

FOI Status: Public	<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNGER ADULTS DEPARTMENT</b>	Version: 1.0 Review Due: August 2011
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## **DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE**

### **Statement of Purpose 2011/2012**

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 18 of the Adoption Services Minimum Standards 2011 (Care Standards Act, 2000) and regulations 2, 3 and 4 of the Local Authority Service (England) Regulations 2003. Regulations 3 and 24B and Regulation 4 of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 200 and Regulation 5 of the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 require an Adoption Agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information.

This Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the above requirements and will provide a source of information to all areas of the Children and Younger Adults Department, partner agencies, adopters and prospective adopters, children who may be adopted and their parents or guardians and adopted people, their parents, birth family and former guardians.

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed no less than annually.  
The Adoption Service of Derbyshire County Council is conducted in a manner that is consistent with this Statement of Purpose.

## **Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Adoption Service**

The primary aims of Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service are to:

- Provide high quality child-centred legally permanent placements either through adoption or special guardianship. Legal permanence is a positive alternative for children to enable them to grow and reach adulthood, within a stable and loving family environment; this process is to be kept within an agreed timescale and all parties involved will be kept fully informed throughout.
- Recruit, train and prepare sufficient adopters who are best able to meet the needs of children referred for adoption. Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service acknowledges that successful outcomes for children can be found with married couples, couples in a relationship, couples in a same sex relationship, single people and people with or without birth children. Where this cannot be achieved within the agency, every step will be taken to find suitable adopters outside our own resources.
- Provide training, advice and support to social workers, who are working with children and families, where adoption is the plan.
- Provide support services, advice and guidance for adoptive children, adoptive families and birth families before, during and after the adoption process, where appropriate and applicable.
- Provide support services to adopted adults and their families

The primary objectives of Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service are to:

- Ensure that, prior to the matching process commencing, the child and their needs have been fully assessed and considered before planning for adoption. Full consideration will be given to family and friends as possible kinship carers, who are able to meet the needs of the child through a legally permanent order.
- Ensure that the views of children and young people have been heard and acted upon before any decisions concerning their future are taken – that full consideration is given to the welfare, safety and assessed individual needs of the child for permanency. These considerations are the core of the process and come before the needs of anyone else involved.
- Work with birth families so as to achieve, wherever possible, an effective partnership to assist the child in making a successful transition to an adoptive placement and to maximise the opportunities for the adoptive placement to remain stable.

- Ensure that where adoption outside the birth family has been identified as the care plan, an appropriate match is found at the earliest opportunity in order to minimise delay.
- Seek the following, where a child has been matched with adopters, unless they are inconsistent with promoting the best interests and welfare of the child:
  - Consideration in placing siblings together.
  - Contact, either direct or indirect, with the birth family and individuals significant to the child is undertaken, where appropriate and applicable.
  - All needs, including education and health care, are met by the adoptive parents.
  - A period of introduction, prior to placement commencing, appropriate to the child's age, abilities and understanding – the introduction will be child rather than adult led.
  - The views of the child to be sought prior to, throughout and following the placement process, on a regular basis and in a manner appropriate to their age, abilities and understanding.
- Recruit a wide range of prospective adopters able to meet the diverse needs of children – while matching does not rely upon exact ethnic or cultural counterparts, adoptive parents and prospective adopters will respect diversity in gender, abilities, ethnicity, religious and spiritual needs, culture, language and sexuality in society, and in the backgrounds of the child they adopt, and choices the child may make in later life. Furthermore, through training, supervision and personal development, all adoption team staff members will be expected to value diversity and counter any discriminatory practice.
- Use every opportunity to recruit prospective adopters, from all sections of the community, by promoting the service in a positive fashion and providing a timely and well informed response to any and all enquiries.
- Provide to relatives and friends, approved as adoptive parents or special guardians, the same support and assessment of needs as any other adoptive parent would receive.
- Find alternative placements, where none can be found 'in house', through the East Midlands Consortia, the National Adoption Register and any other appropriate service
- Recruit, train and maintain a skilled and appropriately qualified team capable of assessing, matching and supporting adoptive placements, who are committed to ensure that children placed for adoption receive a safe, secure and loving family whilst remaining sensitive to the needs adoptive parents and birth relatives during the adoption process.

- To ensure that at all times Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service is fully compliant with all legislation and policy requirements, relating to the running of the agency and that all written materials are informative, up to date, fit for purpose and freely available in a variety of media.
- Provide innovative and high quality training packages, covering all aspects of the adoption process, for adoptive parents and staff members.

Furthermore, Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service will:

- Counsel, prepare and assess people who wish to adopt a child from outside the United Kingdom.
- Undertake welfare supervision and prepare reports for the Courts, for step parent and inter-country adoption applications.
- Prepare reports for the Adoption Panel and the Courts on any aspect of adoption that is required.
- Assist in the arrangements for direct contact between adopted children and their birth families where this is deemed appropriate.
- Manage safe contact between adopted children, adoptive and birth families through the Letterbox Contact system, which will be reviewed regularly.
- Offer support services to anyone affected by the adoption process, to include individual counselling, support events and training groups.
- Provide Birth Records Counselling for adopted adults and provide an intermediary service, for adoptive adults and their birth families, wishing to meet.

The main principles and values which underpin Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service are to:

- Place the needs of the child at the heart of the adoption process, act in their best interests at all times and make sure that the service works in a way that avoids both disruption and delay. Wherever possible, a child should be brought up by their own birth family but where this cannot be achieved, the child's safety, well being and future development is the primary concern of the adoption agency. Adoption and/or legal permanency is primarily a service for children and no adult has the automatic right to become an adoptive parent or special guardian.
- Treat every individual, within the adoption process, with respect and courtesy. We will, wherever possible and appropriate and according to age and ability, consult and listen to children we are responsible for and explain to them what is happening in a way they may best understand. We will treat adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents as valued and crucial stakeholders in our service and that they, in turn, respect the principles and values that guide our service. We will work sensitively with birth parents whose children are to be adopted.

- Work in partnership with others, including other adoption agencies and colleagues in the foster service, to find the best possible outcome for the child. Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service acknowledges that the adoption process is an ongoing and continually developing responsibility, one which we and partner organisations and co-professionals will support for as long as is necessary.
- A commitment to anti-discriminatory practice – we recognise the gender, abilities, ethnicity, religious and spiritual needs and cultural origins and background of the child for whom we are responsible and welcome enquiries from prospective adopters irrespective of gender, abilities, ethnicity, religious and spiritual needs, culture, and sexuality.
- To fully recognise and take into account the needs of disabled children when making decisions about them.
- A commitment to consultation and quality assurance, to continually look at ways of improving the services. Adoptive parents are encouraged to express their views throughout both the approval and the matching process, through ongoing evaluation. Children and young people, both awaiting adoption, and, where applicable, from the adopters' birth family will be consulted in a way appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Recognise that adoption has life long implications for all involved and this requires life long commitment from many different organisations, professions and individuals. We will work with others to meet the needs for services for those affected by adoption.

### **Standards of Care to be followed by Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service**

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service aims to provide safe, secure and loving permanent home for children who are unable to live with their birth families, through adoption or permanent fostering, which will meet that child's needs until they reach adulthood and beyond. This will be achieved through compliance with, but not limited to, the standards, regulations and requirements below:

- Children Act 1989
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Standards Act 2002
- Inter-country Adoption Standards and Associated Regulations 2003
- Adoption Support Services Regulations and Standards 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Adoption Guidance 2011
- National Minimum Adoption Standards and Associated Regulations 2011

## **Status and Constitution of Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service**

Derbyshire County Council is an approved adoption agency under Section 2(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and will be inspected against the Care Standards Act 2001.

### **Improving Outcomes for Children**

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service pledges to constantly improve the care provision it offers and consistently achieve the best possible outcomes, for all children and young people in its' care. Our intent is guided by the Every Child Matters green paper (supported by the Children Act 2004), and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the National Minimum Standards to ensure a genuine partnership between all those involved within the adoption process, which can be summarised through best outcomes from the Government, local government and other statutory agencies, including the 5 outcomes seen as being key to the well being and development of children and young people.

- **Being healthy**

All children and young people have the right to have their physical and mental health safeguarded and promoted and the right to live a healthy lifestyle. The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully met and recognised and taken into account

- **Being safe**

All children and young people have the right to be safe and secure, protected from harm and neglect, and to live in an environment that enables them to develop to their full physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social potential. It is essential that staff receive relevant development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.

- **Enjoying and achieving**

All children and young people have the right to the best possible education and training, growing up in a loving environment which meets their identified needs and equips them to live full adult lives. They also have the right to time and support to pursue appropriate leisure interests, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful life. Making a positive contribution

- **Make a positive contribution**

All children and young people have the right to family life wherever possible and to be supported to play their part within the wider community. They have the right to a continuity of care, wherever possible, and to develop and preserve their own

identities. They also have a right to have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account as well as being provided with information which will enable them to make choices about their lives, subject to their age and understanding and so be enabled to make a positive contribution to the community and to society.

- **Economic well-being**

All children have the right to live above the poverty threshold and to be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will help them overcome socio-economic disadvantage where necessary. All children should feel valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self confidence and self worth.

Prospective adoptive parents and adoptive parents will be encouraged and supported to help their child achieve these outcomes.

## **Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People Awaiting Adoption in Derbyshire**

Derbyshire County Council Children and Younger Adults Department works in partnership with other child care agencies and professionals, across the county, to deliver a comprehensive range of services aimed at ensuring children do not become accommodated, or remain so, except where this is consistent with their assessed needs.

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service supports and complements this role, by providing a range of services, specifically aimed at meeting the needs of children in the county, those of their families and of adoptive parents and prospective adopters.

In particular, the service provides the following:

- An adoption service to Derbyshire residents wishing to adopt children.
- An adoption service to non-Derbyshire residents wishing to adopt children.
- A contracted adoption service to Derbyshire residents wishing to adopt from overseas and outside the United Kingdom.
- Family Finding for children for whom there is no immediate, available placement.
- A court and welfare service to children adopted from overseas and outside the United Kingdom.
- A comprehensive assessment and support service to Connected People (previously Family and Friends carers) wishing to care for a child permanently under the auspices of Special Guardianship order.
- A post placement/post adoption service for adoptive families.
- Support services to adopted adults.
- Support services to birth relatives of adopted children and adults.

- An adoption support service for adoptive families prior to and after the making of an adoption order.

## **Recruitment Strategy, Policy and Procedure**

Derbyshire County Council recruits adoptive parents through a number of methods, incorporating advertising in national, specialist adoption publications, internal publications and information events.

Current recruitment activity includes:

- Regular Family Finding events held in-house, open to all approved prospective adopters within the county and belonging to other local adoption agencies, focussing on fast tracking applicants who express an interest in children featured at the event.
- Promoting children waiting to be matched through publications such as 'Be My Parent' and 'Children Who Wait'.
- Promoting the service and the needs of children waiting to be matched during Adoption Week.
- Participation in the East Midland's Consortium joint Family Finding events.
- Participation in Family Finding events organised by the National Adoption Register.
- Liaising with the Fostering Recruitment team to ensure that where a candidate expresses an interest in both fostering and adoption, a joint visit is undertaken.
- Liaising with area fostering teams, to assist in supporting foster carers who wish to adopt a child placed in their care.

All recruitment is undertaken by the Assessment and Placement team, based centrally in Matlock, with the primary aim of finding adoptive families for children who will give them the best possible opportunity to grow in a safe, secure and loving home which will enable them to reach their full potential as they grow towards adulthood. Prospective adopters are recruited from across the county although applicants from outside Derbyshire will be considered, but only where those applicants are interested in adopting a child with more complex needs and so add to our pool of prospective adopters, enabling better matches to be made.

The Assessment and Placement team welcomes and will respond positively to enquiries from all prospective adopters, in order to find a wide range of potential placements to meet the needs of the children we are responsible for. Wherever possible, we will match a child and a prospective adopter according to ethnicity, cultural heritage, spiritual or faith background but where this is not possible we will place where these significant factors can be promoted. Applicants have to be aged over 21 years to begin the process, but there is no upper age limit. However, candidates do need to be in good health (as verified by a medical) and we cannot, under BAAF (British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering) guidelines, consider anyone who smokes to adopt children less than five years old or any child with health concerns. We generally aim for a gap of no more than 45 years between parents and their children

All expressions of interest are taken centrally at our Matlock office and recorded immediately onto Frameworki client records system. Enquirers will have a discussion with a social worker to ensure they have considered the implications of adoption and to discuss any particular issues. If the enquirer remains interested the candidate will receive an information pack within five days of their inquiry. This provides comprehensive information on the adoptions service, the needs of children awaiting placement, the criteria required to become an adoptive parent and a full description of the process and the timescales involved. If a candidate is interested in proceeding further, they will be offered an initial interview with an adoption social worker within two months of registering their interest.

This interview will allow the prospective adopter to further explore the adoption process whilst providing the Assessment and Placement team worker with the opportunity to determine whether the applicant is able to sufficiently meet the needs of children requiring adoptive placements. If the Assessment Team Manager decides that the enquiry should be progressed, prospective adopters are invited to make a formal application, attend Adoption Preparation training and undergo assessment, by a qualified adoption social worker. The Assessment and Placement team will only assess prospective adopters who are able to provide a placement for a child requiring adoption. Where the number of applicants exceeds the demand for placements (especially with respect to young infants, with no health issues), Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service will prioritise applications – this intent is made clear in our information to the public and on our website [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/adoption). If it is not possible to accept the candidate's application at this time, the prospective adopter is advised of the reasons for the decision and made aware of any possible options that may be open to them.

Once an application, from a prospective adopter, has been accepted and if that application is subsequently rejected, the prospective adopters have the right of appeal to the IRM (Independent Review Mechanism), information of which can be found in the appendices.

## **Preparation**

All prospective adopters are expected to attend preparation groups, either before or during their adoption assessment. The preparation groups are held throughout the year and involve contributions from individuals concerned in all aspects of the adoption process and also social care professionals and colleagues from partner agencies e.g. CAMHS (Children's and Adolescent's Mental Health Service).

Foster carers wishing to adopt a child they currently have in placement are expected to attend the same preparation groups as prospective adopters. Applicants, who have previously adopted, must also attend these groups, although if they have completed a course within the last two years, they are not expected to attend for the full duration.

## **Assessment and Approval**

All applicants will be treated with respect and all enquiries and discussion will relate to their ability to offer a safe, secure and loving home to a child needing adoption, and the service will respect the confidentiality of all those involved.

The assessment and preparation of prospective adopters uses the framework provided by the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). Derbyshire County Council's adoption agency will endeavour to complete the assessment within the timeframe of 8 months as stipulated in National Adoption Standards (2001), whilst allowing time for prospective adoptive parents to reflect, discuss and question their social worker. Where this is not possible, reasons for delay will be recorded and all parties kept informed.

In accordance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, Derbyshire County Council will carry out statutory checks and references in relation to all applicants, to include: an Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check, six written personal references of whom at least three are visited (two personal references and one family – in the case of a joint application, two personal references and two family will be visited), employment references, references from schools (if the candidates have children of school age), local authority checks and medical checks. In addition, CRB checks will be taken on any other person in the prospective adopter's household aged 16 and over. If the prospective adopter has been in a previous relationship, their former partner will be contacted where there are concerns of a practical or safeguarding nature and all birth children, where applicable, will be interviewed.

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service will not exclude any applications on the basis of health or lifestyle choices. All applicants will undergo a medical assessment and issues such as smoking, diet, weight, alcohol consumption and past or ongoing illnesses will be discussed in the assessment and reported to Panel (a candidates' family history and any criminal convictions (either their own or of members of their household) will be similarly discussed so as to ensure that the prospective adopters will meet the safeguarding thresholds necessary to provide a home suitable for a child awaiting permanent placement. Medical reports are prepared at the start of the assessment, where health issues may be anticipated and, in such cases, the Panel Medical Advisor will inform a decision as to whether to commence or continue the assessment. As children placed for adoption have already suffered significant losses, it is important that their adoptive parents will be able to meet their needs throughout their childhood.

### Structure and Role of Panel

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service operates two Adoption and Permanence Panels, each meeting once per month, although additional panels can be arranged if necessary. The panel satisfies both the Adoption and Fostering Regulations, in order to consider and make recommendations, about permanence plans for children.

Each Adoption and Permanence Panel draws members from a 'Central List', and whilst there is no maximum number of members, the quorum for each meeting is five members, as long as the chair or vice chair, a social worker and an independent member are present and all papers are presented to members five days prior to panel.

The panel membership consists of the following:

- Independent Panel Chair
- Vice Chair
- Medical Advisor
- Independent Members – with personal or professional experience of adoption or fostering
- CAYA representatives – which includes adoption social workers or fostering and social workers with childcare experience.

A professional advisor, legal advisor and minute taker will be in attendance.

The panels undertake the following functions:

- To consider reports on potential adopters and permanent foster carers and recommend whether they should be approved.
- To consider whether a child, where this is appropriate; to recommend that they be placed for adoption.
- Whether an application should be made for a placement order in respect of a child.
- To consider matches between adopters and children and to make recommendations with regard to these.
- To receive disruption reports.
- To consider the six monthly reports about the work of the Panel.
- To consider the payment of an adoption allowance.
- To provide advice to staff members about care planning, contact arrangements, support to adoptive families and the placement of siblings.

Applicants can choose whether or not they attend panel, with regards approval or subsequent matching, in person. Whatever outcome is decided, it is the role of the Agency Decision Maker to make the final decision, within a maximum of seven working days of receipt of the final copy of the Panel minutes. This decision must be conveyed verbally within two working days and then confirmed in writing, within five working days. If the application has been successful, the candidates will also be informed about the National Adoption Register and it's use.

Where a candidate has been unsuccessful in their application to adopt or to undertake a permanent fostering placement, the Agency Decision Maker's reasons why they were not approved will be made known to them within the above time scales. Applicants may request a review of the decision within forty days, from which the Agency Decision Maker will give a final decision. The applicant can also have the decision reviewed independently by the Independent Review Mechanism, within forty days of notification (details to be found in the

Complaints section) or make a complaint through Derbyshire County Council CAYA complaint's process.

It is the role of the Adoption Manager to performance monitor the panel process – candidates are asked to leave their views, through feedback forms, which are also available for presenting social work staff. This information is regularly collated and presented to senior managers and cabinet members, through the Corporate Parent's Committee, to assess, review and develop the service as necessary.

## **Matching, Linking and Support - Valuing Adopters**

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service will also consider the adoption plans for children in care, who are unable to return to their birth family. They can make a recommendation as to whether the child should be placed for adoption, based upon the views of the child, their birth family and the recommendations of the responsible social worker.

Wherever possible sibling groups of children requiring adoption will be placed together. Before a decision is made that this is not in the children's best interests or not possible, a thorough assessment of the sibling relationship will be undertaken. Adoption Panel will recommend on the appropriateness, or not, of the plan. If the children are to be placed separately, full reasons will be given by Panel and will be made available to the children. The Assessment and Placement Team will seek to ensure that contact in some form is retained between the children. All children who are to be adopted will undergo a full medical assessment and information from the assessment will be available to the Panel. Full medical information will be made available to prospective adopters prior to placement being agreed.

The majority of children available for adoption will need some contact, either directly or indirectly, with their birth family. Adoption Panel will consider plans for contact and advise on their suitability.

## **Linking**

Following advice from the panel medical advisor, and in accordance with BAAF guidelines, it is the practice in Derbyshire not to place children under 5 years or any children with known health concerns in households where people smoke.

When seeking placements for children from minority ethnic backgrounds backgrounds, a placement does not necessarily have to be with adopters whose ethnic background reflects that of a child. This will usually be preferred but what we will look for are trans-racial placements where adopters have proven knowledge and skill in meeting the needs of children from different ethnic backgrounds. Where a particular religion is specified for a child by their parents, a placement will be sought which is committed to enabling the child to be brought up with an awareness of his or her religious background and given the opportunity to practice that religion if he or she wishes to do so.

The Adoption Panel will consider plans for contact between the child and members of the birth family and comment on their suitability.

When considering a particular adoption placement for a child, the Adoption Panel will receive a report which clearly sets out the assessed needs of the child and the ability of the proposed family to meet those needs. The Panel will consider whether the caring potential of the family is such that they are the best possible match for the child. Prospective adopters are invited to give their views about the proposed placement and to attend the Panel where the proposed link is discussed.

## **Support**

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service recognises the need to provide support to adoptive families from the beginning of a placement and on an ongoing basis, recognising that adoption is a life time relationship. The authority similarly recognises the need to give financial support in some adoption situations. To meet this need, the Agency has a scheme for the payment of adoption allowances in specified circumstances.

Financial support is offered to all adopters to facilitate introductions.

Financial support to provide necessary equipment for children being placed may also be payable.

Following approval as adoptive parents, all prospective adopters have an allocated social worker. This is usually the worker who completed the assessment. This worker will support the adoptive family until the finalising of an adoption order.

When a child is placed for adoption, the child's social worker will be involved in supporting the child in placement as required by adoption legislation.

Children placed for adoption will be subject to statutory adoption reviews under the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1997. This will involve an Independent Reviewing Officer who will ensure that all aspects of the child's welfare and plans for the future are progressing satisfactorily. Where an adoption placement ends in an unplanned way, the Service Manager responsible for the child, assisted by the adoption social worker, will convene a disruption meeting to consider what has happened and assist in planning for the future. The meeting will be chaired by someone independent of the case. Minutes of the meeting will be considered by the Adoption Panel.

## **Overseas Adoption**

The Assessment and Placement Team will undertake home study reports for people wishing to adopt a child from a country outside the United Kingdom. This will include the home study/assessment; presenting to the Adoption Panel, following up references and statutory checks, submitting papers to the Department of Education and supporting the family in decision making when a match is offered. A charge, equivalent to one sixth of the BAAF Local Authority Interagency fee, is made.

When a child is brought into the country for the purpose of adoption, the Assessment and Placement team will undertake the welfare supervision and prepare the Schedule 2 report to the Court.

When a progress report is required after adoption by the country of origin the Assessment and Placement Team will visit and provide a report.

Services to Adopted People, Services to Birth Families, Letterbox and Services to Children

Adoption support events for adoptive families are arranged regularly and speakers may be invited to address particular issues. Adoptive families can also access the adoption surgeries which are held each month in four locations within the county. A 'letter-box' (indirect) contact facility is provided through which birth families and adoptive children and families can communicate as part of an agreed plan. This is facilitated and monitored by adoption support workers. Assistance in writing letters is provided if requested.

Some direct contact between siblings and between children and members of their birth families is facilitated by the Adoption Support team. The Adoption Support team provides a counselling service for adult adoptees in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Adoption Act 2002. A support service is also offered to people adopted since 1975 who are seeking information about their origins. The intention of the service is to provide appropriate advice and counselling. The service does not engage in tracing family members but will act as intermediaries. Where a tracing service is requested the Adoption Support team will refer people to an appropriate organisation.

Support is provided to birth family members by the Birth Parent Support team (who form part of the Adoption Support team) from the time that a Child in Care review decides that adoption is the appropriate care plan for the child. There are dedicated workers in the Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service who provide support for adoptive families in Derbyshire.

This service is independent of both the child's and the adopter's social worker. It provides support, advice and details of other appropriate resources. Birth families who have had a member of their family adopted can access support through the adoption surgeries if they so wish.

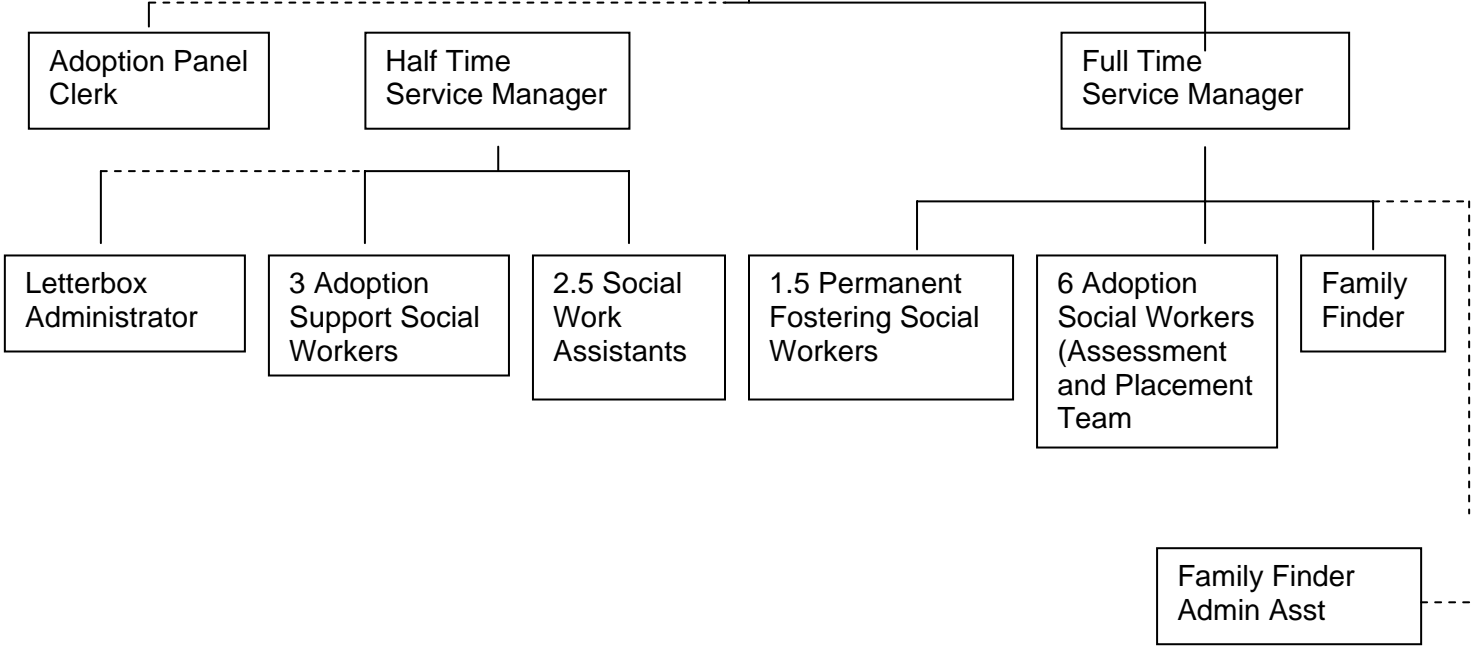
Under the Adoption Support Regulations and Guidance published in 2003, Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service that provides that those affected by adoption can ask for an assessment of support need. Initially this should be done through the adoption surgeries or the adoption duty service. Referral to other services within and outside the Department may be made.

The Adoption Manager is designated as the Adoption Support Services Advisor and co-ordinates the support services in the county.

# Structure and Staffing

Director of Children and Young Adults Department  
Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services)  
(Designated Agency Decision Maker)  
(Deputy Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services))

Adoption Manager



## **Registered Manager**

The Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services) is the Registered Manager with OfSTED. The Registered Manager has overall responsibility for the performance of the Adoption Service.

The Registered Manager is:

Ian Johnson (Diploma in Applied Social Studies (Certificate Qualification in Social Work))

Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services)

Children and Younger Adults Department

County Hall

Matlock

Derbyshire

DE4 3AG

## **Agency Decision Maker**

The Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services) is responsible for all adoption panel decisions and provides independent oversight of panel business including approvals, incidents, complaints, allegations, resignations and de-registrations.

The Agency Decision Maker is Ian Johnson. However, if he is unable to fulfil this task within the required timescales, the Deputy Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services) deputises for him. The Deputy Assistant Director is: Jane Parfremment (BA Hons Applied Social Studies CQSW, Post Graduate Diploma in Health and Social Services Management)  
BTEC

Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the overall quality of case planning and decision making for children and young people in the care of the authority.
- Maintaining the focus on safeguarding through line management.
- Providing service performance reports to the Director and Assistant Director.
- The development of policy in line with national standards and developments.
- The organisation and preparation of inspections and reviews.

## **Adoption Manager**

The manager of Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service is Gwen Roe ([gwen.roe@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:gwen.roe@derbyshire.gov.uk) – tel. 01629 532250), BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies, MA Applied Social Science, CQSW and DMS)

## Staffing Summary

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service consists of one full time and one half time Service Manager, 10 WTE Social Workers and 2.5 Family Resource Workers. There are, in addition, 2 Social Workers whose role is to identify permanent foster carers for children.

The Assessment and Placement team is managed by a full time service manager, whilst the Adoption Support team is managed by a half time manager.

The social worker responsible for family finding is managed directly by the Adoption Manager.

All social workers have a diploma in social work, or equivalent and all staff members are registered with the General Social Care Council – seven possess a post qualifying PQ1 award, five have the PQCCA, one has the PQ consolidation award and one is currently undertaking it. Specialist courses/training undertaken include:

- Safeguarding
- Practice Teaching
- Child Care Award

The team have regular service development days/half days and, wherever possible advantage is taken of external courses pertaining to adoption issues.

### Functions Undertaken by the adoption service

- Recruitment of prospective adopters, including publicity campaigns and holding regular information evenings.
- 'Family Finding' to specifically find families for children with an adoption plan.
- Permanence Fostering work, to identify and approve foster carers for children where permanent fostering has been identified within their care plan.
- Assessment and preparation of prospective adoptive families, to include home visits, home studies, reference and statutory checks and running preparation groups, to include relevant and up to date training (e.g. Esafety)
- Offering ongoing support for approved families awaiting a placement.
- Offering advice, guidance and support to adoptive families during the matching process and post placement.
- Providing guidance for staff members who are preparing children for adoption and advising birth families and foster carers of children awaiting adoption.
- Providing support services to adoptive families and birth relatives.
- Facilitating direct and indirect contact arrangements.

- Providing specialist advice and consultation, where requested and appropriate.
- Counselling, information and advice in relation to the following:
  - Birth parents whose children may have been adopted
  - Prospective adopters
  - Adults who have been adopted, including birth records counselling
  - People who wish to adopt children from another country
  - Non Agency adoptions, including step-parents who wish to adopt their partner's children
  - Relatives of adult adoptees who may want information, advice and/or intermediary service

## **Performance Data**

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service presents performance management information every year to our Corporate Parenting Committee, on the previous financial years performance. This information can be found in the document 'Adoption Service Performance Report'.

## **Quality Assurance and Monitoring**

Arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure that services provided by Derbyshire's Adoption Service are effective and that the quality of those services is of an appropriate standard.

All staff have regular supervision.

All prospective adopters complete an evaluation of the preparation course in order to monitor the effectiveness of the delivery of training.

All individuals receiving a service from the adoption service are asked to complete an evaluation form about the service they have received.

All prospective adopters are advised of the department's complaints procedure and given information about how to make a complaint.

Prospective adopters are asked to provide feedback regarding their attendance at Adoption Panel.

Children who are referred to the Assessment and Placement team will have a permanence plan. These are generally made at the four month review and are monitored through the children in care Review Process.

The Adoption Team regularly reviews the progress of family finding and possible matches for waiting adopters within the team meeting.

Prospective adopters who do not have placements are identified through this process and are made available to other Adoption Agencies seeking adoptive parents.

The Family Finder progresses family finding for children with an adoption plan. They will identify drift, or any other issues that arise and liaise with children's social workers as appropriate.

The Adoption Manager gives regular progress monitoring reports on children who have an adoption plan to the Adoption Panels.

The adoption and permanence panels provide commentary on all reports presented to the panel which are collated into a 6 monthly report presented to the corporate parenting committee.

## **Complaints and Allegations**

Derbyshire County Council maintains a statutory complaints service, and the leaflet "Comments, Compliments and Complaints" is included in the Adoption Information Pack so prospective adopters may use it at any stage in the process

The complaints process is a three stage process.

Stage 1, the authority and the complainant seek to resolve the concern with the involved local manager with direct responsibility, within ten days. If the complainant is unhappy with these findings, they can go to Stage 2, where the Quality Assurance department will appoint an investigating officer and an independent person to respond to any concerns. If this is unsatisfactory, they may be entitled to go to Stage 3, an Independent Complaints Panel.

All complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate and all staff members must ensure that anyone within the adoption process understands how to make a complaint, and to whom it should be directed. At any stage, they may contact their Councillor, MP or consult with a solicitor.

Complainants should refer their concerns to the Assistant Head of Service (CAYA Quality Assurance) on 01629 523042 or email at [vicki.dudley@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:vicki.dudley@derbyshire.gov.uk). If they are still dissatisfied with the findings, they can contact the Commissioner for Local Administration in England (The Ombudsman) at:

The Commissioner for Local Administration in England  
PO Box 4771  
Coventry  
CV4 0EH  
Telephone: 0845 602 1083

If anyone has any concerns about the service, which they feel it is in the public interest to make known, the authority provides complete guidance on confidential

reporting (also known as ‘Whistle Blowing’) in the Adoption and Permanence Procedures.

If a prospective or approved adoptive parent is unhappy with a decision made by the Adoption Panel, the applicants have the right to appeal within 28 days of receiving notification. The appeal has to be made in writing to the Agency Decision Maker. Alternatively, they may apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), again, within 28 days of receiving notification. The IRM is part of BAAF, working on behalf of the Department of Education. Adoption Agencies cannot refer to the IRM – only prospective adopters. They do not have the authority to rescind decisions made by the Agency but can offer an independent review of decisions, from which they can make recommendations.

*Between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011, no cases went to the IRM.*

The IRM can be contacted at:

FAO Contract Manager  
IRM Head Office  
Dolphin House  
54 Coventry Road  
Birmingham  
B10 0RX

Telephone: 0121 766 8557

Email: [irm@baaf.org.uk](mailto:irm@baaf.org.uk)

Derbyshire County Council actively monitors and reviews all complaints, incidents and allegations to identify patterns and trends within fostering, which it may then seek to address within a wider context and so improve the quality of service for both children and young people looked after and for adopters.

## **Advocacy and Children’s Rights**

Derbyshire County Council’s Children’s Rights Officer is Steve Lowe who can be contacted on 01629 532029 or at [steve.lowe@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.lowe@derbyshire.gov.uk). Part of his role is to make sure that the authority’s adoption service fulfils its obligations to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children and young people. The Children’s Rights service assists our Advocates, whose role it is to act independently upon behalf of children and young people who are looked after, ensuring that they are fully aware of the processes that affect their time in care, helping them plan for their future and above all, seeing that their voice is heard. There is a statutory obligation, under the Adoption Act 2002, that all children in care must be offered the services of an Advocate, if they are making or are intending to make a complaint.

Derbyshire County Council is committed to giving children and young people in care, the best opportunities they can have in life by putting them at the centre of

all our processes. By consulting with adoptive parents and their children, we are looking to constantly improve the service and provide the best possible outcomes.

## **OfSTED**

OfSTED is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services, including Derbyshire County Council, under the provisions of the Care Standards Act (2000). Should an adopter need to contact the service, with any questions, queries or complaints, they can be reached on 08456 404040 or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or in writing to:

OfSTED,  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

## **Valuing Diversity and Anti-Discriminatory Code of Conduct**

Derbyshire County Council is committed to challenging any form of discriminatory conduct. We will endeavour to treat all candidates fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption enquiry and assessment process and applicants will be approved as carers, irrespective of ethnicity, spirituality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or ability, providing the adoption service considers that they can safely meet the needs of children in care and will, in turn respect their needs. The minimum age for a candidate to apply to adopt in Derbyshire is 21 years of age.

We will make every attempt to find a placement which meets the needs of the child or young person, taking into account their ethnicity, spirituality, faith, language, culture, gender and ability although we recognise that no child in care should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement. Where it is not possible to place a child in a family that reflects their ethnic origin every effort will be made to assist the adoptive family to address their identity needs.