



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S COMMISSION**
15 March 2011

Report of the Strategic Director of Children &
Young People's Services

ITEM 8

Adoption Agency Report 2011

SUMMARY

- 1.1 Information regarding the work of Derby City Council's Adoption Agency is provided for the period January 2010 to December 2010

Members are advised that new regulations, guidance and minimum standards are due to be published in March 2011 for implementation in April 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Adoption Agency continues to provide Agency Reports from the period of the last report in January 2010 and reviews the Statement of Purpose as required in the Adoption Minimum Standards.
- 1.2 A monthly highlights report is produced to track key indicators of performance.
- 1.3 The agency continues to develop adoption support services in line with the National Adoption Standards.
- 1.4 To note the work and developments of the Adoption Agency as outlined in this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 This report informs the Children and young people's commission, acting as the Social Services Committee, of the activity of the Derby City Adoption Agency. A report is required annually and this document covers the period from January 2010 to December 2010. It is the expectation of guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families that the report will be placed before Members.
- 2.2 The Children Act 1989, the Adoption Agency Regulations (2005) and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 placed duties and responsibilities on Local Authorities to provide, or arrange to provide an Adoption Service.
- 2.3 Derby City Adoption Agency has continued to develop services to meet the needs of children for who should be placed for adoption. The Agency also continues to provide services to meet the needs of adults including adoptive parents, birth family members and adopted adults.

2.4 The Adoption Panels met a total of 24 times between Jan 2010 and December 2010. There are 2 panels which consider adoption matters and they meet on a fortnightly basis to consider:

- Whether a child should be placed for adoption
- The suitability of prospective adopters
- Whether a child should be placed with a specific prospective adopter

2.5 Panels are appropriately constituted and meet regulatory requirements. Panel members receive regular training and appraisals. In addition, members of the Derby City Children's Legal Department act as legal advisors. These are non-voting members.

- Carol Gilbert is Professional Adviser to both Adoption Panels and is non voting.
- The Agency Decision Maker is Katie Harris, Service Director, Specialist Services

2.6 From January 2006 we have been required to have an independent panel chair and this has been reinforced by the new adoption regulations. To achieve this we have entered into a service level agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council and exchange senior managers to act as independent chair of panels.

2.7 **Panel Business January 2010 to December 2010**

33 children were suitable to be placed for adoption
41 children were matched with adopters (37)
21 adoptive families were approved (15)
0 disruptions

Gender

Male	19
Female	14

Heritage

4 Dual heritage	(2)
28 White British	(30)
2 Asian	(2)
1 Afro Caribbean	(1)

2.8 **Placements made January 2010 to December 2010**

43 Children have been placed for adoption. 17 of these children have been placed with Derby City Adopters.

31 White British
1 White Irish
3 White European
1 Asian
7 Dual heritage

2.9 Adoption Orders granted January 2010-December 2010

29 orders made of which:

24 White British
4 Dual heritage
1 White European

2.10 Children Waiting Placement as at December 2010

There are currently 48 children waiting for adoptive placements of whom 12 have potential matches identified.

2.11 Approval of Adopters

Panel has considered 21 applications from families wishing to be approved as Adopters and all have been approved. 7 have had Derby City Children placed with them.

2.12 The Adoption Service was last inspected by Ofsted in 2009. It was found to be good in all '5 outcomes' with 'enjoy and achieve' element having outstanding elements.

2.13 The Statement of Purpose has been updated in March 2011. The Adoption Minimum Standards require that it is reviewed and updated at least annually and presented to this committee. Our policies and procedures are currently being reviewed in light of the new Adoption Regulations, guidance and minimum standards due for publication in April 2011.

2.14 Derby City continues to provide a comprehensive post adoption service offering a range of services to adopted adults, birth family members and adoptive families.

The post adoption service is fully staffed, with the adoption team carrying a part time vacancy.

2.15 Our continued membership of the East Midlands Adoption Consortium has brought benefits in local exchanges of adoption placements and staff training opportunities. Attendance at regional and national 'Placement Days' helps to achieve permanency for some of our 'hard to place' children.

2.16 Special Guardianship - The development of this continues to provide significant financial challenges. A small but growing number of younger children for whom adoption outside of the family would have been the plan are now being placed with relatives under Special Guardianship (a private law application) many of whom are then requesting financial support for the child through to independence.

As a consequence the number of children being placed for adoption from local authority care may reduce.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and value for money

The development of Special Guardianship Orders continues to significantly challenge budgets.

Interagency fees, paid when children are placed with adopters from other local authorities and voluntary agencies, is a significant cost to the Council. The geographical area of Derby City can preclude the placement of Derby City children with Derby City approved adopters which means we have to look at other agency adopters for the placement of children. In addition the needs of children are the paramount consideration for any adoption agency and the agency may have to consider a wider pool of adopters to achieve the right "match" for a child.

Legal

The function of the Adoption Agency is regulated by the Adoption Act 1976, the Adoption and Children Act 2002; the Adoption Agency Regulations (1983) and the Adoption Support Regulations 2005.

The final section of 2002 Adoption and Children Act was implemented at the end of 2005.

As noted above new Regulations, Guidance and Standards are due to be implemented in April 2011.

Personnel

The Adoption Team consists of a full time Service Manager, 6.3 Social Workers who carry out the full range of adoption activities. The Post Adoption team consists of a Service Manager, 2 Post Adoption Social Workers, a .5 children's support worker and an independent worker for Birth families.

Equalities Impact

The Agency continues to give due consideration to ethnicity, gender, culture, religion and disability issues in relation to children being placed for adoption.

The recruitment strategy should help the agency focus its recruitment on groups of prospective adopters and to prioritise applications according to the needs of children waiting for adoption.

Enquiries are welcomed from people interested in adoption irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, age or health.

Health and Safety

This is considered at all stages of the adoption process.

Environmental Sustainability

Not applicable

Asset management

Not applicable

Risk Management

Risk is managed at all stages of the adoption process, including post adoption.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- To comply with the new statutory regulations, guidance and standards;
- To link to Central Government priorities on adoption, including delay in achieving permanency for children in care and increasing the numbers of children being adopted;
- Placing the needs and welfare of the child at the centre of the adoption process.

This furthers the Council's Objectives of **healthy, safe and independent communities** and supports the priorities of **modernising social care**.



Derby City Council Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose

Derby City Council Adoption Service places children and their needs at the centre of its activity. The welfare and safety of children is of paramount concern when making decisions.

March 2010

Heather Tomlinson
Interim Director of Children
& Young People's Services

Statement of purpose

The Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of the Derby City Adoption Service. The information contained in the Statement of Purpose is prescribed in Schedule I of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Standard 1). The Statement of Purpose will be regularly reviewed and formally updated as required by the National Minimum Standards. This document has been informed by:

- Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003;
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2003;
- The Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003;
- The Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005;
- Related Regulations, Local Authority Circulars and Practice Guidance;
- Every Child Matters 2003;
- We are awaiting the publication of new National Minimum Standards, Regulations and Guidance, due April 2011.

The Statement of Purpose links all sections in the document to the relevant Adoption National Minimum Standards and the five outcomes of Every Child Matters that are most important to children and young people.

• **Being Healthy** – there are no corresponding National Minimum Standards (NMS).

• **Staying safe:**

- The agency matches children with adopters (NMS 2);
- The agency assesses and prepares adopters (NMS 4);
- Adopters are given information about matching (NMS 5);
- The functions of the adoption panel are as specified (NMS 10);
- The constitution and membership of adoption panels are as specified (NMS 11);
- Adoption panels are timely (NMS 12);
- Adoption agency decisions are made without delay and appropriately (NMS 13);
- The manager is suitable to carry on or manage an adoption agency (NMS 15);

- Staff are suitable to work with children (NMS 19);

- **Enjoying and Achieving**

- The adoption agency provides support pre and post adoption for adoptive parents (NMS 6);
- The agency has access to specialist advisers as appropriate (NMS 18).

- **Making a positive contribution:**

- Birth parents and birth families are involved in adoption plans (NMS 7);
- Birth parents and birth families are involved in maintaining the child's heritage (NMS 8);
- The Adoption agency supports birth parents and families (NMS 9).

- **Achieving economic wellbeing** - there are no corresponding National Minimum Standards.

Management - This is not one of the outcomes of Every Child Matters but will be covered in the Statement of Purpose, as there are a number of NMS, which cover the management of an adoption service.

Contents

- 1. Values, aims and objectives**
- 2. Named manager**
- 3. Qualifications and experience of named manager and decision maker**
- 4. Management structure of the Adoption Service**
- 5. Number, relevant qualifications and experience of staff**
- 6. Services provided**
- 7. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision of services**
- 8. Storage, access, maintenance and security of adoption records**
- 9. A summary of the procedures for making a complaint**
- 10. The address and telephone number of the Commission**
- 11. The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose**

1. Values, aims and objectives

(NMS 1 applies)

The National Adoption Standards have been written to ensure that looked after children, birth families, prospective adopters and the general public understand what they can expect from an adoption service. The values below set out the important principles, which underpin both the National Adoption Standards and the Adoption – National Minimum Standards. Derby City fully endorses these values.

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- Where possible it is best for children to be brought up by their own family.
- The child's welfare, safety and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes and feelings are listened to and their welfare and safety are the paramount considerations in the adoption process.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language will be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family will be valued and respected.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many different organisations, professions and individuals who have to work together in partnership to meet the needs for services of those affected by adoption.
- Birth parents and birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

The aims of the Derby City Adoption Service are:

1. To recruit, assess and provide suitable families, within the timescales laid down by the National Adoption Standards that meet the needs of every child referred to the adoption service.
2. To provide information on the process of adoption and the children available for adoption to applicants wishing to adopt a child into their family.
3. To provide an adoption support service to enable a child to remain with an adoptive

family and ensure that the child reaches their full potential.

4. To provide a service for those wishing to adopt a child into their family from overseas via the Yorkshire Adoption Agency Ltd.
5. To provide information on the process of adoption for those people who wish to adopt a related child from within their family, for example, stepparent and relative adoptions.
6. To provide information and support to adopted adults wishing to obtain information about, and from, their birth records.
7. To provide information, help and support for all those who have been affected by adoption whether prior to, or after, the making of an adoption order.
8. Staff are organised and managed in a way which delivers an efficient and effective service.
9. To provide opportunities for adoption workers to increase their knowledge in new research and developments.
10. The number of staff and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purpose and functions of the adoption agency.

2. Named manager

(NMS 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, and 22 apply)

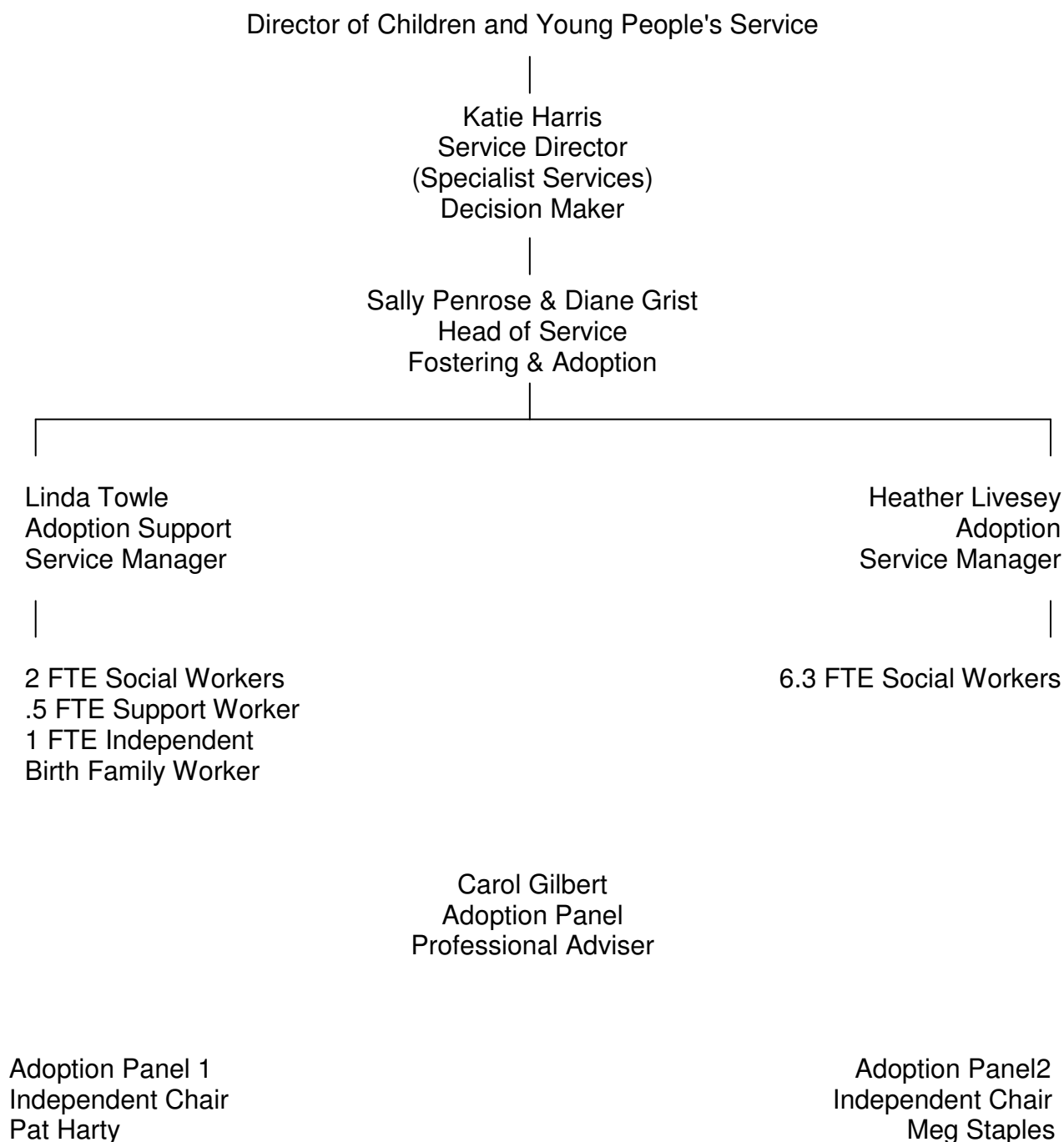
The responsible managers for Adoption and Adoption Support Services are currently Sally Penrose and Diane Grist, Acting Heads of Service, Adoption and Fostering, Adoption and Fostering Centre, Perth Street, Derby DE21 6XX

The Adoption Agency Decision Maker is Service Director, Specialist Services, Katie Harris.

3. Qualifications and experience of named managers

Sally Penrose	Diane Grist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in Residential Care 1973 • Certificate of Qualification in Social Work 1982 • PQ Childcare Award 2001 • Practice Teaching Award • NVQ Level 5 Management Standards Operational Management 2006 • 28 years Social Work experience, including statutory child care, senior practitioner, quality assurance, independent reviewing officer. Present post commenced February 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Psychology 1984 • Diploma in Applied Social Studies 1991 • Certificate of Qualification in Social Work 1991 • Practice Teaching Award 1998 • Certificate in Management Studies 2004 • 1984-1991 Children's Residential Care (local authority and voluntary agency) • 1991-2001 Fostering and Adoption social worker • 2001-present Fostering and Adoption Manager in four local authorities.

4. Organisational structure of the Derby City Council Adoption Service



5. Number, relevant qualifications and experience of staff

The list of current staff and their relevant qualifications and experience will be made available to the Ofsted Inspection Service.

6. Services provided

The information contained in this section is under the headings suggested in the draft practice guidance to support the National Adoption Standards for England 2001 (Section F2). The Derby City Adoption Service aspires to the timescales set down by the National Adoption Standards.

a) Effectively publicising adoption services, their accessibility, including information about services provided by other agencies

As well as responding to enquiries from prospective adopters, the agency actively recruits adoptive families. The Adoption Agency has the services of a Marketing Officer who is responsible for generating enquiries using all relevant forms of media. This includes local and national press, television, and the internet, radio, leafleting and working within the community to generate enquiries. Information and enquiries can be received through the Derby City Council website. The Agency will accept applications from prospective adopters within a 50 mile radius of Derby City. If a suitable prospective family living at a considerable distance from Derby City apply to be assessed for a specific child, Derby City will negotiate with a Adoption Agency local to the family to assess and support them. Applicants living a considerable distance from Derby who are making general enquiries are referred to their local Adoption Agency.

b) All aspects of the recruitment process, including effective arrangements to advise, assess, counsel and support those who become approved adopters and those who do not

(NMS 2 and 3 apply)

Derby City holds bi- monthly information meetings to which all enquirers are invited. Some enquirers may prefer a private home visit which can be arranged. These meetings are intended to provide an overall picture of adopting in Derby, and will include information about Derby children currently needing adoptive homes. This also provides an opportunity to talk to experienced adoption workers and adoptive parents. Attendees will be informed that priority will be given to those who are able to meet the needs of the children requiring adoption, for example, currently older children, sibling groups, and therefore it may not be practical to assess everyone.

People wishing to proceed will receive an initial visit from an adoption worker where their personal circumstances will be discussed. If the enquiry proceeds, further information is obtained to enable all the checks and references to be undertaken. Checks and references will be requested from the following:

- Criminal Records Bureau; - with particular arrangements if the applicant has lived for a period in another country
- Health Visitor;

- Children & Young People's Departments for other areas in which the applicants have lived;
- employer or educational tutor if the applicants are attending college; particular references will be required when having worked with children or vulnerable adults.
- self-employed applicants will need to obtain a reference from a contractor, supplier or customer; plus bank or accountant
- the Education Department and relevant schools or nurseries will be contacted for a reference if the applicant has, or has had, children of school age;
- Overseas Residency – applicants will need to obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct from the Embassy or Consulate for the relevant Country;
- members of Armed Forces – applicants will need to give their service number and checks will be taken up through SSAFA;
- where applicants have been previously married, or lived with another partner who have cared for children, the absent partner will be contacted unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.
- Applicants will be asked to provide 6 referees if a couple and 4 if a single applicant

If at any stage applicants or the adoption service consider that the application should not proceed, a full discussion will be offered to explore the circumstances leading to this decision. Wherever possible the reasons for not proceeding will be shared with the applicants although in exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to disclose third party information. All decisions will be confirmed in writing.

Once satisfactory checks and references have been received applicants are invited to attend a preparation course to prepare them for the task of adopting. It is a requirement that prospective adoptive parents attend a preparation course to help them understand the difference between parenting an adopted child and parenting a birth child and the impact this is likely to have on the child, on themselves and their families.

Most applicants will proceed to an assessment following the preparation course. The aim is to complete the assessment within eight months of the formal application being accepted.

c) The assessment of prospective adopters using objective, thorough, fair and transparent criteria

(NMS 4 applies)

At the information meetings issues around who can adopt and the qualities required are openly discussed. Adopters will need to show they have the capacity:

- to learn from experience;

- to cope with stress;
- have the capacity to meet the ethnic, cultural, health, religion, language and educational needs of a child needing adoption;
- to work with children's services and other agencies to secure necessary services for the child;
- to build and sustain close/intimate and reciprocal relationships;
- to understand other people's point of view and their feelings - empathy;
- to be in touch with sad and angry feelings;
- to resolve past traumas or losses;
- to build secure attachments, to share difficulties and accept help.

At the information meeting, enquirers are informed about the wide range of people who may be able to adopt and any limitations that may arise in certain circumstances. The information given will cover the following:

- families from all types of backgrounds;
- people without children;
- people with children;
- single people;
- people from all ethnic backgrounds;
- people with disabilities;
- people who are not "perfect";
- people who have had problems in the past;
- people who rent their home;
- health and lifestyle issues;
- people whose infertility treatment has ended.

Further explanation is given to each of these bullet points, so, for instance, when discussing health issues, this is qualified by explaining that adopters need to have the health and vigour to meet the many and varied demands of children throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

Further information is given about the qualities needed to adopt, which are:

- ability to see the child as they are – not how you would like them to be;
- acceptance, commitment, flexibility, sensitivity, openness;
- ability to cope with uncertainty and lifestyle adjustment;
- ability to ask for and accept help, support and advice;
- sense of humour.

During the remainder of the assessment process, other criteria are explored in more depth with applicants, including the non-smacking policy, and the need for adopters to embrace diversity and difference.

Applicants attend a preparation course, which provides information about adoption. These courses also offer participants an opportunity to reflect upon the impact of adoption on themselves and their families and develop support networks as adoptive parents.

After the preparation courses all applicants are assessed, and the information collated, using the Prospective Adopters Report produced by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

Applicants are visited within their own home, and seen together, and separately, if there is more than one applicant. Applicants are invited to make their own written as well as verbal contributions to their assessment and are given the opportunity to read and comment on the completed Prospective Adopters Report. Work with the adopters' own children is also undertaken if appropriate. Other members of the household are also interviewed. Significant relatives and referees are seen at this stage. A mid way review is held with the applicants and social worker. The assessing adoption Social Worker will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be adopters. The adoption social worker will give a copy of the written report to the applicants who will have ten working days to give their views to the agency. Prospective adopters are expected to attend the adoption panel when their application is being considered.

d) Inter-country adopters

(NMS 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 18 apply)

Applicants for Inter-Country adoption are referred to Yorkshire Adoption Agency Ltd for a comprehensive inter country adoption service. There will be a charge made to the family by the Yorkshire Adoption Agency Ltd.

e) Non Agency Adoption

- The role of the LA is to provide a report to the court as to the suitability of the applicants to adopt.
- Enquirers approaching the Service are sent written information about non agency

adoptions within five working days.

- Applicants are asked to confirm in writing that they have received the information and they wish to proceed by completing a Notice of Intention Form.
- Applicants are asked to complete an initial application form.
- Applicants are asked to sign their agreement for statutory checks to be undertaken in line with agency adopters.
- A social worker is allocated and begins the gathering information for the court report.
- The applicants submit their application to court.

f) Birth parents - Support, information and counselling for birth parents

(NMS 7, 8, and 9 apply)

It needs to be acknowledged that most birth parents will find it difficult to accept that they can no longer parent their children and that adoption represents the best outcome. The Derby City Adoption Service fully supports the principle in the National Adoption Standards that birth parents and birth families are entitled to services, which recognises the lifelong implications of adoption. The child's social worker and adoption social worker have discreet but complementary roles in providing services to birth families. The childcare workers will endeavour to work with birth parents to enable effective plans to be made and implemented for their children and ensure that birth parents views about adoption and contact are fully recorded.

- It is the responsibility of the children's and adoption social worker to explain the adoption process and gather the birth parents views about the kind of family they would ideally like for their child. The birth parents will also be asked for their views about contact and whether they would like their child placed with siblings. The social worker will explain the importance for the child of having a full medical history of not only the birth parents but also the birth family.
- Birth parents are entitled to see what is written about them and presented to the adoption panel.
- All birth parents will be encouraged to provide information, and contribute, to their child's Life Story Book and Letter for Later Life.
- In addition birth parents are offered access to further counselling provided by the Independent Worker for birth families, a leaflet is available to explain the service offered to birth families
- The Adoption Service will provide birth parents, via the childcare social worker, with an information leaflet explaining the adoption process.

- Following the making of an Adoption Order birth parents may request an assessment for Post Adoption support.

g) Adoption panels

(NMS 10, 11, 12, and 18 apply)

Derby City has two adoption panels with independent chairs and attended by the same Professional Agency Adviser. The panels are constituted in line with the adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and follow the requirements of the National Minimum Standards (Standard 11.3).

Prospective Adopters are positively encouraged to attend panel for their approval consideration and for the matching of children with them.

Prospective adopters are given a leaflet explaining the panel process and are also asked to complete an evaluation form after the meeting. Their comments are fed back to the panel and the Professional Adviser retains a copy of all evaluation forms.

The Adoption Match Planning meeting monitors the progress of family finding for all children where adoption is the plan.

h) Preparation of prospective adopters for the placement of a child, including the provision of appropriate support post-placement and post-adoption

(NMS 5, 6 and 18 apply)

Prospective adopters have already received some preparation for the placement of children through attendance at the preparation courses and during their assessment. (See above – Sections b and c)

When prospective adopters are identified as meeting a particular child or children's needs the adoption worker and child's social worker will provide the prospective adopters with verbal and written information about the child. If the prospective adopters wish to proceed they will receive further detailed written information and will be visited by the child's foster carer and the two social workers. All adoptive parents should have the opportunity to meet with the medical adviser prior to the adoption panel, particularly where children have special needs. If following a period of reflection all parties wish to proceed, a matching report, which incorporates the Adoption Support Plan, is prepared for the adoption panel which will recommend the matching should proceed. As well as seeking the prospective adopters' views about the placement, children's views are sought where they old enough to express a view.

In order to plan introductions and placement of a child, the Adoption Service Manager chairs a Placement Planning Meeting. Following placement the prospective adopters continue to receive visits from the adoption social worker, who supports the placement until the adoption order is made. Once placed the child is reviewed by an independent reviewing officer who will continue to regularly review the placement up to the making of an adoption order. Derby City has a Adoption Support team. (See Section N for details)

Derby is a member of the East Midlands Adoption Consortium. The aim of the consortium is to increase the choice of adoptive placements regionally by circulating details of children and approved adopters who have not been linked by their own agency. The consortium also strives to achieve consistent good practice standards across the region. Derby City also increases placement choice by using the Adoption Register for England and Wales. Derby City produces a brochure of Prospective Adopters and children requiring adoption for circulation to all national approved Adoption Agencies.

i) Preparation of children for placement with prospective adopters, including the provision of appropriate support post-placement and post-adoption

(NMS 5, 6, and 9 apply)

Efforts will be made to find a placement which meets the child's individual needs arising from racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, gender, religion or disability taking into account at all times the need to ensure that a child is placed with a permanent family with the minimum of delay.

Every child should have a Life Story Book, a Letter for Later Life and a written guide to adoption. This work should be undertaken by the child's social worker with help and advice from the adoption worker. Every effort is made to provide the child with the fullest possible family history and help maintain their heritage. The Letter for Later Life includes information about the child's birth and early life, and an explanation as to why they were placed in an adoptive family.

Age appropriate work is undertaken with children to ascertain their wishes and feelings about adoption and the kind of family they would ideally like to live with. Once a family has been identified, children are given appropriate information, depending on their age. The placement planning meeting co-ordinates an age appropriate introduction timetable. This is reviewed during introductions to assess progress and whether the timescale for the child's move needs to be adjusted in accordance with their needs.

Post placement the social worker continues to support the child in placement but where more in depth work is identified the child and prospective adopters can be referred to other appropriate post placement/adoption support services, for example, if agreed as part of the Adoption Support plan.

j) Clear criteria for adoption financial support and other payments, the arrangements for review and making these available to adopters

(NMS 6 applies)

The Derby City Adoption Service may pay pre-placement costs (introductory expenses and agreed settling in expenses) in certain circumstances and may also meet the cost of legal expenses where the adoption is contested or particularly complex.

At the point of matching, all children must have an Adoption Support Plan which sets out both the prospective adopters' and child's support needs, with any financial implications and how the adoption service intends to meet these. The Adoption Support Plan must

be agreed with the adoptive family and the Head of Service Adoption and Fostering before being presented to the Adoption Panel.

The Adoption Service has a dedicated inter-agency budget when it is not possible to place a child with Derby City approved adopters.

k) The process for establishing, maintaining, monitoring and reviewing contact arrangements for each adopted child

(NMS 8 and 9 apply)

The adoption service recognises the importance of children and young people having suitable contact with their birth families and other significant people. Such contact is entirely governed by the best interests of the child. Contact can vary from the annual exchange of written information to face-to-face contact with members of the birth family at intervals appropriate for the child.

The Adoption Support Service operates a well-established letterbox contact arrangement for the exchange of information between adoptive families and birth families. Birth families are also supported in arrangements for direct face-to-face contact, when deemed to be in the child's best interest.

The Adoption Service generally believes there are mutual benefits of at least one meeting

between a child's birth parent and adoptive parents around the time of placement; other significant birth relatives may also be involved.

Contact plans are first considered at the Looked After Children reviews, and included in the care plan presented to court. Adoption panel may advise on contact plans. Children's needs will change over time and contact plans should evolve to reflect the child's changing circumstances, needs and expressed wishes.

Post placement contact arrangements continue to be reviewed at each child's statutory review. The service does not formally review contact arrangements after the Adoption order is made.

l) The review of disrupted placements, ascertaining the causes for the breakdown to aid future planning for the child

(NMS 6 applies)

Following a disruption the Derby City Adoption Service convenes a disruption meeting in order to try and achieve a better understanding of the factors which led to the breakdown

of the placement. This helps in planning future placements. An experienced, preferably independent childcare manager chairs these meetings. A summary of the conclusions of the meeting are presented to the adoption management team meeting and the relevant adoption panel in order that they can learn any lessons.

m) Investigations into allegations that are made known to adoption service staff, adopters and children and young people

All child protection investigations involving children placed for adoption are in line with safeguarding procedures.

n) The range of post adoption support services available to all those affected by adoption

(NMS 6, 9, 18, 25, 26, and 27 apply)

The Derby City Post Adoption Team offers assessment of support needs and where appropriate services or signposting to other services for parties affected by adoption. Assessments and services are offered in line with the Adoption Support Services 2005.

Services may include Schedule 2 counselling and access to records for adopted adults, and section 98 intermediary services for adopted adults and specific adult birth relatives of adopted adults.

The Post adoption Team manages the indirect contact letterbox scheme between adoptive parents and birth relatives.

Adoptive parents are offered training opportunities, a support group run by Adoption UK and an annual newsletter. Adoptive families are invited to social events and adopted children over the age of 10 are offered activity and support groups. Derby City also pays for one years membership of Adoption UK for all newly approved adopters.

o) An equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of adoption

The adoption service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process. Applicants wishing to be approved as adopters will be considered Irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability, providing the adoption service believes that they can safely meet the needs of children requiring adoption.

7. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision of services

The Derby City Adoption Service has developed a comprehensive system for monitoring service users feedback during different stages of the adoption process. This information is analysed and used in staff supervision and team meetings. Where necessary the information is used to improve the service.

This monitoring includes:

From adoptive applicants

- Feedback on the Information Meeting.
- Feedback on attendance at preparation courses.
- Feedback on the assessment process.
- Feedback on attending adoption panel.

- Feedback on written information at time of placement.
- Evaluation of service received following the making of an adoption order.

Birth parents

- Their views are sought at all stages of the process and particularly in relation to the Child's Permanence Report to which they are offered the opportunity to contribute

Children

- The views of children are recorded in their adoption file at all stages and where appropriate in the Child's Permanence Report.

Monitoring of the Adoption Service

- The SWIFT/ICS computerised data and information recording system tracks the progress of children looked after. The 'infoview system' provides management information across a range of indicator and performance issues. The service has produced a Business Plan, which reviews performance in the previous year and sets targets for the forthcoming year, having regard to any serious shortfalls in the service and the standards expected.

There are review systems in place for the following:

- monitoring the progress of family finding for children prior to placement through regular updates to the Match Planning Meeting
- all approved adopters are formally reviewed annually by the adoption social worker and team managers;
- the independent reviewing officer reviews the progress of all children placed for Adoption, up until the granting of the Adoption Order;
- staff from the Adoption Agency and Children's Services supervise and monitor the placement;
- the adoption panel has an overall quality assurance role to uphold best practice, in conjunction with the Agency Professional Adviser to the Adoption Panels.

There is a well-established supervision policy, which is available to all members of staff. The Head of Service meets regularly with Service Managers to discuss issues of policy and practice arising from developments in the service.

The Service Director meets with all Heads of Service bi-monthly to consider Adoption performance indicators

8. Storage, access, maintenance and security of adoption records

(NMS 25, 26 and 27 apply)

The indexes to all children's adoption case records are kept for at least 100 years, and where the case concerns a placement resulting in an adoption order being made, the related case papers are kept for 100 years from the date of the making of an adoption order. All requests for access to closed adoption files must be made through the Adoption Support Manager and a log of all requests is maintained. All files are held in lockable, secure storage. Some older files of cases prior to 1997 are still held by Derbyshire County Council in their Archive Service in Matlock.

9. A summary of the procedures available to service users and others if they are dissatisfied with the adoption agency

Complaints and representations.

1. Any service user, or a person acting on behalf of a service user with their informed consent, can make a complaint about the service received from any of the adoption teams. The majority of such complaints will be dealt with under a complaints procedure established in line with The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and the statutory guidance "Getting the Best from Complaints". Where a person making a complaint does not qualify to access that procedure, the complaint will be dealt with in line with the Derby City Complaints Procedure. Complaints may be made directly to any member of staff of the adoption service or to Head of Communications and Customer Support, Children and Young People's Service; Derby City Council, Middleton House, 27 St Mary's Gate, Derby DE1 3NN Tel 01332 716934.

2. Where the decision maker is minded to not recommend the approval of adopters, they will have the opportunity to have their case reviewed by the adoption service or referred to the Independent Review Mechanism. The Independent Reviewing Mechanism is organised by the British Association for Adoption Fostering (BAAF). The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a review process, conducted by a panel, which prospective adopters can use when they have been informed that their adoption service does not consider them suitable and does not propose to approve them as adoptive parents (or has withdrawn their approval). More information on the IRM can be obtained from the IRM Contract Manager, Dolphin House, 54 Coventry Road, Birmingham B10 0RX. Telephone: 0121 766 8086 Fax: 0121 766 8557 E-mail irm@baaf.org.uk.

10. The address and telephone number of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED)

Head Office functions operate from the following addresses:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Telephone: 08456 404040

E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

11. The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed in conjunction with the Adoption Service Plan and presented to the appropriate Committee of Derby City Council annually.