



Statement of Purpose 2022 -23



A proud history of children's futures

Rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Members of:



Contents

Introduction to our agency	4
Adoption Matters Aims & Objectives.....	4
Our Vision.....	4
Mission	5
Values & Standards of Service	5
Services we offer.....	7
Recruitment, approval and training of prospective adopters.....	8
Enquiries, Pre-Stage 1 and Stage 1 Process	9
Assessment	10
Approval.....	10
Matching	11
Support.....	11
Assessment & Therapy Service	12
Post Adoption Support	12
Advice and Information for Adopted Adults & Birth relatives.....	13
Concurrent Planning Service.....	14
Monitoring & Evaluation of Services	15
Responsible Individual, Senior Management & Board	19
Children's Guide to Adoption & Children's Guide to Adoption Support	21
Regulations.....	21
England and Wales	21
England	22
Wales	22
Comments, compliments and complaints.....	24

Introduction to our agency

Adoption Matters is an independent specialist voluntary adoption agency (VAA) and children's charity operating in the North West and North East, North Wales, Yorkshire/Humberside and Staffordshire and Shropshire. The agency has offices in Blackburn, Chester, Hale (Altrincham), Warrington, Stoke on Trent, Salford, Durham and Leeds.

The agency has a history of over 74 years, has placed over 5,000 children with adoptive families and has been at the forefront of innovation in adoption development.

The agency is also registered charity (No 512892) and a company limited by guarantee (No 1617324). It is registered with Ofsted as an adoption agency and as an adoption agency providing adoption support services to adults and children.

This statement sets out the agency's aims and objectives, principles and values, the services provided and how these are monitored. It provides an overview of the structure of the agency.

Adoption Matters Aims & Objectives

At Adoption Matters we believe that children's welfare and needs are paramount and; we aim for them to grow up in a secure and loving family who will best meet their long-term needs and who can help them to reach their full potential.

In order to do this and in recognition of the lifelong impact of adoption, the agency provides a comprehensive adoption service for all the parties involved, offering support and advice to prospective adopters, adoptive families, children, adopted children and adults and birth relatives, and an information, support and intermediary service to adopted people and birth relatives.

We aim to provide a high-quality service that is:

- **Honest, transparent and fair**
- **Timely and responsive**
- **Expert and informative**
- **Inclusive**
- **Accepting and valuing of difference**
- **Supportive to all users of the service**

Our Vision

Adoption Matters strives towards a situation where all children growing up in the UK will have the security and benefit of a permanent, loving family home.

Mission

Our main aim is to find permanent families for children who, for various reasons, are no longer able to live with their birth families. We also aim to provide a high quality, comprehensive and responsive support service to potential and existing adopters as well as all those whose lives have been touched by adoption. As we grow and develop our service increasing both scale and scope whilst maintaining quality, we aim to be the first agency of choice for those considering adoption in the areas that we cover.

We seek to work closely with local authorities and regional adoption agencies throughout the country to place some of society's most vulnerable children with our families, and we would wish to work in partnership in order to provide high quality support to these children and their adoptive families.

Values & Standards of Service

Children's welfare, safety and outcomes are paramount considerations in all our work undertaken across the agency.

All our activities are underpinned by a strong commitment to the following core values, principles and standards of care:

Ethical – We are an organisation that has its foundations in the Church of England Diocesan Adoption Services and thereby have regard to the principles of the Christian faith in furthering our Charitable Objectives.

Celebrating difference - We work within a culture of respect and acceptance, treating everyone who comes to us for support or advice fairly, professionally and with respect to people's right to confidentiality.

Inclusive - We strive to ensure equality of opportunity, both for our adoptive families and amongst our staff and Trustees regardless of gender, culture, ethnic background, age, disability or sexuality.

Flexible - We aim to continually develop and improve our services and increase engagement with our service users, using their feedback and suggestions to inform future developments.

Honest and Fair - We undertake to treat every case fairly on its individual merits and to be honest and realistic in all our communications.

Quality & Reputation - We are committed to ensuring that quality is at the heart of all our activities and that we provide the best possible service to our families, taking their views and requirements into account at every stage and finding new ways to improve their experience. We have well-defined procedures for Safeguarding with two nominated managers taking a lead in this area.

Innovation - We aim to be a proactive, dynamic and innovative organisation that anticipates and responds to the changing environment to develop and deliver the very best in Adoption and Adoption Support.

Approachable, friendly & collaborative - We strive to be a welcoming, compassionate and inclusive service, whose ethos is based on principles of fairness, equality and respect. From the first point of contact and throughout we will work in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for children and families.

Professional - Underpinning the agency's success is our highly qualified, experienced and knowledgeable staff team. Our committed, reliable team help ensure consistency and quality throughout periods of growth and transition.

Sustainable - The agency operates in a financially prudent manner employing robust strategies and undertaking due diligence in all its decision making. All staff take responsibility and are aware of the need to work within defined budgets and to meet agreed objectives wherever possible. We monitor annual accounts regularly with oversight from the Board of Trustees and the Agency's Accountant, making decisions and taking appropriate measures in a timely manner to ensure the continued operation and stability of our services and staff team.

We are also fortunate to receive support from a large number of volunteers, including our Board of Trustees and Adoption Panel Members who help us ensure that our practice is grounded, responsive and accountable.

Covid-19 - The safety of children and families who use our services and our staff are our absolute priority. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we continued to operate under government guidance using virtual technology wherever possible and undertaking face to face visits where needed. We have adapted some of our processes that feedback has suggested has worked well virtually and plan to maintain these. Going forward will continue to operate within any current government guidance relating to safety and Covid-19.

Services we offer

A list of the services we offer is listed below:

Recruitment, preparation, training and assessment of prospective adopters, to the meet the needs of children waiting.

Matching families to children waiting locally and nationally.

Advising and supporting adoptive families through transitions, placement and adoption.

Offering advice and support post adoption to those with whom the agency has previously been involved, e.g. adopted children and adults, adoptive parents, birth parents and relatives including those with a prescribed relationship.

Support services provided by our Centre for Adoption Support (CfAS):

CfAS is a unique service providing a wide range of training, interventions and activities to adopted children, young adults and their families. Based upon an innovative 'graduated approach' model, CfAS offer bespoke packages of support to families from the earliest stage in their adoptive journey and throughout their placement. We believe that support should be an integral part of the adoption process and our families benefit from early support and enhanced preparation to enable them to fully understand the impact of early trauma and loss. The graduated model is based on the premise that every family situation is different: there is no 'one size' of support that fits all. By understanding the child's needs within the family context, we are able to support families and work closely with schools to consider the best support options and monitor progress along their journey. Where appropriate some of these services may be delivered virtually,

The service supports families by sharing guidance with them with regards to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) England to ensure that they are aware of their rights to request an assessment of their support needs from the relevant Local Authority/ Regional Adoption Agency and referring, as appropriate to other specialist agencies e.g. CAMHS.

Support is also provided to schools via attachment and trauma training and specialist support packages to support transitions and children's identified needs.

The Service also supports Birth Records Counselling and Intermediary service initiated by adopted adults and/or birth parents and relatives with whom the agency was involved in their adoption.

Additionally, in accordance with agreements with Local Authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies we offer the following services:

- Concurrent planning service – via our partnership with Caritas Care
- Fostering for Adoption
- Post placement and post adoption support to families
- Access to information, counselling and an intermediary service to adopted people and birth relatives with respect to adoptions not arranged by the agency
- An independent support service to birth parents and birth relatives whose child/ren are, may or have been placed for adoption
- Non-agency adoption assessments, e.g. partner adoptions
- Assessments and other work on behalf of other agencies, e.g. Courts, Local Authorities, Health Trusts etc.
- Bespoke family finding service for specific children and providing direct work
- Life story or therapeutic work with children, or other therapeutic work with families, e.g. in promoting attachments to families
- Provision of Adoption and Fostering Panel Chairs or Social Work Panel Members.
- Training or training packages including for schools
- Assessment, Therapy and Counselling Service to provide support to placements.
- Advice and information about inter-country adoption including on behalf of the Intercountry Adoption Centre, informal visits and Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessment of families wishing to pursue Intercountry Adoption.

The agency is represented on the Management Boards of the following Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs):

- Adoption Counts
- Adoption NoW
- Together for Adoption
- Adoption in Merseyside
- Adoption Lancashire and Blackpool
- Coast to Coast

We are also working in partnership with other RAAs including:

- Together 4 Children
- Adoption Tees Valley
- Adopt North East
- One Adoption South Yorkshire
- One Adoption West Yorkshire
- One Adoption North Yorkshire

Recruitment, approval and training of prospective adopters

Adoption Matters recruits, prepares and trains adoptive families for children waiting.

Our recruitment is open and inclusive. We welcome adopters irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation and disability. We encourage adopters from many different backgrounds to suit the diverse needs of children requiring adoption.

Prospective adopters are offered preparation training and full support to help them understand the needs and background of children requiring adoption.

The agency is committed to prioritising applications from prospective adopters who seem likely to meet the needs of children waiting nationally who:

- are likely to display significant emotional or behavioural difficulties
- have a parent or parents diagnosed as having significant mental health or learning difficulties or have been exposed to substance misuse in utero
- are black or from other ethnic groups for whom there are fewer available approved adoptive families who may be able to meet their needs
- have a disability
- are aged 5 years or over
- require a high level of direct contact to birth family members or require placing together with brothers and sisters

The agency uses a number of recruitment methods including the agency website, social media and other media sources and has a range of literature explaining the service. These can be produced in other formats and languages upon request.

People interested in adopting are sent an Information Pack (available via our website which is also emailed or as a hard copy by request). This explains the process of how to apply to adopt, the preparation, assessment and approval process and the timescales involved. It also provides an explanation of the likely needs and background of the children waiting to be placed and the qualities and competencies being sought from prospective adoptive families.

Potential adopters wishing to have more information are offered the opportunity to attend a virtual information event and/or the chance to speak to a member of our Enquiries Team.

Enquiries, Pre-Stage 1 and Stage 1 Process

- The potential adopter(s) is provided with the Registration of Interest Form and guidance notes to assist with its completion.
- Once the potential adopter(s) returns the completed Registration of Interest Form and a Manager has agreed to accept this, a social worker or social work assistant meets with the potential adopter(s) to share further information and complete a plan for Stage 1.
- The agency undertakes statutory checks and references. This includes medicals and DBS checks on all applicants, members of their household aged 18 or over and anyone else who will have regular, unsupervised access to any children placed. We also seek references from ex partners, adult children and employers.
- The prospective adopter(s) is invited attend preparation training provided by the agency alongside a recommended adoption related reading list and undertakes any other jointly agreed additional reading or experience.
- This first stage normally takes 2 months, but can be extended by the prospective adopter, if they wish, or the agency with good reason, though it cannot be completed until statutory checks and references have been returned.
- On completion of this first stage, the prospective adopter(s) has up to 6 months to make a formal application to adopt before there is a requirement to re-do aspects of Stage 1.

Assessment

- Once the prospective adopter(s) has made a formal application to adopt and the agency has accepted this, a qualified social worker completes the Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR). This is completed within nationally set timescales (4 months from the date of the formal application to agency decision) unless there is a good reason to extend this.
- The PAR report follows the CoramBAAF format, which ensures compliance with the Regulations across the UK.
- Prospective adopter(s) is given information about the process and are encouraged to contribute to the assessment report, as are any children in the family.
- As an agency we support the use of the Attachment Style interview as an assessment tool and use this in our assessments unless there is an agreed reason not to do so.
- Where there are existing children in a family who are being assessed, the Agency will support adoptive applicants to ensure that these children are well prepared for another child joining their family and also that their wishes and feelings are ascertained and carefully considered in the assessment.
- Applicant(s) are encouraged to meet with other adoptive families, including existing adoptive parents, during the process.
- All assessments are undertaken under national requirements underpinned by legislation. If the agency does not intend to recommend approval as a result of information received during the preparation, the social worker will discuss their reasons with the applicant and may complete a Brief Report to the Panel, in the absence of full information.
- All prospective adopters will see their completed Prospective Adopter's Report (with any confidential third-party information such as references and medical reports removed) and will have the opportunity to comment upon it.
- The Agency has two Agency Decision Makers. One is a suitably qualified person with Senior Management experience in Adoption; the other is a suitably qualified person and the Service Manager for our Centre for Adoption Support.

Approval

- The agency has three Adoption Panels, which meet monthly either virtually or face to face. Prior to Covid-19 these panels all met in person in either Blackburn, Chester or Durham. However, since Covid-19 and following feedback from prospective adopters, some of these panels will take place virtually, the Agency seeks to hold at least one panel a month face to face for those applicants who would prefer this. Each of the panels has an independent Chair. All completed assessment reports are considered by the Adoption Panel, which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker about their suitability to adopt and gives advice as appropriate. Prospective adopters are invited to attend and are told of the Panel's recommendation that day.
- If an applicant is not recommended as suitable, or following a review and Panel recommendation, the Agency proposes to withdraw their approval, the various options available to them, such as further representation to the Agency or referral to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), are explained and written notification provided.
- All adopters are supported by a qualified and suitably experienced social worker throughout the assessment and approval stage or, in the case of a less experienced worker; the worker would be supervised by someone who has the required experience. Adopters are advised and supported in finding the right child or children for them.

Matching

- Support then continues through the matching process, transitions, children moving to live their adoptive family, through the legal process of adopting the child and beyond, as appropriate.
- The completed Prospective Adopter's Report serves as a matching document for children waiting.
- While the Agency ideally aims to place children from our partner RAAs to ensure they have access to our adoption support services, we will also look nationally if a suitable local match is not available.
- Prospective adopters are encouraged to be proactive and to join LinkMaker and to follow up and discuss with their social worker children featured on LinkMaker websites. Prospective Adopters are also encouraged to attend exchange days with Local Authorities and RAAs and to attend adoption activity days.
- Each family's social worker will give unbiased advice about the suitability of a proposed link with a child based on experience of successfully placing children and their detailed knowledge of the prospective adopter.
- The central importance of placement planning is recognised by the Agency. It is also expected that there will be full preparation of the child prior to placement in recognition of the child's need at all stages of his/her development. The Agency will make every attempt to ensure that the prospective adoptive parents are provided with full and accurate information about the child, his or her history, including medical, legal and social information and also with a written plan outlining the support that can be expected from the two agencies. They will be encouraged to submit their written views about the placement and the placement report.
- Children, taking into account their age and understanding, should be involved in the placement decision about which family and when they should be placed and Adoption Matters' supports this. Social Workers from the Agency will also support families and Local Authorities to ascertain and include the wishes and feelings of children in subsequent reviews and the decision to proceed with an application for an adoption order.

Support

Adoption Matters knows that adoption is life-long and we offer comprehensive adoption support for as long as families need it. The Agency endeavors to ensure that prospective adopters are provided with comprehensive information about the child, their background, history and likely needs, and will ensure that they receive a support plan prior to proceeding to a Matching Panel. This can include financial support. Support plans are reviewed up to the making of an adoption order.

Adopters are provided with a range of information and support following approval and/or placement. This includes a wide variety of events as detailed in the Centre for Adoption Support Calendar of Events listed on their website, including:

- Individual therapeutic consultation sessions for adoptive families
- A comprehensive training menu of webinars with the opportunity for peer support in breakout groups.
- Social events and activity days for children and adoptive families
- Groups for children and young people who have been placed for adoption or adopted, including a group for adopted adults.

- Adoptive families can draw upon the services of Volunteer Adoption Buddies. Adoptive families can also access the services of therapists affiliated to the Agency where funding is available.

Children will have a statutory social worker from the Local Authority to offer support and monitor their wellbeing, development and progress in their adoptive family.

It is expected that there will be full preparation of the child prior to placement in recognition of the child's need at all stages of their development.

The agency works with adoptive families to promote the attendance of children at school and liaises with education colleagues as appropriate. Advice and support will be given about the Pupil Premium or access to free nursery provision and the Adoption Support Fund and how to apply.

The Agency, via the Centre for Adoption Support, works with schools to offer advice, training and individual plans incorporating strategies in supporting children with attachment challenges and early trauma.

Individual support can be made available for adoptive parents' birth or previously adopted children if appropriate.

All families who access a service via the Centre for Adoption Support will be given information about support available to them, written confirmation of any planned interventions, reading lists, comments/complaints/compliment form, safeguarding statement, and links to useful resources to help support their family. Evaluations are undertaken and consultations with families and children with regards to developing the service.

Assessment & Therapy Service

Adoption Matters Therapy Service can provide a wide range of therapists located across the country. The therapists have specialist skills and experience of working with adopted children and their families. Approaches include Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Theraplay, Child Psychotherapy, Filial Play Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR). The approaches incorporate developments in neuropsychology, brain development and sensory integration.

Therapists are qualified and registered to practice and have ongoing clinical supervision. Therapeutic interventions are informed by an assessment, have clearly defined goals with regular reviews as agreed. Work is evaluated so that progress and effectiveness can be monitored.

Post Adoption Support

We offer a comprehensive post adoption support service including:

- Letterbox contact system as and when appropriate. This may include administrative support, recording and monitoring, liaising regarding contact, e.g. advice on writing letters, help in renegotiating level of contact etc.;

- Counselling in preparation for tracing, intermediary services, reunion and post reunion support;
- Access to workshop/support groups for adopted adults
- Access to/information about resources such as DVDs, books and informal support networks;
- Opportunities for networking with other adoptive families, including social events for adoptive families;
- Advice regarding other agencies' services and resources, e.g. Chinese Association, LGBTQ+ support services such as New Family Social, Deaf Society, Adoption UK.
- Agency updates for adoptive families, e.g. regular updated website, newsletters; Groups for adopted children;
- Individual families and adoptive children and adults may use some or all of these services at different times in their lives.
- The Agency works closely with the Local Authorities' Adoption Support Services Advisers to provide services and will make the adoptive parents or adopted person aware of the likely services provided and for which the Local Authority is responsible including information about the Adoption Support Fund
- The Agency will ensure that all parties are aware of their rights to request an assessment of their needs for post adoption support from the responsible Local Authority.
- Birth parents who have placed a child through Adoption Matters and who wish to obtain information or to seek to make contact with them will be counselled, supported and assisted to do so within the boundaries of legislation.

The full range of services offered by our Centre for Adoption Support is available at www.adoptionmatters.org/cfas

Advice and Information for Adopted Adults & Birth relatives

We offer an advice, information and intermediary service for adopted adults who were adopted through our agency or the below former agency names and institutions or whom have connections with the agency:

- St. Bridget's House of Mercy
- Chester Diocesan Adoption Service
- Blackburn Diocesan Adoption Agency
- Durham Family Welfare Adoption
- Adoption Matters Northwest

We provide the following guidance leaflets for anyone requesting this service from us:

"Access to Files – Information for Adopted Adults"
"Intermediary Services"
"Planning and Approaching a Reunion"

Adopted adults whose placements were arranged by Adoption Matters are offered counselling and information where requested under Schedule 2 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. They are provided with a written summary of the information provided.

Concurrent Planning Service

The concurrent planning service is provided in partnership with another Voluntary Adoption Agency, Caritas Care, in partnership with many local authorities across the North West.

Young children (under 4 years of age and under) are placed with Concurrent Planning Carers who are approved as both prospective adopters and foster carers, whilst the child/ren's future is decided by the court.

Children are either rehabilitated home or adopted by their carers. This approach puts the children's need for early permanence at the forefront and minimises moves for young children in care.

Within this service, the risks are taken by adults not the children. The service operates monthly information sessions for prospective adopters and also offers specialist training and ongoing support to their carers.

Full information can be found at <https://www.adoptionmatters.org/ccp>

Monitoring & Evaluation of Services

The agency has a Quality Assurance Policy.

Written feedback is sought from prospective adoptive parents at the following stages:

- Level 1 – after initial contact with the agency
- Level 2 – after preparation groups
- Level 3 – after approval
- Level 4 – after an adoption order is granted
- Level 5 – after accessing adoption support services

Written feedback about the panel process is sought from professionals and prospective adopters who attend the Adoption Panel.

Panel members quality assure the prospective adopter reports presented to them and the Social Worker's verbal presentation at Panel. These are collated into the Chairs' biannual reports to the agency.

Written and oral feedback is sought from those who have received a service under Schedule 2, Adoption & Children Act 2002 and under Section 98 Adoption & Children Act 2002.

Written feedback is sought from those who receive a service under the agency's post adoption services.

Written feedback is sought from users of the Assessment, Therapy and Counselling Service. There are systems in place for line managers to obtain oral feedback from service users.

Issues raised are included in supervision, other meetings as appropriate and are used to inform and develop practice.

We encourage the involvement of service users, e.g. birth parents and adoptees, in processes wherever possible, e.g. reviewing leaflets etc. as this empowers them and their personal experience informs practice.

Copies of the "Comments, Complaints, Compliments" leaflet are provided to anyone who approaches the agency, adopted people, adoptive families and birth relatives at all stages of the process.

Service users, including children, are advised of the right to make representation and complaints and assisted to do this if required.

Staff and others who work for the purposes of the agency receive training in the agency's complaints procedure. Learning points from any complaints are considered by the Strategic Management Team and shared with staff via Team Meetings.

Prospective adoptive parents' DBS and medical checks are updated every two years. If they do not have a child placed with them, a review is carried out every year and a written report presented to the Adoption Panel to note progress.

The Adoption Panel has a role in monitoring the progress of cases presented to Panel and regular statistics are provided with regard to links, matches, placements, adoption orders granted and disruptions. The Panel Chairs complete a Quality Assurance Report to the Agency's trustees twice a year.

The Agency operates a tracking system to monitor timescales and to ensure that they are met. Records are made of any instances whereby applications or requests for service are not completed within the requirements of the Adoption Guidance Chapter 3. The Adoption Panel is kept informed of and monitors the Agency's record in meeting timescales.

The Panel has a role in reviewing and recommending changes to the Agency's policies and procedures and in advising the agency on the quality of reports.

Further quality assurance is provided by internal measures such as monthly supervision of staff and annual appraisals of all staff and Central List Panel members.

All volunteers and sessional workers receive induction and regular supervision and are invited to staff meetings and training events as appropriate.

Service Managers and/or Team Managers read case files and sign off numerous documents. Decisions are recorded in electronic case files and are signed and dated. The agency operates a case file audit system and a caseload monitoring system.

Staff and volunteers are made aware of the agency's children's safeguarding procedures and receive training in this area.

All complaints and allegations and incidents of abuse about the agency's current or previous staff or volunteers are followed up promptly, referred to the appropriate agencies as necessary and details of action recorded. The agency reviews its records of complaints annually to identify any pattern of complaint against services or individuals.

Contracts are monitored through annual and quarterly meetings with purchasers and reports and statistics are provided. This facilitates a bespoke service and feedback enables changes to be made for service users' benefit.

The Trustees receive an annual Quality Assurance Report and twice yearly Panel Quality Assurance Reports.

The Agency produces an Annual Review.

The Agency is registered with Ofsted and is inspected by them approximately every three years. Their address is:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231

The agency welcomes feedback about the contents of this Statement of Purpose: either email: info@adoptionmatters.org or write to: Adoption Service Manager, Adoption Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1AE.

Responsible Individual, Senior Management & Board

The name and address of the Registered Provider:	Adoption Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, Cheshire, CH2 1AE Tel: 01244 390938 Fax: 01244 390067 Email: info@adoptionmatters.org www.adoptionmatters.org The Agency has offices listed below:	
	Blackburn office: 10 Cathedral Close, Blackburn, BB1 5AA Tel: 01254 205050 Warrington office: Aiken Hall, Room WAH108, Padgate Campus, Crab Lane, Warrington, WA2 0DB Tel: 01925 534 118 or 01925 534 333 Leeds office: Unit 19, Armley Park Court, Stanningley Road, Leeds, LS12 3LW Tel: 0300 123 1066 Stoke office: The Dudson Centre, Hope Street Temple, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 5DD Tel: 0300 123 1066	Hale office: St Peter's House, 233 Ashley Road, Hale, Cheshire, WA15 9SS Tel: 0161 941 7732 Salford office: Innovation Forum, Room 221 (CCP), Room 218 (AM), 51 Frederick Road, Salford, Manchester, M6 6FP Tel: 0161 743 3682 Durham office – Agriculture House Durham DH1 2RY Tel: 0191 386 3719
The Agency Decision Maker:	Norman G Goodwin, Anne Fleming, Service Manager, Centre for Adoption Support	
The Responsible Individual:	Susy White, Chief Executive, Adoption Matters	
The Strategic Management Team:	The Agency's Strategic Management Team is comprised of Senior Managers in the agency. This includes: -	
	Susy White Karen Davies Gaynor Richards Anne Fleming Paul Dolan Jacqui Shore	Chief Executive Finance & Business Service Manager Business Development Manager Service Manager Service Manager Service Manager

The Panel Advisors	Paul Dolan (Blackburn/Durham) Jacqui Shore (Chester)
The Deputy Panel Advisors	The Panel Advisors deputise for each other.
The Adoption Support Services Adviser	Anne Fleming, Service Manager, Centre for Adoption Support
Safeguarding Leads	Jacqui Shore Anne Fleming (Centre for Adoption Support)

Adoption Matters Chief Executive, Susy White, is the Responsible Individual and is a Chartered Certified Accountant.

The Agency has two Agency Decision Makers who make decisions following recommendations from the Adoption Panel: -

- Norman G Goodwin qualified social worker who previously worked for the Agency for over 36 years and holds the NVQ level 5 in Operational Management.
- Anne Fleming – who is a qualified social worker, highly experienced Adoption Practitioner and Manager and currently the Service Manager for the Centre of Adoption Support.

The Agency ensures that those who have responsibility for providing services shall, as far as possible, possess the necessary skills and time to do so effectively, and in accordance with regulations.

All social work managers and supervising social workers are professionally qualified with a Degree or Diploma in Social Work or equivalent and are registered with Social Work England at least one social worker is also registered for Social Care Wales.

As 1 February 2022

- The Registered Manager and one other Service Manager hold the NVQ level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management Children and Families
- 2 Service Managers 8 Team Managers, 16 Senior Practitioners and 4 Social Workers hold the Advanced Child Care Award or equivalent, and the Agency has a training plan for additional staff to obtain this
- 3 Service Managers, 9 Team Managers, 16 Senior Practitioners and 10 Social Workers hold the Post Qualification Certificate in Social Work Level 1 (or equivalent)
- 5 Social Workers in CFAS, 10 Social Workers in mainstream are recognised as Senior Practitioners
- 3 Social Work Team Managers, 5 Senior Practitioner and 2 Social Workers hold a Practice Teaching qualification which qualifies them to supervise social work students.
- 1 Social Worker holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Non-Directive Play Therapy
- 2 Occupational Therapists work within the Centre for Adoption Support and hold BScs in Occupational Therapy
- The Agency has 6 Social Work Assistants and two Adoption Enquiry Advisers,
- 14 business support workers including an IT specialist who hold a variety of qualifications including Diploma in Business and Finance, BA (Hons) in Business and Finance NVQ, Level 4 Level 3, Level 2, ECDL, ITQ and CertBOIS (Certificate in Business Office Information Systems), Associate member of the CIPD with a Certificate in Personnel Practice and an AAT qualification in Payroll Management.
- The Agency has a Finance and Business Service Manager who is CIMA registered and Finance and Business Manager who has a BTEC National Diploma in Business & Finance.
- The Agency has a Business Development Manager who has a Degree and PG Diploma,
- The Agency has a Marketing Manager who has a CIM Diploma in Marketing

- The Agency has a Fundraising & Relationship Manager who is a member of the Institute of Fundraising
- The Agency has an HR Manager who is a Chartered Member of the CIPD, with a Degree and CIPD Level 7 Diploma in HR and a HR Advisor who is an Associate Member of the CIPD; who has a Level 5 CIPD Certificate in Human Resource Management.
- The Agency also have a self-employed Clinical Lead of our Therapy Service who holds a Degree, Masters Clinical Psychology and PHD Child Sexual Abuse.

The work of Adoption Matters is overseen by a Board of Trustees, a list of current members can be found [here on our website](#).

You can find information on all of our managers [here on our website](#). Our full staff list is available upon request.

We also have the following advisors to the agency:

- Legal advisor
- Medical advisor
- Panel advisor
- Adoption support advisor

Children's Guide to Adoption & Children's Guide to Adoption Support

Local Authorities will provide children with a copy of their Children's Guide to Adoption and the Agency shares copies of the Agency Children's Guide to Post Adoption Support with Adopters at Panel

Regulations

The Statement has been produced in accordance with the following:

- Adoption Agencies (England) Regulations 2005
- Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014
- Care Standards Act 2000
- VAA and the Adoption Agencies Misc Amendments Regs 2003 as amended by the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (Amendments) Regs 2005
- Adoption Agencies (Misc Amendments) Regs 2013
- Statutory Guidance 2013
- The Data Protection Act and GDPR 2018

The agency works within the requirements of legislation and guidance outlined in:

- The Adoption & Children Act 2002 and associated regulations and guidance
- The Adoption Act 1976
- The Children Act 1989
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Children & Adoption Act 2006
- The Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children Act 2004
- The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption 1993
- Adoption (Designated of Overseas) Order 1973
- Adoption (Intercountry Aspects) Act 1999
- Equality Act 2006 and 2010
- The Family Procedure (Adoption) Rules 2010
- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Children and Social Work 2017

England and Wales

- The National Care Standards Commission (Registration) Regulations 2001 – England – as amended by the National Care Standards Commission (Registration) Amendment) Regulations 2003 and the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005
- The Family Procedure (Adoption) Rules 2005
- The Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005
- Adopted Children and Adoption Contact Registers Regulations 2005
- The Adoptions with a Foreign Element Regulations 2005 (in so far as making arrangements for the adoption of children in relation to inter-country adoption)

- Adoption with a Foreign Element (Special Restrictions on Adoptions from Abroad) Regulations 2008
- Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2014

England

- The Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 as amended by the Local Authority Adoption Service (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2005
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption July 2013
- The Suitability of Adopters Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 as amended by the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre Commencement Adoptions (Amendment) Regulations 2014, and 2015.
- The Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations
- The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption) Regulations 2009
- The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013

Wales

- The Access to Information (Intermediary Services) (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) (Wales) Regulations 2005 and (Amendment) Regulations 2015.
- The Access to Information (Post-Commencement Adoptions) (Wales) Regulations 2005
- Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005
- The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption & Fostering) Regulations 2009
- The Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2016

Plus

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, (and associated child protection guidance and local Children's Safeguarding Partnerships procedures)
- The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families
- The principles of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)
- The Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Charity Commission 'Strategy for dealing with safeguarding vulnerable groups including children issues in charities', 'Safeguarding Children and Young People' and 'The Essential Trustee'.
- Other relevant legislation and regulations and guidance.

Comments, compliments and complaints

Adoption Matters is committed to providing a quality service which is efficient, effective, timely and conducted in an open, friendly and respectful manner. We welcome all comments and feedback about the way we work and your views help us to make sure that we are giving the best service we can, and are important in letting us know if there are any things we could do better.

Your feedback may include compliments (e.g. praise of a particular service or staff member), comments about how our services could be developed, or complaints. Compliments and comments can be shared by talking to the person working with you or a manager.

We provide a leaflet to all our adopters as part of their information pack, which is also available on our website and contains a tear-off sheet for convenience. We also welcome feedback by telephone, in a letter/email, or by asking to meet with us.

Let us know how we are doing.

Comments

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about how we could improve any aspect of our service. If you make a comment about our services, we will reply to you in writing.

Compliments

We are always pleased to hear from people using our services who want to praise a particular member of staff or the service they receive. If you send us a compliment we will write back to you and send a copy to the staff concerned and their manager(s) so that they know their work is appreciated.

Complaints

We realise that despite our best efforts, sometimes things can go wrong and, in such instances, we want to hear from you so that we can address this. We regard complaints as an opportunity to turn a negative experience into a positive one, as well as an opportunity for us to learn and to improve how we do things.

If you wish to make a complaint, we will do all we can to investigate this fairly, confidentially, and quickly and to explain the result to you. This leaflet summarises the agency's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which is available on request.

The purpose of our procedure is to ensure that we:

- listen and are responsive to people who raise an issue with us
- respond swiftly, aiming to resolve complaints informally where possible
- are fair, consistent and transparent in our approach
- offer solutions and/or explanations
- provide appropriate support for any staff who are mentioned in complaints
- record complaints consistently and monitor what we record
- use complaints positively as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

Who can complain?

Anyone who is receiving a service, or who has been provided with, or has been refused a service from Adoption Matters may complain to us.

Carers can make a complaint in their own right or on behalf of a child in their care. We also have a separate leaflet for children "A Children's Guide to Complaints"

We can assist if your first language is not English or if you have other specialist needs.

How to make a complaint

The informal route

Stage 1

In the vast majority of situations we are able to deal with complaints informally and quickly and achieve a solution that is acceptable to both parties.

Your first step should be to discuss the issue directly with the person with whom you have been dealing, ideally as and when the situation arises. This staff member should discuss the matter with their line manager and explain what they have done to address the complaint to ensure that it is handled effectively.

Stage 2

If you are not happy with the response you receive from the member of staff you are working with, or you feel that they cannot help you, you should ask to speak to their line manager. You can contact them by telephone or email to explain your concerns or alternatively you have the option of meeting with them.

Sometimes people tell us "this is not a complaint but..." or raise an issue with us without stating that they wish to complain and we will treat this in the same way under our informal procedure.

When you contact the line manager, it is helpful if you are able to explain clearly:

- What the problem is
- What you would like to see happen to resolve your complaint.

The line manager will look into all aspects of your complaint and the matters you have raised and you will receive a response within 28 days.

The formal route

Stage 3

If you are unhappy with the response from Stage 2 and feel that your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, you can make a written complaint to the Chief Executive (CEO), outlining your reasons for remaining dissatisfied and what actions you expect to see. This instigates the formal complaints procedure.

In certain circumstances, for example if your complaint is about the line manager, or if the line manager feels it is inappropriate for them to deal with it, they may recommend that your complaint be escalated to Stage 3 instead of responding to you themselves.

Your correspondence to the CEO can be made either by email or letter but must be made in writing. If you need any assistance in preparing your written complaint, for example if English is not your first language, we can provide you with support.

At this stage, your complaint will be fully investigated by the agency's designated lead for complaints (DLC), a senior member of the management team who is experienced in customer service and complaints handling. They will speak to all the members of staff who have been involved or who are named in your complaint and review all previous correspondence. They will address each element of your complaint and set out all their findings, conclusions and recommendations in a report or letter, outlining any actions the agency plans to undertake. You will receive this within 28 days of your formal complaint being received by the Agency.

Stage 4

If still not satisfied with the outcome, you have the right to appeal to the agency's Board of Trustees. You would need to write again to the CEO explaining why you are still not happy with the Agency's response and what outcome you are looking to achieve. The CEO will appoint three Board members to an appeals panel to consider all the previous information and correspondence regarding your complaint and you will be invited to a meeting to discuss their conclusions and final decision. In certain circumstances, they may also invite an external advisor to review the complaint and report on their findings, in which event you would be informed of the reasons in advance.

The CEO will write to you within 14 days of receiving the panel's written report summarizing their recommendations and final decision. This will conclude the agency's complaints procedure.

A copy of our full complaints procedure is available on request.

All comments, compliments and complaints should be addressed to our Head Office
Adoption Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1AE

Tel: 01244 390 938
Fax: 01244 390 067

E-mail: info@adoptionmatters.org Website: www.adoptionmatters.org

If having exhausted the agency's procedure you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you will be told of other avenues for complaint (e.g. Ofsted).

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

You may also wish to contact Ofsted with a comment, compliment or complaint. They can be contacted at:

Ofsted, North Regional Office, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Helpline: 0300 123 1231
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Complaints about a Local Authority: Children & Young People

From 1 April 2004, local authorities have a duty under section 26A of the Children Act 1989 to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy to children in need, looked after children and care leavers making or intending to make representations (including complaints) under the Children Act 1989.

Each Local Authority with responsibility for a Looked After child should provide the child with details of their complaints procedure and details of an independent advocacy service that the child can access. You need to ensure that the child's Social Worker gives you this for the child when the child is placed in your care.

Children placed outside of the authority who use alternative and augmentative forms of communication and those whose preferred language is not English are particularly vulnerable. Local authorities must make sure that the arrangements they make for providing advocacy services are able to provide an effective service to these groups of children.

Carers should enable children to make complaints and representations and ensure that the child is not subject to reprisals for making a complaint or representation.



Web: www.adoptionmatters.org

Tel: 0300 123 1066

Email: info@adoptionmatters.org

Like & follow us at:

www.facebook.com/AdoptionmattersUK/

www.twitter.com/adopt_matters

www.instagram.com/adoptionmattersuk/

www.linkedin.com/company/adoption-matters

Head office: 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1AE.

Also offices in: Blackburn, Warrington, Hale, Manchester, Leeds, Stoke & Durham.

Registered Charity Number: 512892

Rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Members of:

