



Statement of Purpose 2024-25



A proud history of children's futures

Ofsted 'Outstanding' since 2008 - the **ONLY** adoption service in the North of England rated Ofsted 'Outstanding' 5 times in a row



Members of:



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Introduction to Adoption Matters

Adoption Matters is an independent specialist voluntary adoption agency (VAA) which operates in the North West and North East of England, North East Wales, Yorkshire/Humberside and Staffordshire and Shropshire. The agency has offices in Blackburn, Chester, Hale (Altrincham), Warrington, Stoke on Trent, Manchester, Durham and Leeds.

Adoption Matters has a history of over 70 years, has placed over 5,000 children with adoptive families and has been at the forefront of innovation in adoption development.

Adoption Matters is a 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 our aims and objectives, principles and values, the services provided, how these are monitored as well as an overview of our structure.

Adoption Matters Aims & Objectives

At Adoption Matters, we believe that children's welfare and needs are of paramount importance, 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, Adoption Matters 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.

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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.

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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 our success is our highly qualified, experienced and knowledgeable staff team. Our committed, reliable team help ensure consistency, stability and quality throughout periods of growth and transition.

Sustainable

Adoption Matters 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.

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Services we offer

A list of the services we offer is listed below:

Recruitment, preparation, training and assessment of prospective adopters, to 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 Fostering and 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 and Special Guardianship Support Fund (AS GSF) 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.

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

- Carers who are approved to care for children under early permanence arrangements. (Also referred to as 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
- 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.
- A specialised family finding service for children who may wait longer to find an adoptive family (Child Focused Family Building)
- 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

We are also working in partnership with other RAAs including:

-
- Adoption Tees Valley
- Adopt North East
- One Adoption South Yorkshire
- One Adoption West Yorkshire
- One Adoption North Yorkshire
- Midlands Together Collaboration

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 adoptive families, irrespective of age (as long as at least one applicant is over the age of 21 years, 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 adoptive families are offered preparation training and full support to help them understand the needs and background of children requiring adoption.

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Adoption Matters 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 challenges
- 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 minority 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
- can consider a child/ren joining their household via early permanence arrangements
- require a high level of family time with birth family members or require placing together with brothers and sisters

We use a number of recruitment methods including our website, social media and other media sources and have a range of literature explaining the service. These can be produced in other formats and languages upon request.

People interested in adopting are able to download or be sent an Information Pack. 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 who need adoptive families and the qualities and competencies sought in these families.

Potential adopters wishing to have more information are encouraged to attend one of our information events to find out more about adoption and Adoption Matters and to speak to one of our Enquiry Advisers before formally registering their interest in adoption.

Enquiries and Stage 1 Process

- Potential adopter(s) are provided with the Registration of Interest Form
- Once the prospective 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 prospective adopter(s) to agree the way forward. (Stage 1 plan).
- Statutory checks and references are undertaken. This includes medicals and DBS checks on all applicant(s), members of their household aged 18 or over and anyone else who will have regular, unsupervised access to any child/ren placed. We also seek references from former partners, adult children and employers.
- The prospective adopter(s) attend preparation training groups and are provided with other resources to support their individual learning style to access information relating to adoption, the early experience of childhood trauma that many adopted children and the range of needs that an adopted child/ren could have.
- 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, prospective adopters have up to 6 months to make a formal application to adopt before there is a requirement to repeat aspects of Stage 1.

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Assessment

- Once the prospective adopter has made a formal application to adopt and we have 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) are given information about the process and are encouraged to contribute to the assessment report, as are any children in the family.
- Adoption Matters supports the use of the 'Attachment Style Interview' an assessment tool and use this in our assessments unless there is an agreed reason not to do so.
- Applicants are encouraged to meet with other adoptive families, including existing adoptive parents, during the process.
- All assessments are undertaken under national requirements underpinned by adoption legislation and statutory guidance. If for any reason the assessing social worker does not intend to recommend approval as a result of information received during the preparation, the social worker/social work team manager will discuss their reasons with the applicant(s). A Brief Report may be presented to the Adoption Panel.
- 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 on it.

Approval

- Adoption Matters has three Adoption Panels, which meet monthly (virtually or in person) in Blackburn, Chester and Durham and have independent Chairs. All completed assessment reports are considered by one of our Adoption Panels, 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(s) is not recommended as being suitable to adopt, or following a review, we propose to withdraw their approval; the Agency ensures that all potential options available, such as further representation to the Agency or referral to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), are clearly explained both verbally and in writing.
- 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 is supervised by someone who has the required experience.

Matching

- Support continues through the matching process, introductions, into placement, through the legal process of adopting the child and beyond, as appropriate.
- The completed Prospective Adopter's Report is also used to support the matching of approved families with a child/ren who need an adoptive family.
- While we ideally aim to place children from our partner RAA's we also look nationally to ensure that each family is linked and matched with the right child/ren.

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- 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 Adopter(s) 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/ren based on professional experience of successfully placing children and their detailed knowledge of the prospective adopter.
- Adoption Matters fully recognises the importance of good, clear placement planning and our expectation is that all children are appropriately prepared for the move to their adoptive family/early permanence placement based on their understanding and individual developmental needs. We will make every attempt to ensure that the prospective adoptive parent(s) 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 Adoption Matters, the placing Local Authority and the Regional Adoption Agency. Prospective adopters will be encouraged to submit their written views about the placement and the placement report.

Early Permanence

From 2014, Adoption Matters delivered the concurrent planning service in partnership with another voluntary adoption/fostering agency. The service placed children aged four years and under with adoptive parents who were also dually approved as foster carers and as such were able to care for children whilst assessments were undertaken by the local authority and their outcomes determined by the Court. Whilst in most cases a plan of adoption was probable reunification of the child to their birth parents was also possible. Concurrent Planning carers cared for children as foster carers and were subject to fostering regulation and requirements until such a time that either the child returned to their parents, or a plan of adoption was endorsed by the Court and they moved into adoption regulations. The ethos of this child centered service is that the adults managed the uncertainty in terms of outcome and moves, rather than the child. The service came to a close in May 2024 when we made the decision not to renew the contract for concurrent planning and instead made the decision to bring our early permanence service back in house in order for more children to potentially benefit.

We have very much taken on board the positive outcomes for children and good practice of our Concurrent Planning Service as well as a wealth of learning and experience from the past 10 years and integrated this into our early permanence service. We encourage all our prospective adopters to consider whether or not they could care for a child/ren who join their household under an early permanence arrangement. In addition to the assessment process as outlined for other prospective adopter(s), those who wish to consider a child/ren joining their family under an early permanence arrangement, also benefit from additional training and support in relation to fostering regulations, the role of foster carers, delegated authority and supporting family time. Those wishing to offer an early permanence placement are presented at our Adoption Panel for consideration firstly about whether or not they are suitable to adopt and secondly if they have the potential to manage the additional challenges of an early permanence placement which includes consideration of their ability to manage uncertainty, support and facilitate family time arrangements and their potential to manage a reunification to birth family if this is determined by the Court to be the most appropriate plan for the child.

Early permanence carers become registered foster carers for an identified child/ren by the Local Authority who has responsibility for the child (Reg 25a) and as such the support to early

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permanence carers during the fostering phase is usually provided by the local authority fostering service.

Support

Adoption Matters knows that adoption is life-long and we offer comprehensive adoption support for as long as families need it. Adoption Matters 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 and Fostering Support “Calendar of Events” including:

- Individual therapeutic consultation sessions for adoptive families
- Webinars and a suite of Videos in relation to supporting children and parents
- Sensory support services from experienced and skilled Occupational Therapists
- social events and activity days for children and adoptive families
- groups for children who have been placed for adoption or adopted, including a group for new placements, a group for LGBTQ+ adopters, an adopted adults' group.
- 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 supervision.

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.

We may by prior agreement visit a child on behalf of a Local Authority.

Adoption Matters works with adoptive families to promote the attendance of children at school and liaises with education colleagues in Children and Young People's Directorates, as appropriate. Advice and support will be given about the Pupil Premium or access to free nursery provision and the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund and how to apply.

Via the Centre for Fostering and Adoption Support we work 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 Fostering and Adoption Support will be given written information about support available to them, written confirmation of any

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planned support 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 about developing and improving our services.

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 workshops/Webinars and 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, New Family Social, Deaf Society, Adoption UK.
- 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.
- We work 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 and Special Guardianship Support Fund
- We 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.

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The full range of services offered by our Centre for Fostering and Adoption Support is available at www.centreforadoptionssupport.org

Advice and Information for Adopted Adults & Birth relatives

We offer an advice, information and intermediary service for adopted adults who were adopted through Adoption Matters or the below former organisational names and establishments 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 held within our files and relevant original documents to assist their understanding.

Monitoring & Evaluation of Services

Adoption Matters 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 panel reports which are shared with staff and trustees.

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 our post adoption services

Written feedback is sought from users of the Assessment, Therapy and Counselling Service.

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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. contributing to development days for social workers, reviewing leaflets etc. as this empowers them and their personal experience informs practice.

Copies of the “Comments, Compliments and Complaints” leaflet are provided to 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 Adoption Matters receive training in our complaints procedure.

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 our trustees twice a year.

Adoption Matters 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 our record in meeting timescales.

The Panel has a role in reviewing and recommending changes to our 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.

Heads of Service and/or Social Work Team Managers audit case records. Decisions are recorded in electronic case files and are signed and dated. We operate a case file audit system and a caseload monitoring system.

Staff and volunteers are made aware of our children’s safeguarding procedures and receive training in this area.

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volunteers are followed up promptly, referred to the appropriate agencies as necessary and details of action recorded. We review our 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 fashion 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.

Adoption Matters produces an Annual Review.

Adoption Matters is registered with Ofsted as a voluntary adoption agency and as an adoption agency providing adoption support services to adults and children. We are regularly inspected by Ofsted.

The address for Ofsted is:

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

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

Responsible Individual, Senior Management & Board

<p>The name and address of the Registered Provider:</p>	<p>Adoption Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, Cheshire, CH2 1AE Tel: 01244 390938 Email: info@adoptionmatters.org www.adoptionmatters.org Adoption Matters has offices listed below:</p>	
	<p>Blackburn office: 10 Cathedral Close Blackburn BB1 5AA Tel: 01254 205050</p> <p>Warrington office: Suite 412B Birchwood Park Chadwick House Warrington Road Warrington WA3 6AE Tel; 01925 982 243</p> <p>Leeds office: Tenants Hall Acre Close Middleton Leeds LS10 4HX Tel: 0300 123 1066</p> <p>Stoke office: The Dudson Centre Hope Street Hanley Stoke-on-Trent ST1 5DD Tel: 0300 123 1066</p>	<p>Hale office: St Peter's House 233 Ashley Road Hale Cheshire WA15 9SS Tel: 0161 941 7732</p> <p>Manchester office The Thomas Centre Ardwick Green North Manchester M12 6FZ</p> <p>Durham office – Agriculture House Durham DH1 2RY Tel: 0191 386 3719</p>
<p>The Agency Decision Maker:</p>	<p>Norman G Goodwin</p>	
<p>The Responsible Individual:</p>	<p>Susy White, Chief Executive, Adoption Matters</p>	
<p>The Registered Manager</p>	<p>Paul Dolan, Head of Service</p>	

<p>The Strategic Management Team:</p>	<p>Adoption Matters Strategic Management Team is comprised of Senior Managers in the agency. This includes: -</p> <p>Susy White Chief Executive Gaynor Richards Business Development Manager Paul Dolan Head of Service Adoption Jacqui Shore Head of Service Adoption Karen Davies Finance & Business Service Manager Karen Palfreyman Service Manager (Fostering) David Robinson-Field Service Manager (Centre for Fostering and Adoption Support)</p>	
<p>Our Panel Advisers</p>	<p>Paul Dolan (Blackburn/Durham)</p>	<p>Jacqui Shore (Chester)</p>
<p>Our Deputy Panel Advisers</p>	<p>The Panel Advisors deputise for each other.</p>	
<p>The Adoption Support Services Adviser</p>	<p>David Robinson-Field, Centre for Adoption and Fostering Support</p>	
<p>Safeguarding Leads</p>	<p>Jacqui Shore Paul Dolan</p>	

Adoption Matters' Chief Executive, Susy White is the Responsible Individual

Paul Dolan, Head of Service Adoption North, is the Registered Manager.

Norman Goodwin CBE is employed specifically by the Agency as the Agency Decision Maker, making decisions following recommendations from the Adoption Panel. Norman Goodwin holds the NVQ Level 5 Award in Operational Management and has worked for the agency for over 33 years.

Adoption Matters 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.

As of 1 April 2024 Adoption Matters employed 85 people comprising of 47 Social Workers/Social Work managers registered with Social Work England, 3 Occupational Therapists, 6 Social Work Assistants, 2 Enquiry Advisors. 27 people work within the Business and Development Section of the organisation which includes, IT, HR, Finance, Marketing and Fundraising.

Our Registered Manager and another Head of Service have completed the NVQ level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management Children and Families); and the Chief Executive holds a recognised management qualification (NVQ level 5, Dip MCS or equivalent)

All Social Work Managers and Social Workers/Senior Social Workers are professionally qualified with a Degree or Diploma in Social Work or equivalent and are registered with Social Work England and registered with the Care Council for Wales if practicing in Wales.

- We support our Social Workers in meeting the requirements for their continued professional development by offering access to ongoing training and development. 45 of our social workers hold the Post Qualification Level one in Social Work. 30 of our Social Workers/Senior Social Worker and Social Work Managers hold the Advanced Child Care Award or equivalent, and the Agency has a training plan for additional staff to obtain an Internal Award similar to this. 13 of our Social Workers/Senior Social Workers and Social Work Managers hold a Practice Educators Award.
- Other qualifications held by our Social Workers/Senior Social Workers and Social Work Managers include:- Post Graduate Diploma in Non-Directive Play Therapy
- The people who work within the Business Sections of our organisation 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, PG Diploma, CIM Diploma in Marketing. Our HR Manager has a Chartered Member of the CIPD, with a Degree and CIPD Level 7 Diploma in HR and a Level 5 CIPD Certificate in Human Resources. Our Finance and Business Service Manager is completing her CIMA qualification
- We 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 advisors
- Adoption support adviser

- Islamic advisor
- Education advisor
- Cultural 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.

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 2014
- 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 Act 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 2014
- 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) updated 2023
- 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.
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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 a chance to turn a negative experience into a positive one and for us to learn and 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 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 member of the senior 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

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

Ofsted 'Outstanding' since 2008 - the **ONLY** adoption service in the North of England rated Ofsted 'Outstanding' 5 times in a row



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