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countycouncil

**WORCESTERSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

ADOPTION SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

April 2011

If you would like this information in an alternative format such as large print, on audio cassette or CD, or in another language, please contact the Communications Officer at Worcestershire Social Services. tel: 01905 766915 email: cgriffiths@worcestershire.gov.uk

1 INTRODUCTION

Worcestershire County Council recognises the lifelong impact on all those affected by adoption and is committed to developing a high quality adoption service.

This statement of purpose will detail the aims and objectives of the service, quality assurance mechanisms and the range of services provided to children, prospective adopters, adoptive parents, adopted adults and birth families.

This statement of purpose includes details of the staffing and organisational structure of the service, management arrangements, complaints procedures and details of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

The principles within the statement of purpose apply to placements made with other adoption agencies and also non-agency placements such as stepparents, kinship and adoptions with a foreign element. These placements will receive the same high quality professional and management attention.

The statement of purpose is subject to formal approval and is to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Since January 2007, the adoption service in Worcestershire had been part of the Looked After and Adopted Children services (LAAC) which is a county-wide service providing specialist support and services to looked after and adopted children and their carers and families. In 2010, Children's Services restructured and LAAC Services is renamed Integrated Provider Services (IPS)

Alongside adoption, IPS is made up of Residential Services, the Fostering Service and the Integrated Service for Looked After and Adopted Children (ISL).

IPS focus on 'whole system' approaches in order to improve life chances for looked after and adopted children in a variety of placements and settings. Working in partnership across Children's Services and with partner agencies, voluntary and

community sectors from early years to adulthood is an essential part of the 'core' business.

2 KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTION AGENCY

The aims of the Adoption Service are derived from the vision of Children's Services in Worcestershire, 'that children and young people in need will be able, with support if necessary, to achieve the best possible life chance outcomes. Children in Need in Worcestershire will have their needs identified as early as possible. These needs will be met wherever possible within a secure and stable environment where children are encouraged to meet their full potential'.

Children are best cared for in their own families and communities where it is safe to do so. Where this is not possible, we will strive to achieve the best outcomes for children in public care, ensuring they receive safe and effective care, and an early return home wherever possible. Our aim is to enable children in need to become confident and able adults with the facility and capacity to be contributing members of society.'

IPS are performance managed and planned and reviewed using the Every Child Matters outcomes and in line with the Children and Young people's Plan:

- *Be Healthy*
- *Stay Safe*
- *Enjoy and achieve*
- *Make a positive contribution*
- *Achieve economic well-being*

In putting the vision and priorities into practice the adoption service works to the following principles:

- The paramount role of the service is to meet the needs of children for stability and permanence.

- The service will respect, value and promote diversity through the delivery of services.
- The service will promote equality of opportunity and anti-oppressive practice with regard to children, birth families, adopters and staff.
- Service users will be consulted and their views taken into account in planning at an individual and service level.
- There is a commitment to continuing improvement against national and local standards based on evidence based practice.
- There is a commitment to training for both staff and adopters as a method of raising standards.
- There is a commitment to inter agency working to meet the needs for services of those affected by adoption.

The service aims:

- To provide for every Worcestershire child for whom it is required, a permanent family by adoption.
- To ensure that the child's need for a stable, secure placement are paramount and take priority when matching with an prospective adoptive family.
- To provide a service to those people who wish to adopt.
- To provide a service to those people who wish to adopt a child from abroad.
- To provide a comprehensive support service to all those affected by adoption, which addresses their needs in relation to adoption.

3 THE NAME, QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE MANAGER

Marilyn Butler

Operational Manager for Adoption Services

Children's Services

Floor J2

County Hall

Spetchley Road

Worcester

Worcestershire

WR5 2NP

Telephone Number 01905 728861

Fax Number 01905 728819

E mail mbutler@worcestershire.gov.uk

Qualifications:

Diploma of Social Work 1995

Registered with the General Social Care Council

Experience:

Marilyn Butler is a qualified and registered Social Worker obtaining her Diploma of Social Work in 1995. Since that time she has worked as a Social Worker in a number of settings and teams, including Children and Families and Adoption and Fostering. She has also managed a Respite Unit for disabled children, and has been a Team Manager for a Fostering Team within Worcestershire.

She has been employed by Worcestershire County Council Children's Services since 1990. Within the Adoption Service she has worked as an Adoption Worker, Senior Social Worker and Team Manager. She is currently acting Operational Manager Adoption for Worcestershire's Children's Services.

Marilyn has a BTEC Business studies and Finance qualification, has completed a Management course within Worcestershire Children's services and is currently undertaking a CMI certificate level 5.

4 NUMBER, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE STAFF EMPLOYED BY WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE.

The adoption service is made up of:

1. The **Adoption Team** - recruits, trains, assesses and supports adoptive applicants, family finds for children where adoption is the plan and provides post placement and post order support. They also provide birth family support and support with contact. The team is made up of 2 fte Team Managers (0.5 fte currently vacant), 4 (2 .49 fte) Senior Social Workers, 13 (10.20 fte) social workers, 1 (0.6 wte) social work assistant and 6 (3.58 fte) team clerks. There are 2 (fte) Adoption Workers that deal with all referrals into the team and enquiries from people wishing to adopt and 1 (wte) administrative assistant – finance.

2. The **Adoption Panel** – consists of 1 (0.5wte) panel manager and 1 (wte) panel administrator.

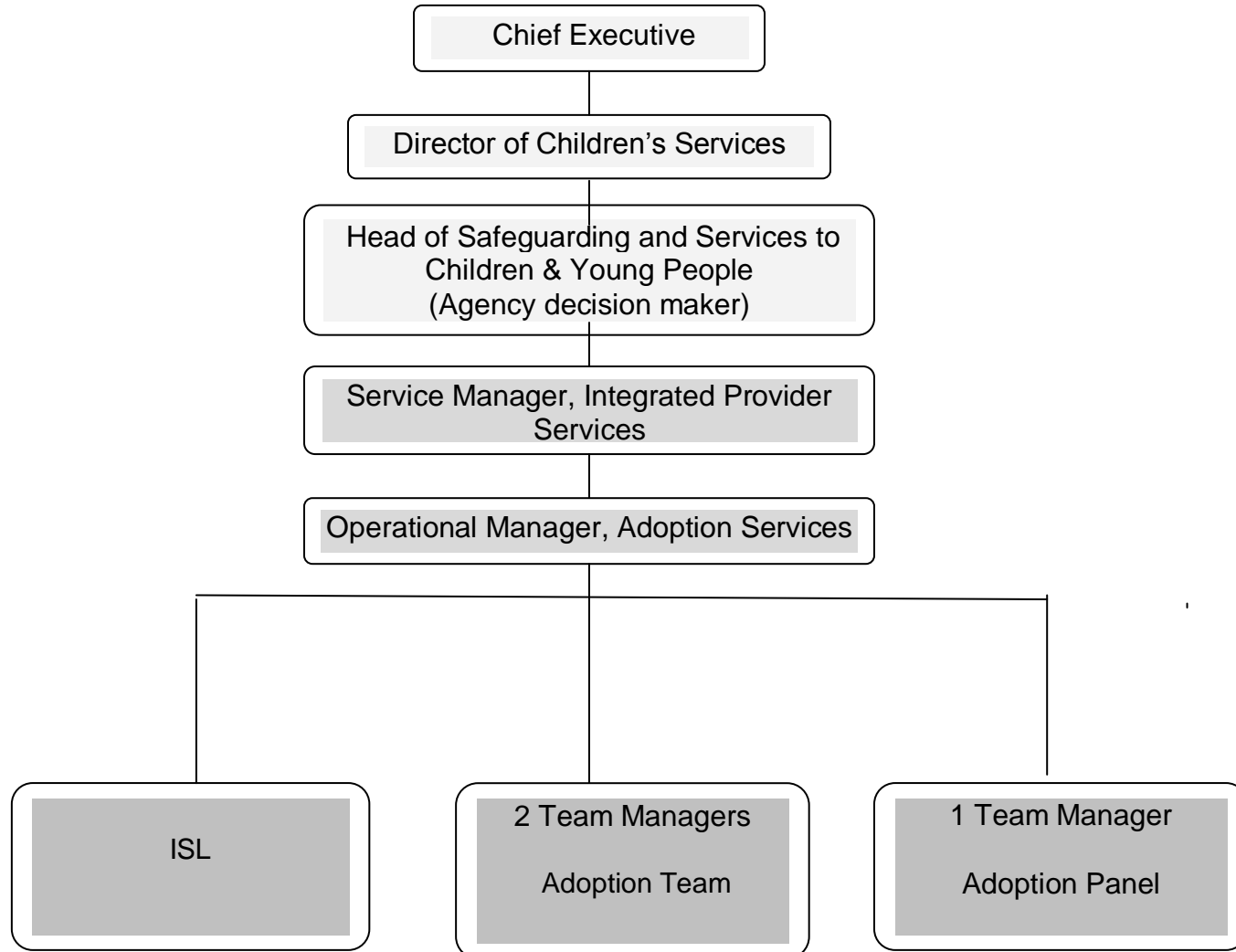
In addition, the Integrated Service for Looked After and Adopted Children (ISL) has a role within adoption. ISL is a team consisting of education, social care and health professionals. The ISL teams work together with others involved with the child to support carers, adoptive and pre-adoptive parents, and schools to provide stable secure home and school experiences that promote positive relationships for the children and help to meet their needs.

All managers and social workers in the adoption service are qualified and registered with the General Social Care Council. Staff involved in the adoption service have a range of skills and experience in childcare, in family placement and in recruitment, preparation and assessment of adoptive families.

All social work staff have knowledge of adoption legislation and standards and are committed to the whole adoption service and learning from each other's practice and experience.

The service is committed to continuous professional development. most members of social work staff have obtained the Post Qualifying (PQ) , and 2 have the full PQ Award.

5 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE - AS AT APRIL 2011



6 SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO ENSURE SERVICES PROVIDED BY WORCESTERSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE ARE EFFECTIVE AND THE QUALITY OF THESE SERVICES IS OF AN APPROPRIATE STANDARD.

- All staff have regular supervision and an annual Staff Development Review.
- A proportion of staff supervision and case records are audited quarterly.
- Children referred to the Adoption Service will have a Permanence Plan, which is made at the four-month review. Once a Permanence Plan is recommended which includes adoption, including those cases which are twin-tracked, a referral will be made to the adoption team for the appointment of an adoption co-worker for the child. The co-working procedure will then monitor progression alongside the normal childcare review process.
- Information about children and prospective adoptive families are regularly updated and a monthly management report produced.
- All prospective adopters are interviewed after the preparation course to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of training.
- All prospective adopters are required to give written feedback after each preparation training session to assist in the regular review and evaluation of training and preparation content.
- A tracking process monitors timescales against national standards.
- All prospective adopters and birth families are advised of the services' complaints and compliments procedures and given information about how to make a complaint.
- All prospective adopters awaiting placement are reviewed at least annually.
- The adoption panel receives an annual report about its activity and performance.
- Panel requests regular updating reports on children's progress. The maximum time between reports is 6 months.
- All prospective adopters are asked to provide feedback about the experience of attending adoption panel.
- Written feedback is routinely sought following training offered to adoptive parents.

- Adoption Services development is monitored through team and service plans as part of the directorates' business planning and performance management process.
- The directorates' quarterly performance management report to staff and elected members contains information related to adoption and relevant performance indicators.
- All prospective applicants are given information about the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM).
- The views of children and young people, who have a plan for adoption, are sought by their social worker and by the family finder from the Adoption Service. Including their views and wishes in regard to the type of adoptive family that they would prefer. Adopted children are also consulted about the type of activities and events they would be interested in, post adoption.
- Worcestershire has written information (a children's guide) for children and young people to tell them about adoption and adoption support services.

7 BIRTH PARENTS AND BIRTH FAMILIES

- Worcestershire adoption agency is committed to offering support to birth relatives and have a 'Continuum of Birth Family Support (for birth families affected by adoption)' which addresses the support needs of families throughout the adoption process , how these can be met and by whom.
- If a child's plan becomes adoption the birth parents will be provided with information and advice from the Adoption Team and may also be assisted to access support and information from a more independent source if needed. Support will be offered periodically throughout the process.

- The views of birth families about the adoption and contact plans will be clearly recorded on the Child's Permanence report (CPR) when the plan is presented to the adoption panel. Birth parents will be given sight of the CPR to enable them to comment on its content before presentation to the adoption panel.
- The Adoption Team will provide support to birth relatives to facilitate the provision of information and written permission if this is required.
- The wishes and views of the birth parents will be taken into account in the planning of placements particularly in regard to religion.
- The Adoption Team will offer to discuss post adoption contact with the Social worker, with birth relatives, and any significant others.
- Social workers for the child will make efforts to obtain appropriate information from the birth family and encourage them to contribute to the child's life story material.
- Birth parents and appropriate family members will be given the opportunity to meet the adoptive parents, usually before placement, unless there are good reasons not to.
- Following the making of an Adoption Order, the Adoption Team will continue to support birth relatives in line with the support plan and as assessed by the team.
- Birth relatives will be advised of the complaint procedure and their right to make representations and complaints.

8 ADOPTERS, RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT

8.1 Recruitment and Training

- In accordance with the Children Act 1989, and Adoption and Children Act 2002, the needs of the child are paramount when seeking adoptive families. The main consideration will be to provide adoptive families for children to enable them to grow up in a secure and positive environment which will give them the best opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- A recruitment strategy is in place and reviewed annually.

- Recruitment of adoptive parents will be based on recruitment targets that reflect the needs of children who require permanent families. These priorities may change from time to time. .
- The Adoption Service aims to recruit, assess and approve prospective adopters in a robust and timely manner.
- Applications will be welcomed from all sections of the community who may be able to meet the needs of looked after children. Children needing adoptive families come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have an infinite variety of needs. The agency therefore embraces the diversity of applicants who have differing life experiences and a range of skills.
- The option of a child remaining on a permanent basis and achieving a permanent family through adoption with a foster carer will always be considered and explored if appropriate.
- Foster carers expressing an interest in adopting a child will be considered in the same way as any other prospective applicant.
- The Adoption Team provide an enquiry service to respond to enquiries from prospective adopters. Initial details will be taken and information given about eligibility criteria. Full information packs will be sent out to potential adopters within 5 working days, in a format that is appropriate for them. Information material gives details of issues relating to past criminal convictions, health and other considerations.
- Applicants must be over 21 years and legally domiciled in the UK and within reasonable travelling distance of Worcestershire. Enquirers from bordering areas may be considered if their offer reflects the needs of the children currently needing placement.
- The Adoption Team also provides a service to give information and advice and undertake work required to progress non-agency adoption e.g. step parent. Any non-agency enquirer will be offered an interview to help them thoroughly consider adoption given their individual circumstances and to explore other options.

- All first time adoption enquirers are required to attend an initial information meeting to ensure they are aware of the needs of looked after children, the adoption preparation process and the assessment process.
- Information meetings are held at regular intervals in response to the number of suitable enquirers waiting.
- Following the information meeting a primary assessment visit can be arranged. A social worker from the Adoption Team will visit the prospective applicant to further inform and counsel. Prospective applicants will be given a copy of the 'Adoptive Family Life Cycle' from the Guidance on Assessing for Adoption Support Needs .
- In adoption with a foreign element the designated social worker will visit with a social worker from the Adoption Team.
- After counselling and if the agency is in agreement, the applicants will be provided with an application form.
- If the agency already has significant concerns about suitability the agency is not obliged to provide an application form. In such instances the reasons based on the merits of the case will be clearly explained in a considerate manner and recorded.
- Following formal application, prospective adopters will be expected to attend comprehensive training and preparation groups where they will be able to learn about the tasks and challenges of adoption and have the opportunity to meet with adoptive parents.
- Criminal Record Bureau checks (CRB) and statutory checks are started at this point with the consent of the applicants.
- Preparation courses are held 4 times a year, places on the course are prioritised according to the needs of children waiting.
- Medicals are usually taken up after the preparation course though may be taken up earlier depending on individual circumstances.
- On satisfactory completion of the course, applicants will be visited by at least one of the preparation course facilitators and will have the opportunity to discuss any particular concerns and feedback of their experience of the course.
- Following the initial preparation course prospective adopters will be invited to a follow up session to help them look at the assessment further.

8.2 Assessment

- Allocation of an adoption social worker to complete the homestudy/prospective adopters report (PAR).as soon as possible following the preparation training. Applicants are advised in writing of the time that this will happen.
- Prospective adopters will have an allocated adoption social worker for the homestudy/PAR and, wherever possible, the same social worker will remain throughout the process to adoption.
- The assessment and approval process is comprehensive, thorough and fully explained to applicants. A home study agreement will be made between the adoption social worker on behalf of Worcestershire County Council and the applicants which draws out a working agreement/contract of how the homestudy will be conducted and offering timescale for the work to be completed. The Adoption Service will endeavour to work in partnership with applicants; however it is necessary for both parties to be clear that a risk assessment is being carried out when a home study assessment is being completed.
- The adoption social worker will make a full assessment using an evidence based/competency approach and a portfolio of supporting evidence will be collated. The assessment (prospective adopters report) will be written up on a BAAF Prospective Adopters Report (PAR).
- Further statutory checks and references will be undertaken with the consent of the applicants. Applicants will be advised of the confidential nature of these.
- Once the PAR is completed, including an assessment of the prospective adopters need for adoption support, its contents will be shared with applicants with the exception of confidential material.
- The need for a second opinion visits is decided on a case-by-case basis.
- A copy of the PAR will be retained by the applicants and they will be invited to forward any comments they wish to be made known to panel within 10 days. Applicants will be asked to sign to signify they have read its contents.

- During any part of the process from application, if the adoption social worker comes across significant information and forms the view that the applicants may not be suitable to adopt, a Brief Report may be prepared for panel.
- If a Brief Report is needed the applicant will be counselled, and the report shared with the prospective adopter before being submitted to the adoption panel with the opportunity to provide their comments within 10 days.

8.3 Applicants and Panel

- Applicants will be given a pack of information about the panel and the panel process.
- Worcestershire adoption panel is run on a professional basis and to a high standard. The panel currently meets on the first Monday of the month, usually for a whole day. Additional panels have taken place to ensure that there is no delay in considering children for adoption and linking with prospective adopters. The frequency of panels is currently under review and fortnightly panels are being developed.
- Worcestershire adoption agency has clear written policies and procedures relating to the constitution of panel and decision-making.
- Worcestershire employs a suitably qualified and experienced person to act as independent chair of the adoption panel.
- The agency adviser to the panel is a specially appointed manager within the Adoption Team.
- The agency adviser oversees the timetabling of the panel agenda ensuring sufficient time is given for each item and provides a quality assurance role by linking with relevant managers/senior managers.
- Panel members, advisers and the Agency Decision Maker receive all paperwork usually one week before panel to allow time for reading and consideration.
- The Agency Decision maker is Siobhan Williams, Head of Safeguarding and Services to Children and Young People
- Applicants will be invited to attend the Adoption Panel if they wish, in order to answer questions themselves and to meet the Panel members considering their

application. Some applicants may not wish to attend and may waive their right to do so. This will not disadvantage them.

- Applicants who are subject of a Brief Report will also be invited to panel.
- The adoption panel will comment on the strengths and weaknesses in the application.
- Panel will make a recommendation and convey that to the member of staff or adoptive applicant, outside the panel meeting, by the Chair or vice Chair. They will be informed when the Agency Decision Maker will make a decision which will be within 7 working days of the panel.
- Minutes of the panel are made available to the Agency Decision Maker before any decision is made.
- The agency's decision will be reported back to the prospective adopters verbally by the adoption social worker within 2 working days, and confirmed in writing by the agency to the prospective adopter within 5 working days.
- Should an application not be recommended the applicants will be given full written details on how to make representations to the agency or seek recourse to the IRM.

9 SUPPORT TO ADOPTERS

9.1 Pre-Adoption Order

- Following approval all prospective adopters will be given a post approval information pack, including information on access to training and events which will continue after adoption for all Worcestershire adopters.
- All approved adopters are encouraged to join a support group which is run by Adoption UK on behalf of Worcestershire County Council.
- All prospective adopters will have an allocated adoption social worker, who will ensure that they continue to consolidate their knowledge and skills for adoptive parenting through participation in the post approval continuous learning programme.

- Prospective adopters will be informed that Worcestershire County Council adoption agency is part of the West Midlands Consortium and works with the National Adoption Register to ensure that where placement needs cannot be met within the agency a suitable placement is identified as swiftly as possible from external sources; and to ensure that approved adopters are used to meet the needs of children/young people on a regional or national basis.
- Whilst waiting prospective adopters will receive profiles of children currently waiting for adoption in Worcestershire where no family can be identified.
- With the agreement of the prospective adopters they will usually be referred to the Consortium and National Adoption Register three months after approval.
- All prospective adopters who do not have a child placed will be subject to a review of suitability at least annually or before if required. A written review form and document explaining the review process will be sent as necessary.
- The review will be conducted by an adoption team manager following consultation with the prospective adopters. If the recommendation is that the prospective adopters may no longer be suitable to adopt, a prospective adopters review will be submitted to the adoption panel and the prospective adopters invited to attend panel when their case is heard.

9.2 Linking and Placement Planning

- Worcestershire has detailed procedures for staff about the linking, introduction and placement of children. The staff are dedicated to finding the best possible match for a child and making the transition from foster care to adoption as positive for all as possible. They will ensure that there are no unnecessary delays when seeking families that can best meet the needs of the children waiting for placements.
- An information guide about the linking process is sent out to newly approved prospective adopters. A placement guide is planned for future development.
- The adoption co-worker for the child will take the lead in identifying appropriate families and will liaise with the child's social worker.

- The Adoption Team keep updated information on all children and prospective adopters waiting which is constantly reviewed to note any potential links.
- The needs of the child requiring placement will be carefully collated in a linking report following a Service Request Meeting and a Matrix of Need Meeting involving foster carer, social workers and any one else who has knowledge of the child.
- The linking report forms the basis to a 'linking meeting' chaired by the adoption social worker or a senior social worker, this meeting looks at the needs of the child and whether any proposed prospective adopter/s can meet these needs. The proposed link will be the adopter(s) assessed, on balance, as being best able to meet the child's needs.
- The adoption social worker for the proposed prospective adopters will discuss the link with them. If they wish to proceed the adoption social worker for the prospective adopter will visit with the child's social worker.
- The prospective adopters will have full details of any child being linked with the opportunity to meet with foster carers, medical advisor, ISL and significant others. Their adoption social worker will offer advice and support in helping them understand all the information.
- The adoption social worker will inform the prospective adopters that it is a requirement that the child's name should not be changed unless there is very good reason and agreement by the court, if applicable.
- Since January 2004, all new adoptive placements have arrangements outlined in the Adoption Support Plan, which specify as clearly as possible Worcestershire's commitments to the placement in terms of practical, professional and financial support, involvement in any contact arrangements, specialist medical or therapeutic inputs and general advice. The plan will contain details of multi-agency service providers as appropriate and a named co-coordinator for the plan. A support plan is made in every case.
- The service fully embraces the requirement of good support planning and is constantly developing its practice around this.

- The use of the ASSA as a consultant in support planning at placement is currently being developed.
- In the case of interagency placements liaison will take place with the other relevant agency to ensure the necessary support will be put in place.
- The completed linking report is presented to the adoption panel alongside the Adoption Placement Report, support plan and comments from the prospective adopters on the proposed link, according to the statutory guidance.
- Worcestershire are keen for prospective adopters to attend panel at the time of linking and this is currently under development.
- The adoption team recognises the importance of good planning around introductions of children to adoptive placements and this is undertaken according to clear practice guidelines.
- If Panel recommends a link that is approved by the Agency Decision Maker, a placement planning meeting chaired by the team manager or senior social worker, formulates a placement plan. This meeting is attended by the prospective adopters, foster carer, social workers, and any other significant others including ISL. The age, wishes and feelings of the child are considered throughout. The attachment needs of the child are significant.
- Where a local or national link cannot be readily identified for a child they will be considered for featuring in the journals; 'Be my parent' and 'Adoption UK', and 'on line' via the internet and at the National Adoption Register Exchange Days or other 'parents for children events'.

9.3 Placement

- Once a placement has taken place, the child's allocated social worker and the adoption social worker for the adopters will be involved in supervising the child in placement, support to the adopters and preparing court reports, as required by the adoption legislation.
- Children placed for adoption will be subject to statutory reviews, which will include review of the Adoption Support Plan. An Independent Reviewing Officer

will chair the reviews to ensure that all aspects of the child's welfare and plans for his or her future are progressing satisfactorily.

- All children will have a life story book, later life letter and memory box with key items from their past. Prospective adopters will be advised on the importance of keeping safe any items and to provide this to the adopted child as appropriate.
- Where a placement ends in an unplanned way the agency will review the case no earlier than 28 days and no later than 42 days after the date on which the child leaves the adoption placement.
- Disruption meetings will be held in all such cases soon afterwards. Support and counselling will be provided for the child and the prospective adopter. Reports of placements that end in this way and the outcome of subsequent meetings will be considered by the adoption panel and within the agency to learn from these experiences.
- The agency will consider its own decisions and actions in the case.

10 Records

- Adoption records will be securely stored and archived and retained for 100 years.

11 ADOPTION SUPPORT

Worcestershire has an Adoption Support Strategy with the key theme that 'Adoption Support is Everybody's Business'. The key aims of the strategy are:

- to provide a service to enable the continuance of adoptive placements and to broaden the range of potential placements;
- to raise awareness about the importance to adopted children and adults of developing knowledge and understanding of their own identity;
- to raise awareness and support the development of the skills needed by adoptive parents and;

- to work in partnership with others to better meet the needs of those affected by adoption.
- Where the Adoption Support Plan has identified specific services that will continue post adoption, the responsibility for coordinating the plan will transfer to the Adoption Support Team.

12 SERVICES PROVIDED FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES BY THE ADOPTION TEAM

- Access to a helpline 4 sessions a week which is the first point of contact for enquiries from service users and colleagues and other agencies.
- Training events for adopters and other professionals.
- Liaison with other agencies (e.g. education and health providers) to promote understanding of the impact of adoption and to support individual families to access appropriate services.
- Support groups which are facilitated in Worcestershire by Adoption UK who run monthly meetings and social events in the North and South of the County.
- Management of letterbox arrangements (indirect contact), and advice and support for direct contact arrangements. It is recognised that contact arrangements need to be kept under review and will need to adapt to meet the child's needs.
- The authority recognises the need to provide financial support in some adoption situations. To facilitate this, the service has a scheme for the payment of financial support in specified circumstances following an assessment of need and an assessment of the financial resources of the family to meet the needs. Written details of the financial scheme are given to all prospective adopters. Regular contacts with adoptive families will be coordinated to include reviews of financial support where this is being paid.

- Adoptive families, adoptive parents, adopted people and birth parents can apply to the Adoption Team for an assessment of need for adoption support at any time.
- The Adoption Team will respond in a way that recognises the special circumstances of adoptive families, will initiate assessments of need for adoption support and will co-work with colleagues in children and families teams where necessary.
- Where a range of support services is to be provided following an assessment of need for adoption support, these will be outlined in an Adoption Support Plan which specifies the services, the range of multi-agency providers involved and a co-coordinator for the plan. Adoption Support Plans will be reviewed regularly.
- The Adoption Team works closely with the Integrated Support Service for looked after and adopted children (ISL) to provide a range of interventions which include attachment consultations, ongoing advice and support, opportunities for training in adoption issues and liaison and support with education.
- Worcestershire has a support care scheme, which offers time limited short breaks to families under stress who meet the criteria. The use of this scheme is currently under review.
- The role of the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA) is undertaken by the Adoption Operational Manager and the senior social workers in the Adoption Team.
- The ASSA oversee the advice and information helpline and they have a key role in providing consultation to colleagues about the preparation of adoption support plans and in developing liaison with other placing agencies.

13 ADOPTED ADULTS AND BIRTH RELATIVES

The Adoption Team provides access for information for adopted adults and intermediary services to adopted adults and their birth relatives as required by the regulations.

The adoption team also provides the following services:

- counselling to adopted adults seeking access to birth records
- advice to birth relatives after adoption
- advice on adoption issues to other agencies
- In their work they demonstrate their understanding of the effects and impact of adoption.

The Adoption Team recognises the impact of the loss of children to adoption for birth relatives and will offer appropriate counselling to help with the loss. The team offers support to birth relatives for contact arrangements and reviews contact agreements.

14 ADOPTION WITH A FOREIGN ELEMENT

The service will undertake assessment reports for people wishing to adopt a child from a country outside the U.K. There is a dedicated inter-country adoption worker who is available to offer advice from the point of enquiry and to undertake the homestudy/assessment. The adoption worker is skilled in inter-country adoption issues and has knowledge of the relevant legislation.

In such cases a set charge will be made for the work involved for assessment, presentation to panel, references and statutory checks and all administration.

15 SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

The Adoption Service produces an annual team plan as part of the Children's Directorate's business planning process. This will take account of any recommendations/requirements arising from inspections carried out by OFSTED and of other planned service developments.

The service will work jointly with other organisations, particularly Herefordshire Council Adoption Service and other West Midlands Consortium partners to develop a regional approach to service provision where appropriate.

16 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In seeking to constantly improve the quality of the adoption service it welcomes and encourages feedback from service users, providers and partner agencies. Prospective adopters are given written information about the Worcestershire County Council complaints procedures and given information about how to make a complaint. All records of complaints are registered and outcomes monitored by the Consumer Relations Officer. The Senior Management team for Integrated Services regularly discusses learning from complaints and how this can be disseminated throughout the organisation.

Consumer Relations Officer (Children's Services)

Consumer Relations Unit

County Hall

Spetchley Road

Worcester

WR5 2NP

Tel: 01905 766366

jgoodman@worcestershire.gov.uk

Applicants to become adopters who are not accepted for approval on the recommendation of the adoption panel and/or decision maker, are able to ask for their case to be reviewed by the Independent review Mechanism (IRM). Details of this process are made available to applicants during preparation and assessment. Contact details are:

IRM

Dolphin House

54 Coventry Road

Birmingham

B10 ORX

Tel: 0121 766 8086

irm@baaf.org.uk

17 OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (OFSTED) responsible for inspecting adoption services against the national Minimum standards:

OFSTED

North, 3rd Floor

Royal Exchange Buildings

St. Ann's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404040

E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Statement of Purpose Approved by

Siobhan Williams

Head of Safeguarding and Services to Children & Young
People

Signed:

Date:

Cllr Liz Eyre

Cabinet Member with responsibility for children and young
people (Safeguarding)

Signed:

Date:

**Copies of this Statement of Purpose will be available
Edulink/SID? It is accessible to all staff, birth relatives,
prospective adopters, adopters and children and young
people.**