.uk

#### **5. Qualification and Experience of Manager**

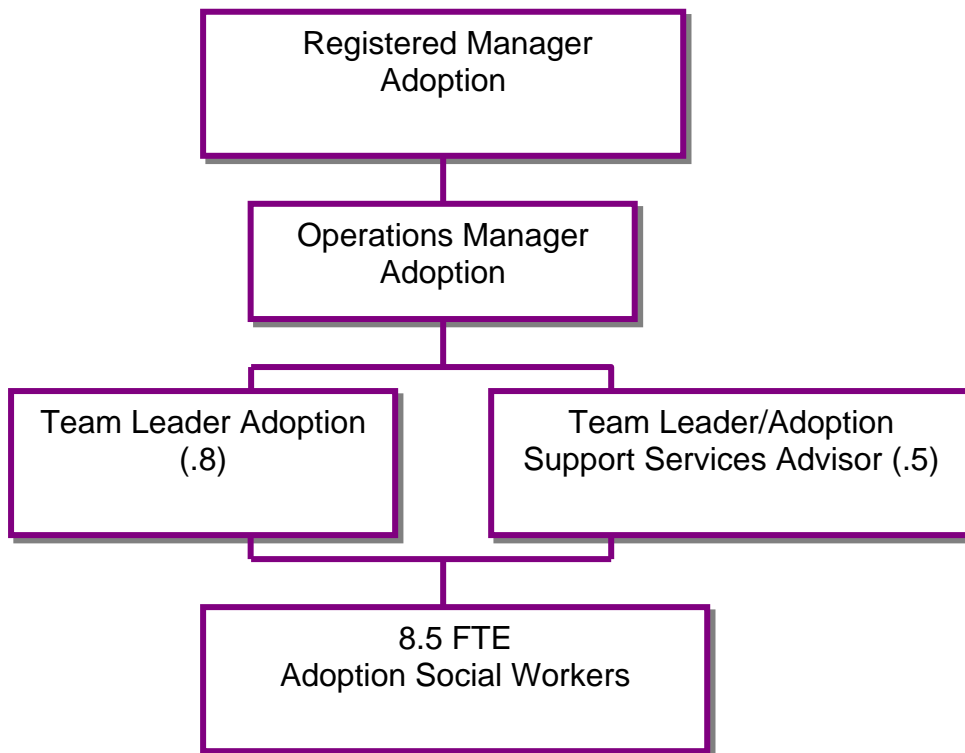
- 5.1 The Registered Manager has both professional and managerial qualifications having qualified as a social worker in 1985 and holds a Certificate in Management Studies from Nottingham/Trent University. The Manager has a breadth and depth of experience as a social worker and manager which totals 34 years. This spans 4 Local Authorities and a voluntary adoption agency and includes a range of social work practice including residential, children and families adoption and fostering.

#### **6. Number, qualifications and experience of staff employed for the purposes of the Adoption Service**

- 6.1 As part of the People's Group - Safeguarding, all staff employed in the Adoption Services Team and those involved in adoption work in the Children's Teams are recruited through a robust and equal opportunities recruitment and selection process. All social work staff will have:
- professional social worker qualification e.g. CQSW, DipSW;
  - Enhanced Criminal Records checks;
  - professional registration with the General Social Care Council.

- 6.2 Only qualified social work staff can be case accountable but they may supervise aspects of adoption work assigned to unqualified workers. In line with the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, adoption reports are completed by social workers with 3 years post qualifying experience in childcare social work including direct experience of adoption work. In circumstances where they do not have the required experience arrangements will be made to ensure that their supervisor has the necessary experience and will sign the necessary adoption reports.
- 6.3 All staff members have regular supervision and have an Annual Performance Review where development/training needs are identified. Staff Training is commissioned through the Staff Development Advisory Group and is evaluated.
- 6.4 The Central Adoption Services Team has the equivalent of 8.5 full time social workers and 2 Team Leaders (one .8 and one .5) and an Operations Manager. (Staff list detailing experience and qualifications can be provided on request)

**7. The Organisation and Structure of the Adoption Service**



**8. Monitoring, evaluating and Quality Assurance processes and systems in the provision of Adoption Services**

- 8.1 A range of departmental and internal arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the Adoption Service. These include:
- 8.2 **Management processes**  
The Adoption Service is reviewed at 3 yearly intervals. On an annual basis an Adoption Report is produced which summarising adoption activity and highlights service achievements and developments. This is supported by an interim Report to monitor the progress of the service within any 12 month period. These reports are received by the Senior Leadership Team (Safeguarding), and Corporate Parenting Elected Members Steering Group.
- 8.3 The Adoption Panel Administrator maintains spreadsheets of all Panel activity from which performance data can be drawn and correlated for reporting purposes.
- 8.4 The Directorate's Commissioning Support Service (CSS) produces regular reports on a full range of child care including adoption activity and adoption support referrals. Also as part of wider reporting on performance within Children's Services the produce monthly and quarterly reports on adoption activity and performance. They complete the Department for Children, Schools and Families return. Additional work can be commissioned to explore service activity from time to time as required. The Registered manager produces quarterly statistics on the number of the children adopted, those placed but not yet adopted and those children with an adoption planned who have e yet to be placed. The report also details the number of approved adopters and those who are currently being assessed
- 8.5 The Senior Leadership Team Safeguarding receives these quarterly reports on adoption activity and is the forum for reviewing and highlighting both factual and 'soft' information about the agency's adoption and adoption support activity and practice.
- 8.6 District based Children's Panels oversee twin tracking and permanency planning for all children in care with a view to ensuring that clear plans are in place and delay is reduced in securing permanent placements for them.
- 8.7 Complaints about the Adoption and Adoption Support Services are monitored by the Customer Relations Team. This information is also overseen by the Registered Manager for Adoption/Adoption Support Service so that remedial actions can be taken and service improvements delivered.
- 8.8 In relation to team processes both the Adoption Services Team and the Children's Team complete annual Team and Unit Plans that establish targets for the delivery of services including adoption services. These are approved by the Head of Children's Services - Safeguarding.

- 8.9 The Adoption Services Team retains a database of all adoption enquirers/applicants and monitor timescales for completing the stages of the adoption application process.
- 8.10 All staff members have regular supervision in line with the departmental policy. The service operates a workload management scheme. All staff have an annual performance review where development and training needs are identified. These are aggregated into the Children's Services Annual Development and Training Plan.
- 8.11 In terms of service processes the Adoption Services Team through the Placement Allocation Group retains an overview of all children to be placed for adoption, children and young people for whom adoption is the twin track plan prospective adopters and applicants who are currently being assessed for adoption. The team undertakes progress chasing activities and retains an overview to ensure that within Adoption Services 'needs and resource' balance and are effectively managed. The Adoption Team Managers attend the district based Children's Panels.
- 8.12 Prospective and approved adopters are invited to attend the Adoption Panel at the approval stage and are invited to comment on the service they have received. They are also sent a 'Comment Form' post approval to comment in more detail about the recruitment, preparation and assessment processes. Adopter Comment Form are aggregated on a yearly basis and considered by the Adoption Services Team.
- 8.13 Written evaluations are received from prospective and approved adopters following Adoption Preparation Group and post approval training.
- 8.14 Team Leader representatives from the Children's Teams meet with the Adoption Operations Manager to discuss practice issues and share information on a quarterly basis.
- 8.15 The service has completed an Equality Impact Assessment that provides the opportunity to review how its policies and procedures impact upon marginal groups within the community and what changes are required to ensure that they are receptive to the needs and requirements of all communities.

## **9. Procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters**

- 9.1 Prospective adopters will be prepared for adoption through a robust and thorough process that will aim to ensure the future placement safety and security for child to be placed.
- 9.2 Recruitment priorities are outlined in the Annual Team and Unit Plan and through the recruitment strategy for the Adoption Services Team. The recruitment, information and preparation processes serve to raise

awareness of adoption generally, and specifically the needs of children currently waiting for placement.

- 9.3 Initial telephone advice is given to enquirers about domestic and inter-country adoption (where applicable), the implications of adoption, the circumstances of children waiting for placement and the preparation, application and assessment process. When the Adoption Information Pack requested by the enquirer, it will be sent to them within 3 days of the initial telephone discussion.
- 9.4 Adoption Information meetings are held every two months on different days at different times including evening. They provide enquirers with:
- information about Warwickshire as an Adoption Service;
  - adoption activity and the number and needs of children who require adoption;
  - the process for adoption approval for both adopters and children.
- 9.5 Following the Information Meeting enquirers will send through a request for an office meeting, following which a decision is made to either:
- accept an application;
  - defer an application to adopt;
  - undertake early checks and references;
  - counsel out as unsuitable.
- 9.6 Applicants are then prioritised for attending the Adoption Preparation Groups These are facilitated at a frequency, on different days, and times to enhance the opportunity for enquirers to attend. This is to ensure that the delay between application and the opportunity to attend the preparation groups is minimised. However, on occasions due to demand and priorities, some enquirers may need to wait for future groups. The reasons for this are outlined in writing to them.
- 9.7 All prospective adoptive parents must be able to demonstrate that they fully appreciate the significance of adoption and the long term impact that it will have on the child, themselves and their extended network of family and friends. They are required to attend all three days of the adoption preparation groups. Applicants who are seeking to adopt for a second time will not be required to attend the preparation groups if these have been completed within the previous 5 years.
- 9.8 Applications to adopt will be accepted on merit and enquiries and applications are welcomed from all sections of the community irrespective of gender, marital status, sexual orientation or religious persuasion.
- 9.9 The BAAF Prospective Adopters Report is completed. At the outset of the home study process an Assessment Agreement will be signed and

the service aims to complete the assessment within 8 months of the agency accepting the adoption application. The assessment will include taking up statutory references, visits to 3 referees and former partners and children as appropriate, and in all cases a reference from current employer/s. Where applicants have previously worked with children or vulnerable people references are also sought from these employers also. Applicants have the opportunity to read, comment and sign the completed assessment report.

- 9.10 Prospective adopters are invited to attend the County Council Adoption Panel when their application is being considered. They are subsequently informed of the agency decision within 5 days of the Panel meeting once the Head of Children's Services –Safeguarding, as the agency decision has considered the Adoption Panel recommendation. Where the decision is not approve as suitable to adopt the prospective adopters are advised and notified in writing of their right to make representation including Independent Review Mechanism.
- 9.11 Approved adopters are reviewed annually. In circumstances where an adopter has not been matched with a placement within 2 years the review is considered by the Adoption Panel. Where three years have elapsed a reassessment report is required that will consider whether the applicants are still suitable to adopt.
- 9.12 Approved adopters will have their approval details forwarded to the West Midlands Regional Family Placement Consortium and National Adoption Register, thereby extending the range of potential placement matches for them.
- 9.13 Following approval adopters will receive a comprehensive Post Approval Information Pack. They are invited to support groups and training events that are delivered both by Warwickshire's Adoption Services Team and jointly commissioned with neighbouring agencies. They will also receive the Adoption Newsletter.
- 9.14 The minimum visiting frequency by their adoption social worker is 3 monthly.
- 9.15 The proposed match is presented to the Adoption Panel using the Matching Matrix Form, Adoption Placement Report that must be signed by them. An Adoption Support Plan and Contact Plan are also presented to the Panel. Following the approval of the proposed placement match an Adoption Planning Meeting is held and the prospective adopters receive the Adoption Placement Plan and must formally acknowledge their acceptance of the placement by signing the placement undertaking.
- 9.16 The adoption social worker remains involved with the adoptive family for 12 months following the granting of the adoption order. Where

required, the Independent Reviewing Officer who reviews the child's adoption placement up until the adoption order is made can specify whether a future review is required in respect of contact or adoption support.

## **10. Complaints Procedure**

- 10.1 All users of the adoption services will be advised their right to make a complaint or representation about the services they have received. They will be issued with Warwickshire County Council Complaints and Representation leaflet. Children and young people are issued with information about the Coventry and Warwickshire Children's Rights Project and through the Children's Guide will also be made aware of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills, and the Children's Commissioner.
- 10.2 Upon receipt of a complaint or representation, at Stage 1 the matter is referred to the appropriate manager who will investigate the matter and report their findings to the complainant within 28 days unless exceptional circumstances as explained to the complainant make this impractical.
- 10.3 For more complex matters, or when the issue has not been resolved under Stage 1 an investigation is undertaken by an independent complaints investigator appointed by the Customer Relations Team Stage 3 of the procedure involves the matter being referred to the Review Panel consisting of an independent person and elected members.
- 10.4 An annual report of issues and outcomes under the complaints procedures is considered by departmental management groups and elected members.

## **11. Address of Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills**

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Anns Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404045  
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

## **Signatories to this Statement of Purpose**

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**Lesley Malley**  
**Registered Manager – Adoption**

**Date**

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**Phil Sawbridge**  
**Head of Service - Safeguarding**

**Date**

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**Cllr Heather Timms**  
**Lead Member for Children’s Services**

**Date**