



**adopters**  
for adoption

# Statement of Purpose - August 2020



**Head of Service:** Sally Heaven-Richards  
**Responsible Individual:** Sarah Dimmelow

Senate House, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Bromsgrove Worcestershire, B60 4AD

# Contents

1. History & Approach
2. Aims & Objectives
3. The Management & Structure
4. The Staffing Structure
5. The Adoption Panel
6. Services Offered
7. The Recruitment and Approval Process Overview
8. Training
9. Matching
10. Supporting Adopters and Children Placed for Adoption
11. Adoption Reviews
12. Termination of Approval
13. Adoption Support
14. Safer, Stronger Adoptive Families 14 week Programme
15. Monitoring and Evaluation
16. Summary of the Complaints Procedure
17. Core Aims & Availability of the Statement of Purpose
18. Name, address and telephone number of the registration authority



where life begins  
and love never ends

# 1. History & Approach

## A Brief History of Adopters for Adoption

Adopters for Adoption is a national adoption agency set up in 2014 to improve the way adopters are recruited, prepared, assessed and supported in order to reduce delay for children waiting for an adoptive family.

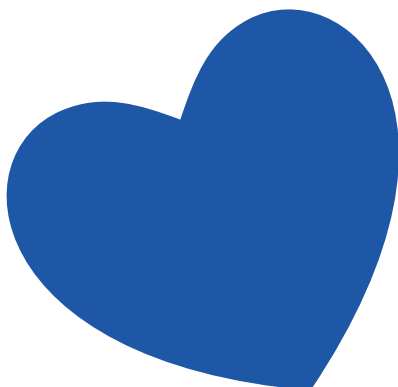
As the name suggests, our values and services are driven by people who have experience of the process and who are successful adopters.

We made a deliberate decision to call the agency 'Adopters for Adoption' as we wanted to make sure that adopters were at the centre of our thinking, and to widen the number of potential adopters from the general population. We continue to challenge the myths that surround adoption and remain open to enquiries from all sectors of the population.

Our development steering group was made up of adopters whose children range in age from 2 to 32 years old, are brothers and sisters, single children and some who have disabilities. This first hand knowledge of adoption ensured that the voice of the adopter was influential in the planning and development of our practice.

As part of the Polaris Community, we combine over 24 years' experience of achieving exceptional outcomes for children and families. We have a desire to transform the way adopters are recruited, supported whilst ensuring that people are always more important than the process.

We firmly believe that many potentially excellent adopters think they won't be "allowed" to adopt so rule themselves out when they don't need to. We constantly challenge those assumptions and encourage people, who are thinking about adoption, to get in touch so we can have an informed discussion.



"Prospective Adopters are not discriminated against because of any specific individual characteristics. For example, there are older adopters, single adopters and adopters in same-sex relationships."

**Ofsted, 2018 Inspection**

# 2. Aims & Objectives

## The values outlined in the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 underpin our work.

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.

### We aim to:

- Provide permanency for children and young people through recruiting, assessing and providing a suitable and diverse range of families to meet the needs of children and young people who need to be adopted.
- Support Prospective Adopters and adoptive parents in managing their responses and feelings arising from caring for the child, particularly where the child displays very challenging behaviour and enable them to understand how the child's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour.
- Ensure adoptive parents are helped and supported in understanding the importance of keeping information provided by the birth family safe and giving this information to the adopted child in an age appropriate and timely manner.
- Provide a full and comprehensive range of adoption and adoption support services, available to those affected by the adoption process, that will be consistent with best practice and national standards and requirements.
- To have a role in developing innovative practice and maintaining service delivery to a high standard.
- Continue to develop positive relationships with Local Authorities including those who are benefiting from the evidenced based Safer Stronger Families Programme.

- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- Children, birth parents/guardians, adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

### Objectives

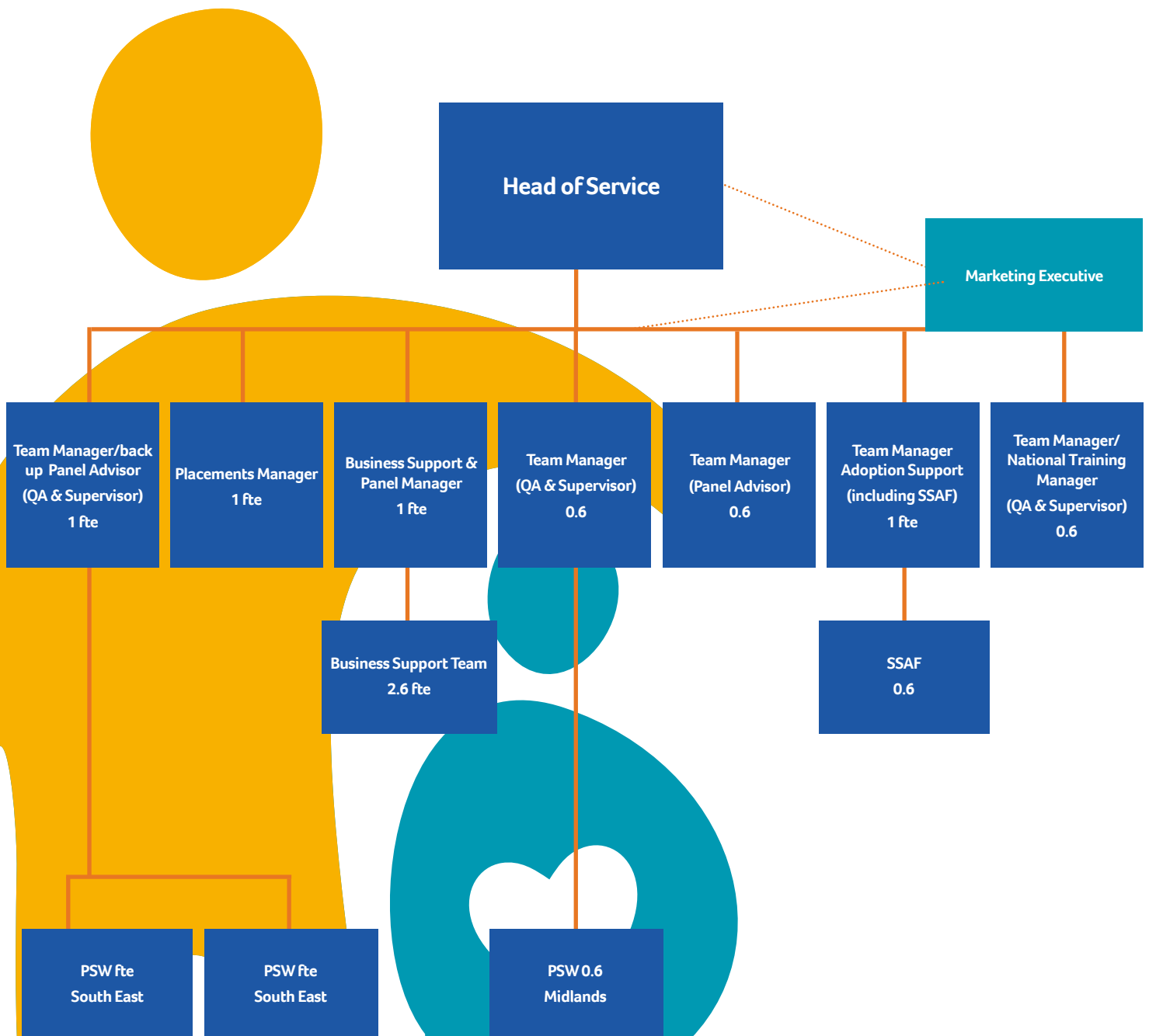
- To recruit, prepare, train and assess a diverse range of families to meet the needs of children and young people to be adopted.
- To ensure we have a sufficient pool of high quality Prospective Adopters to offer placement choice.
- Ensure that Prospective Adopters are prepared and supported to promote the child's social and emotional development, and to enable the child to develop emotional resilience and positive self-esteem.
- To improve the life chances of children through adoption to enable them to reach their full potential.
- To support families post matching and linking to ensure placements succeed.
- To adapt our service to the needs of adopters through open and honest feedback with adopters.
- To maintain a commitment to safe, high quality services with a focus on outcomes and compliance.
- To ensure that children and young people have a voice.
- To develop robust support, training and communication with adopters to ensure that the agency remains adopter-led.
- To ensure sustainability by achieving the overall target numbers and budget for 2020.
- Ensure continued growth in terms of placements and adoption support through infrastructure investment and a focus on making links with Local Authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies.

# 3. The Management & Structure

Adopters for Adoption’s Board, led by the Responsible Individual and Managing Director, provides governance and oversight to the Agency. The Board is responsible for the direction of the Agency, for defining policies and procedures and approving budgets. The Board’s role is to ensure accountability and compliance with relevant legislation and that Adopters for Adoption remains a safe service. Our Board meets on a monthly basis and consists of the Responsible Individual, Head of Service, Marketing Executive and the Head of Commercial Finance. A number of board members are adopters themselves.

# 4. The Staffing Structure

Below is the staffing structure for Adopters for Adoption.



# 5. The Adoption Panel

The members of Panel at Adopters for Adoption are people with complementary experience within the professional arena of child care and lay members with relevant personal life experience. Medical and Legal advisors are also appointed and effectively serve the Panel.


Our members are thorough with their duties, but offer a welcoming and friendly atmosphere to Prospective Adopters as they understand how daunting this experience can be.

The role and function of the Panel appointed by Adopters for Adoption is to:

- Ensure that the assessment process has been adequately carried out and meets the requirements of the law and agency policy.
- Examine applications thoroughly and consider whether there is evidence of the applicants' abilities and suitability to adopt.
- Carry out a rigorous quality assurance function.

- Make recommendations in relation to the approval, review and de-registration of adopters.
- Advise on professional standards and practice, and any other issue which the Head of Service wishes them to consider.
- Monitor activity and quality of practice of the Adoption Service.
- Remain child-focused and ensure adopters have the capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

The Panel members are required to safeguard the confidentiality of panel documents.



"We were a little nervous, but all members of the panel were welcoming and helped us to feel at ease to enable us to fully answer their questions."

**Jill & Glyn,  
Approved Adopters**

"Key to the Adopters for Adoption Panel is including members with direct and personal experience of adoption; we have members who have adopted as well as members who have been in care. We want applicants to feel welcomed and valued when they come to Panel."

**Amy Weir, Panel Chair**

# 6. Services Offered

## Adoption

- The recruitment and assessment of adopters, who are able to offer a range of placements for children of all age groups, with a range of disabilities and both single children and sibling groups.
- A comprehensive programme of training, both pre and post approval.
- Four day Preparation to Adopt training for all Prospective Adopters
- Regular Friends & Family training days to enable Prospective Adopters' support networks to have a better understanding of adoption and the best ways of support.
- A qualified, experienced team of social workers to recruit, assess, train and support adopters.
- Dedicated agency Adoption Placements Manager, assigned with supporting adoptive families to find the right children for them.
- Social work support throughout the matching, placement and adoption process, and through to Adoption Order.
- Access to online training covering such as Attachment, Child Development, Safeguarding, CSE, Bullying, Prevent Radicalisation, County Lines and Internet Safety.
- Bi-monthly newsletter for applicants in Stage Two and approved adopters.

## Adoption Support

- Bi-monthly support groups for adopters in their region.
- Potential to access specialised and extensive post adoption support including our evidence based Safer Stronger Families Programme.
- Access to psychological and therapeutic support where appropriate.
- Access to professional advice and support to support the educational needs of the adopted children.
- Access to therapeutic parenting training programmes.
- The first year's subscription to Adoption UK for adopters, giving access to member support groups, bi-monthly magazines, workshops, training and more.



# 7. The Recruitment and Approval Process Overview





## Initial Enquiry

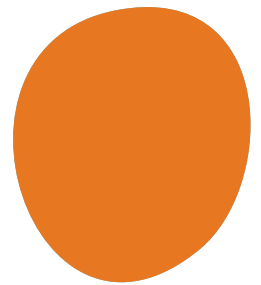
For some enquirers it can take longer to reach the point of making an initial enquiry and it can also require a lot of courage to take that first step. With 50% of our team having a personal connection to adoption or fostering, we understand the difficulties of embarking on this process.

That's why we have worked hard to try to make it as easy as possible for enquirers to access the information they might need, and have an approachable and knowledgeable team available to speak to you from your initial call to us.

At Adopters for Adoption, we want to find suitable families for children who cannot live with their birth families for a range of reasons and know from personal experience how rewarding it can be. Rather than presenting unnecessary barriers, we want to encourage potential adopters to take that first step and we are ready to answer any questions in order to help enquirers to find out if adoption may be right for them.

Enquirers can access our detailed Information pack online, give us a call and speak to our friendly staff and/or we can post it to them.

Enquirers who are ready to make a start in their application process can request an Registration of Interest form (ROI) from an early stage in their enquiry. This can be completed on their smart device, lap top or computer or we can send them a paper version in the post. The form is very detailed but does save a lot of time later on and provides applicants with a clear indication of the areas that will need to cover during their assessment.



## Stage One

Once we receive the completed Registration of Interest (ROI) and signed consent, one of our Team Managers give potential adopters a call to go through the details and to explain the next steps. When we accept a Registration of Interest (ROI) and applicants have decided that they would like to proceed, we will immediately set about seeking the checks and references that are required. We also invite them to attend our preparation training and allocate a social worker.

There are a number of checks and references required in Stage One and we are happy to explain the reason for each one. At Adopters for Adoption, we appreciate that it can sometimes feel intrusive but there are very good reasons involved. We encourage families to think about a child that they know (or have known) and love very much and to imagine that sadly a situation arose where they needed to be cared for by someone else. Then we ask is there anything that they would not want to know about that family before they would be willing to leave that child in their care forever? Invariably it helps people to understand the reason for such rigorous checks.

Stage One is designed to take just two months to complete but relies upon us seeking information from others that may take longer to achieve. At Adopters for Adoption, we pride ourselves on being efficient and have staff who are dedicated to chasing up the information required and keep potential adopters informed of any delays. We also appreciate that for some people the process might feel too fast, so we are happy to go at their preferred pace.

Based on the information provided and the assessment by a social worker, who will have visited at least a couple of times, a decision is made about whether an application can proceed to Stage Two of the process or not with reasons for that decision provided. In addition, Prospective Adopters *can* choose to take a break between Stage One and Two of up to six months without having to start the process again. Some families elect to use this time to make changes in their lives such as moving house, gaining some more child care experience or building up their support networks before they proceed.



## Stage Two

During Stage Two of the process, we provide further training and an assessing social worker visits Prospective Adopters regularly in order to get to know them better and to complete a Prospective Adopters Report (PAR). The PAR is detailed and describes life experiences to date, personalities, support networks, relationships, lifestyle and potential ability to meet the needs of children. Prospective Adopters receive a copy of this report (apart from confidential information provided by others) and have an opportunity to comment on it.

The final Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) is presented to our Adoption Panel, who take all of the information into account. The applicants and their social worker are invited into Panel before they make their formal recommendation about their suitability to adopt. This recommendation is passed to the Agency Decision Maker, who then have seven working days, to make the final decision. Prospective Adopters are then informed verbally of the decision as soon as it is made and subsequently receive a letter to confirm it.

We understand how important panel day is for our Prospective Adopters, so we do our best to look after them. Our panel chair informs applicants of the recommendation straight away and if the outcome is positive, our dedicated Family Finder will be waiting ready to meet with them and their social worker.

Although rare, it is possible that panel might conclude that they do not have sufficient information in order to reach a recommendation that day. In this case, the Panel would be very clear about what information they require in order to reach a positive recommendation. During an assessment, we always endeavor to be clear about any concerns or potential barriers that arise prior to presenting it to panel, so there should not be any surprises. However, if for any reason the panel were to recommend that applicants are not suitable to adopt they would be provided with the reasons and would be informed of their right to appeal or to make representations to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).



## 8. Training

Adopters for Adoption offer a range of training opportunities to families. During the assessment process (preferably during Stage One), all Prospective Adopters are required to attend a three day Preparation Training course. The training course covers a range of topics, including child development, trauma and loss, which will start to equip them with the skills that are needed to become an adopter.

There is also an online training course provided by First 4 Adoption for Prospective Adopters to complete that covers four main topics including the backgrounds of children that might be placed for adoption, attachment, heritage and identity, plus challenges and transitions when a child is placed.

There is also a one day training day during Stage Two that provides families with information about the next stages of the adoption process. It includes information about family finding, matching, introductions, understanding their child's needs and preparing for the early weeks of placement.

At Adopters for Adoption, we are aware of how important family and friends can be to adopters so we are keen to encourage them to understand more about the needs of adopted children and how best to support adoptive families when children are placed. We run regular Friends and Family Training events for our Prospective Adopters to invite key people within their network to attend.

After your approval, there are a range of Training Workshops available to adopters, which they are encouraged to attend. Subjects include Attachment, Life Story Work and How to Prepare Existing Children. There are also an extensive range of online training courses available which include information on Diversity and Inclusion, Health and Safety Awareness, Safeguarding, Prevent Training and CSE.

## 9. Matching

Having thoroughly assessed the ability of our Prospective Adopter's to meet the needs of children and the types of children that might be best suited to them and their family, we start to explore which child/ren they might like to find out more about. At Adopters for Adoption, we have a dedicated family finder who works closely with families and their social worker to help them to find the right match.



As soon as they are approved (even earlier in some cases), we waste no time sharing information with local authorities across the UK, who have children that need a forever family. We realise that it can quite an emotional experience to read about children and their previous experiences and know that some adopters find it quite difficult to discern, but our social workers and family finder are on hand to help Prospective Adopters with this process and keep them on track. Some adopters prefer to take it more slowly than others which is absolutely fine and there are a range of methods to assist them in their search which are explained in detail.

Once a potential match has been identified and reports and information have been shared the child/ren's social worker usually arranges to visit our Prospective Adopters, with their social worker present to offer support so that they can find out more information about each other and decide whether to proceed with a Link.

When an appropriate Link has been made the information about our Prospective Adopters and the Child/ren is presented to the Local Authority panel and Prospective Adopters are invited to attend with their social worker. The Local Authority is legally responsible for the child/ren and if they make a decision to proceed, in partnership with all relevant parties they coordinate a range of meetings and devise a plan for introducing Prospective Adopters and the child/ren to each other.

The Introductions process is arranged to suit each individual child's needs and will involve our Prospective Adopters getting to know them where they are currently living (which is normally with foster carers) before transferring children to their new home. At Adopters for Adoption we are experienced in placing children from all over the UK with families and offer support throughout the introduction process. Very often the introductions can take place over a few weeks, but every child is different and this must be done at their pace.



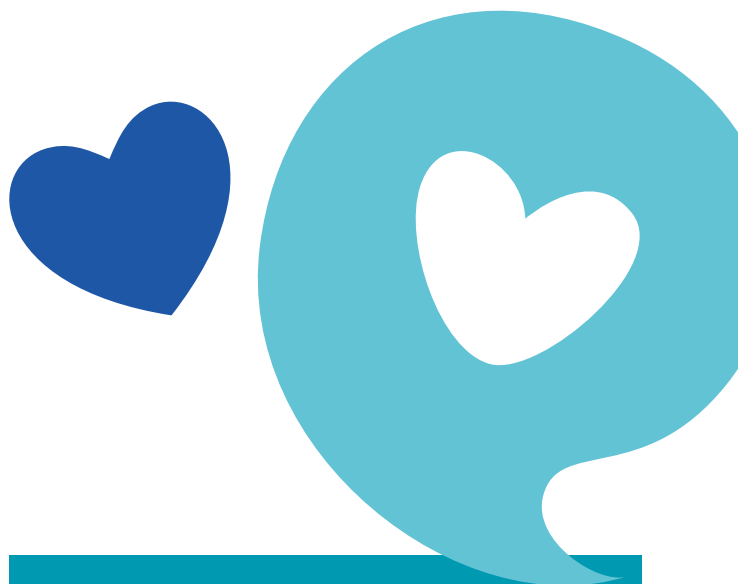
# 10. Supporting Adopters and Children Placed for Adoption

- Following approval as being suitable to adopt, the Prospective Adopter becomes actively involved and supported in the home finding process.
- Once a placement is agreed, we provide intensive support to the adopters during the introductory period and early weeks of placement. Support then continues to be provided at a frequency and level in accordance with assessed and agreed need. All children placed receive an age appropriate Guide to Adoption.
- Adopters for Adoption will support adopters through to Adoption order and then offer ongoing access to local Support Groups. All adopters can seek further support and advice from the agency post order.
- Adopters for Adoption offer support, advice and guidance to adopted adults who were placed with adopters. This may assist adoptees to identify the placing agency, and thereby access their records, and to assist if difficulties arise. For adults whose adoptions had no prior involvement with Adopters for Adoption, we will offer support and signpost enquirers to a more appropriate agency.
- Adoption support services may be commissioned by local authorities or by adoptive parents where Adopters for Adoption were not involved in making the placement. All such services will be subject to individual agreements as to the service required and fees payable.



# 11. Adoption Reviews

At Adopters for Adoption, we keep in touch with approved families and support them throughout the family finding process. We encourage families to be proactive in the search for the right match. We are aware that life doesn't always go to plan and are happy to go at a pace that is right for individual Prospective Adopters. There is an annual review process in place for any families that have not yet had child/ren placed with them or where there have been significant changes. If at any point following their approval, Adopters for Adoption or our Prospective Adopters should feel that adoption is no longer right option there is a process in place to withdraw or terminate their approval.



## What is discussed at the Adoption Review

- The date of the last medical
- The date of the last DBS check (renewed every 3 years)
- Changes in circumstances such as health, relationship, accommodation and finances
- Contact and support from the agency
- Children who have been considered since approval or last review
- Training and group meetings attended
- Whether the age range of children being considered is still relevant
- Any action required to facilitate a successful link with a child
- Is adoption still part of the approved adopters' plan?
- Birth or adoptive children's views (if applicable)
- Feedback and any other comments by the adopters

# 12. Termination of Approval

If after any review the Agency no longer feels satisfied that an adopter is suitable to adopt:

- In this situation, adopters will have had an opportunity to discuss the recommendation prior to the Panel meeting with their social worker and/or the agency's Head of Service.
- The Social Worker will ensure that the adopters are made aware of their right to appeal against the decision, both to the Agency, and to the Independent Review Mechanism.
- A recommendation that their approved status be terminated will be presented to the Agency Decision Maker, including the reasons for that recommendation.

# 13. Adoption Support

Adoption Support is in place from the day that children are placed and is designed to help families and children settle in, get to know each other better and for all to begin to form close attachments to one another. Adopters receive regular visits from their social worker as well as the social worker for their child/ren, as well as regular reviews which are carried out by the Local Authority to check on how everyone is getting on.

In situations where a placement is not going well and is at risk of disrupting, we will do everything we can to support those involved. We never underestimate the impact the breakdown of a placement would have on the child/ren, families and wider support networks and so we try our best to help families to consider this only as a last resort. In very rare circumstances when a placement sadly comes to an end we will endeavor to support all of the parties involved.

Adoption is a permanent parenting arrangement therefore visits from social workers generally reduce as time goes on, although increased or even additional support can be offered if needed. Eventually, when adopters feel ready we support them to make an application to the court to adopt. A report is prepared for court and if everything is going well the Judge has the authority to grant an Adoption Order. An adoption certificate is provided shortly after the court hearing that replaces the child/ren's birth certificate. An Adoption Order is an irrevocable order, providing Adopters with full parental responsibility.

Adoption Support remains available to adopters for as long as they want or need it. After the Adoption Order is granted it is made available at their request. We encourage adopters to keep in touch with Adopters for Adoption, to continue to attend training, support groups and social activities. Unless we receive a request not to, we will continue to send regular newsletters and invitations to all of families. Many of adopters enjoy returning to speak to other adopters about their experiences, to get involved in activities or help us to promote the service that we offer.

In addition to the standard Adoption Support outlined above, Adopters for Adoption also offers a range of distinctive Adoption Support Packages that can be provided with additional funding, normally following an assessment of need and an application by the Local Authority to the Adoption Support Fund (government funding to support adopters).



# 14. Safer, Stronger Adoptive Families 14 week Programme

## Safer, Stronger Adoptive Families 14 Week Programme Overview

In 2017, Adopters for Adoption were delighted to secure funding from the Department for Education to pilot a therapeutic parenting programme for Adoptive families called Safer Stronger Adoptive Families (SSAF). This programme has since been evaluated, updated based on findings and is now eligible for funding through the Adoption Support Fund.

Delivered over 14 weekly sessions with three follow up calls to support families to implement changes over a further 12 week period, this programme gives families six months' worth of skills based, practical, tailored intervention.

This programme includes:

- Effective, practical therapeutic parenting programme
- Structured yet personalised post adoption support
- Triple P® trained Support Workers
- Group and 1:1 sessions with parents and children in their home, at times to suit them
- Dynamic Family Action Plan
- Outcomes Star™ and Parenting Scale© improvement measures

We will use our experience and knowledge to work alongside families and help them become safer and stronger. As a result of the programme, families can experience increased stability, resilience and 'normality'. This can create the additional benefit of providing a platform from which further therapy or support can be undertaken where necessary.



“ How can we even thank you enough for all you have done. You have brought our family back together and we will thank you forever. ”  
- SSAF Adoptive Parent

# 15. Monitoring and Evaluation

**Systems are in place to continually monitor and evaluate all of the services we provide to ensure that they are effective and of an appropriate and high standard:**

- All of the records kept are regularly monitored by the manager to ensure compliance with the agency's policies, to identify any concerns, patterns or trends.
- Dashboards are in place to ensure timescales are adhered to.
- The agency maintains a record of all notifiable and critical incidents as well as complaints and compliments received.
- Feedback forms are provided on a regular basis to those receiving or commissioning a service.
- We record and evaluate the reasons for individuals that decide that they do not wish to proceed with their interest in adoption at enquiry stage to inform our recruitment programme.
- Prospective Adopters who have attended preparation and training groups complete evaluation forms. These evaluation forms are used to inform the assessment and identify areas of support.
- We provide a questionnaire to Prospective Adopters and social workers following their attendance at panel and use the information gained to inform the continuing development of the panel process.
- Quality Assurance feedback forms are completed by panel members on all Prospective Adopter reports that are presented to panel and scrutinised by the agency to inform service improvement.

- A Board of Directors oversees governance of the Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA). The Board holds quarterly meetings to review management information including risk logs, financial information, service activity (e.g. pipeline of Prospective Adopters, lead times) and progress towards outcomes. This enables them to monitor performance against targets and take corrective action, where required.
- The business plan and Statement of Purpose are reviewed annually and informed by the evaluation of services.





# 16. Summary of the Complaints Procedure

All users of the Agency's services are advised of their right to make a representation or complaint about the services they have received. Prospective and approved adopters are issued with the Adopters for Adoption Representation and Complaints leaflet. Children and young people are issued with information about their right to complain within our 'Complaints Guide for Children and Young People'.

## 1: Informal Complaints

These are referred to the agency's Head of Service. We meet with the complainant with a view of resolving their complaint with an informal and problem solving approach. Informal complaints are responded to within 10 or (by agreement with the complainant) a maximum of 20 working days of the complaint being made and an outcome letter sent to the complainant. The complainant is informed of their right to make a formal complaint if they are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage One.

## 2: Formal Complaints - Independent investigation

When a formal complaint is received these are referred to Adopters for Adoption Complaints Manager who co-ordinates an independent investigation. Stage Two investigations are usually completed within 20 working days of meeting the complainant (the complainant will be kept informed if the investigation is likely to exceed these timescales). The Complaints Manager will inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation at Stage Two and their right of appeal.

## 3: Appeal Stage - Complaints Review Panel

The Complaints review panel consists of an Executive Director from the agency, another Senior Manager who has no connection with the complaint and a relevant Independent Person.

The Independent Investigator's report will be provided to panel members along with any other supporting documents. The complainant will be invited to attend panel to make their representations. Panel will make an initial response to the complainant within 24 hours and provide a written response within five working days together with information about Ofsted if they remain dissatisfied. Complainants are also entitled to submit a complaint to Ofsted, contact details follow.

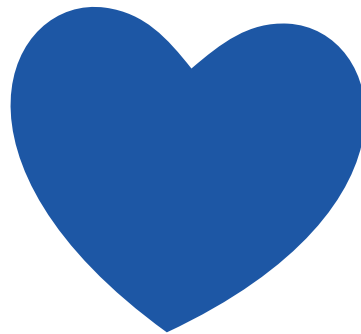


# 17. Core Aims & Availability of the Statement of Purpose

## **This Statement of Purpose sets out the core aims of Adopters for Adoption Voluntary Adoption agency, as required by the:**

It is reviewed and updated annually, or more frequently if there is a significant change.

- Availability and Distribution of The Statement of Purpose
  - All adopters approved by Adopters for Adoption will receive the Statement of Purpose on receipt of our enquiry pack
  - Placing Authorities will be issued with a copy of the document at the point of enquiry.
  - Prospective placing Authorities will receive the information at the point of enquiry in respect of a placement
  - The Statement of Purpose will be available upon request to children who may be adopted, or adopted persons, their parents and guardians, and persons wishing to adopt, and any local authority
  - It will also be available for download on our website (see next page)
- Adoption Agencies (England) 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) Regulations 2005
  - The Adoption Agencies (Misc Amendments) Regulations 2013



# 18. Name, address and telephone number of the registration authority

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate,  
Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD  
T: 0300 123 1231  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



Upon request arrangements can be made for the Statement of Purpose to be translated, explained or produced in a different format as required.

## Contact Us

T: 0800 5877 791

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adopters  
for adoption