



Wiltshire Council

Department for Children & Education

Adoption Service
Statement of Purpose

Revised March 2009

Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service

Contents

	<u>Page No</u>
Introduction	3
Adoption Website	3
Aims of the Adoption Service	4
Objectives of the Adoption Service	4
Principles	5
Organisational Structure in Wiltshire	7
The Adoption Panel	11
Services Provided	14
Systems for Monitoring & Evaluating	16
Service Development	18
The Service to Prospective Adopters	20
The Complaints Procedure	23
The Registration Authority	25
<i>Appendix 1 (Registered Manager and Staff)</i>	26
<i>Appendix 2 (Members of Adoption Panel/Advisers)</i>	29
<i>Appendix 3 (Adoption Service Structure Chart)</i>	30

Statement of Purpose of the Adoption Service

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of Standard 1 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act 2000), Regulation 2 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 and the Adoption & Children Act 2002.

Introduction

The Adoption Service is a part of a broader Family Placement Service, which in turn is a core component of the Children & Families Branch of the Department for Children and Education. The main focus of the Branch's work with children in need is to promote the well-being and development of each child throughout childhood by:

- ensuring secure care
- protecting children from harm
- respecting and promoting cultural ties and identity
- promoting life chances by supporting and enabling parents (including adoptive parents) and extended family to care for their own children, wherever possible.

The Adoption Service also operates under the government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children initiative, with its 5 outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy & Achieve
- Achieve Economic Well-Being
- Make a Positive Contribution

Adoption Website

Wiltshire Council has an adoption website to provide information on the adoption service, including:

- Services for children who need adoption
- Becoming an adoptive parent (including an online enquiry form)
- The Adoption Support Service
- Accessing your adoption records (adopted adults)
- Tracing an adopted person (intermediary service for birth relatives)
- Tracing your birth relatives (intermediary service for adopted adults)
- Special Guardianship
- Inter-country adoption
- Step-parent Adoption

Aims of the Adoption Service

Our overall aim is to help children and young people to attain the highest possible standards of health, development and educational attainment.

- To ensure that the needs, wishes, welfare and safety of the child are kept at the centre of the adoption process. (See Welfare Checklist: s.1 Adoption & Children Act 2002)
- To ensure that where it is not possible for children to live safely with their birth families they are provided with a permanent, stable, alternative family through adoption or special guardianship.
- To ensure that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents, including those wishing to adopt a child from overseas, couples whether married or not, gay or lesbian and single people, from any ethnic background are welcomed without prejudice. They will be responded to promptly and given clear information about recruitment, assessment, approval and support services. (See information leaflet for prospective adopters- AIW2).
- To ensure that birth families are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process and have access to independent counselling and adoption support services.
- To ensure that the timescales set out in Regulations are met, wherever possible and where it is not possible the reasons must be clearly recorded. Our performance against the achievement of these timescales will be monitored.

Objectives of the Adoption Service

- To increase the number of children adopted from the care system, in line with government targets.
- To recruit a sufficient pool of prospective adopters to offer placement choice in order to meet the assessed needs of the children needing adoptive families.
- To develop a range of adoption support services, including practical, financial and therapeutic services, in partnership with other relevant agencies, in order to support adoptive placements and avoid placement breakdowns.
- To ensure that the adoption agency employs staff with appropriate and sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the adoption service.

- To ensure that applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.
- To ensure that birth families wishing to seek information about an adopted relative are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

Principles

The Child

- The child's welfare is paramount in all decisions about her/his future.
- The child's wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken into consideration, according to their age and understanding.
- Every child is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, which should meet all the needs of the child in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, physical, social and emotional development and that promotes a supportive lifelong relationship.
- Children and young people should not be in public care throughout their childhood.
- A child's birth heritage, religious, cultural and linguistic background are all important factors to consider in finding a new family. The adoptive family should reflect this, if this can be found without unnecessary delay. No child should be denied loving adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and parents do not share the same racial or cultural background.

The Birth Family

- The local authority will work in partnership with birth families to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented for their child.
- Every child is entitled to information about her/his birth family in order to promote her/his sense of identity.
- There will be arrangements for ongoing contact, direct or indirect, between the child and birth family unless this would not be in the child's best interests.
- The birth family's wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken into consideration at all stages in the process.

The Adopters

- All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

- Priority for undertaking assessments will be given to those with the skills and experience to meet the needs of the children requiring adoption.
- Every effort will be made to find adoptive homes where brothers and sisters can live together, unless this will not meet their individually assessed needs. Where this is not possible, the reasons for the decision to separate them will be clearly recorded on the child's file.
- Adoptive parents and prospective adopters should be consulted with, provided with information, their views sought and taken into account throughout the process.
- Adoption support services should be provided, as appropriate, to promote the stability of placements and ensure good outcomes for children.

General

- The local authority will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that the needs of all parties in the adoption process are met.
- All the parties to the adoption process are entitled to an assessment of their need for adoption support services, including financial support.
- All the parties to the adoption process will have access to the Department's Complaints procedure.

Organisational Structure in Wiltshire

Management of the Service

All the managers in the adoption service are suitably qualified and experienced in line with the requirements of the Adoption & Children Act 2002. All have completed or are in the process of completing management training courses.

The Service Director of the Children & Families Branch has overall responsibility for the adoption service in Wiltshire. The Service Director is the Agency Decision Maker and the Adoption Support Services Adviser (delegated to the Adoption Support Co-ordinators).

- The nominated manager of the adoption service is the Head of Children Looked After Placement and Support Services, who is responsible for line-managing the County Family Placement Service Manager, the County Adoption Manager and the Adoption Co-ordinator.
- The County Adoption Manager has line-management responsibility for the Adoption Support Co-ordinators and responsibility for the operational development of the adoption service.
- The County Family Placement Service Manager has line-management responsibility for the three Family Placement Managers and some operational responsibility for the adoption service.
- The Family Placement Managers are responsible for the line management of the Family Placement Officers, for Adoption and Fostering and for the Family Placement Support Workers.
- The Adoption Support Co-ordinators have line-management responsibility for the Adoption Support Workers.
- The Adoption Co-ordinator is responsible for the strategic development of the adoption service.
- Three Area Service Managers are responsible for the line-management of the 7 Locality Team Managers and three Children's Disability Team Managers, who are responsible for the case planning in respect of individual children in the adoption process.

N.B. See Appendix 1 for details of the Registered Manager and the number, qualifications and experience of staff employed in the adoption service.

See Appendix 3 for a structure chart of the adoption service.

Operational Functions

- The Family Placement Teams deliver both adoption and fostering services. Some Family Placement Officers are specialist adoption workers; several other FPOs have developed an interest and expertise in adoption work and have considerable experience in this field.
- Each Family Placement Team has at least one Family Placement Support Worker, who provides practical support to adoptive families.
- There is a dedicated Adoption Support Service that is responsible for providing and developing adoption support services in Wiltshire, including for Special Guardianship.
- The Independent Reviewing Service (one senior Independent Reviewing Officer and five IROs) has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of children's adoption plans, conducting the LAC reviews until the Adoption Order is made, ensuring the timescales are adhered to and chairing adoption disruption meetings.
- An Adoption Practitioners Group meets monthly to ensure that there is consistency of practice across the county and that new developments are implemented. The County Adoption Manager chairs the group and there is manager and worker representation from the three Family Placement teams, plus the Adoption Support Co-ordinators.
- A Homefinder Management Group meets monthly to oversee the homefinding process, track the progress of individual children and adopters in order to expedite placements and to review the effectiveness of the Homefinder newsletter. The group is chaired by the Adoption Co-ordinator and membership includes the County Adoption Manager and three Family Placement Managers.
- Regular Permanence Tracking meetings are held between each Area Service Manager and Family Placement Manager to discuss children for whom there is a permanence plan but no placement has been identified and to consider ways of achieving the plan.
- Wiltshire provides a comprehensive set of adoption procedures for staff to assist them in their adoption work. The procedures are available on the intranet, which means they can be easily and regularly updated in line with changes in legislation and practice.
- The Adoption Agency has contracts with Voluntary Adoption Support Agencies to provide complementary services to those provided in-house. Adoption UK provides a 'buddying and support' service to adopters. PACT

(Parents and Children Together) provides adoption support services to birth families, adopted adults and adoptive families.

- The Agency has a contract with PACT to provide inter-country adoption services, including assessment, training, reviewing and adoption support.

Strategic and Developmental Function

- A Strategy & Development Officer, with many years experience in adoption work undertakes the role of Adoption Co-ordinator, focussing on developing policies, procedures and adoption training, as well as the role of Agency Adviser to the Adoption Panel, and consultant to fieldwork and family placement teams on matters relating to adoption.
- There is a countywide Adoption Reference Group, which meets monthly and is chaired by the Adoption Co-ordinator. The group membership includes the Head of Children Looked After Placement and Support Services, representatives from Family Placement, Locality Teams, the Independent Reviewing Service and the Adoption Support Service. The function of this group is the overall development of the adoption service, including enhancing multi-agency responsibility for adoption.
- Wiltshire is a member of the South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC), which is a consortium of local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Support Agencies (VASAs) and is used to share resources to increase the range of placement possibilities for children and adopters, and for the sharing of good practice. They produce the 'e-Link book', which features children needing adoption placements. The Adoption Co-ordinator is the link person with the Consortium and attends quarterly regional meetings.
- SWAC also has regular regional group meetings for Panel Chairs, Panel Advisers and Adoption Support Workers. Wiltshire has representation on all these groups, to share issues, good practice and disseminate relevant information.
- Wiltshire is a member of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). It provides a quarterly information pack, including details of training events, publications and practice notes. It provides licences for the printing and use of nationally recognised adoption forms. It publishes a bi-monthly newspaper 'Be My Parent' and has a Be My Parent Online Service, which feature the more difficult to place children needing adoptive placements. There are local Trainer/Consultants who are available to provide training, advice and guidance on specific issues. The Adoption Coordinator is the link person with BAAF and attends quarterly regional meetings.
- Wiltshire subscribes to Adoption UK and receives quarterly journals and a 'Children Who Wait' magazine featuring children needing placements for

adoption. Wiltshire also joins all newly approved adopters to Adoption UK and pays their membership for the first year.

The Adoption Panel

Membership

The membership of Adoption Panels is prescribed in Regulations. There must be no more than 10 members in total and there must be at least 5 members present in order to be quorate. One of these must be the Chair or Vice-Chair, one must be a social worker and one an independent member.

Membership should be gender-balanced as far as possible and reflect the composition of the local community.

The membership must include:

- (a) An Independent Chair
- (b) two social workers with at least 3 years relevant experience in child care social work, including direct experience in adoption work.
- (c) one elected member of the authority, preferably from the corporate parenting group or with responsibility for children's services.
- (d) the Agency's Medical Adviser
- (e) at least three independent members, where possible at least 2 of these are to have personal experience of adoption.

The Independent Chair must be a person with the necessary skills and experience as follows:

- the authority and competence to chair a panel
- the ability to analyse and explain complex information
- the ability to identify key issues, problems and solutions
- excellent interpersonal, oral and written communication skills

A person is disqualified from being the Chair if they have been, within the last year, a member or employee, or are related to an employee of the Children & Families Branch of the Department for Children & Education.

One of the members must be appointed as Vice-Chair, and must have the skills and experience necessary to deputise for the Chair. In Wiltshire, this position is filled by a Locality Team Manager (one of the social worker representatives).

The Agency has a Legal Adviser to the Adoption Panel who provides written legal advice and may attend if requested to do so but is not a member of the Panel.

There is also an Agency Adviser to the Panel who is not a Panel member but should attend Panel meetings as its adviser. He or she should be able to contribute to Panel meetings by raising issues and providing advice, for example about the Agency's procedures and practices.

The Adoption Panel Administrator is responsible for taking the minutes of the meetings and undertaking the other administrative aspects of the Panel's work.

The Agency pays its independent panel members (including the Chair) a fee to cover the cost of time spent preparing for and attendance at Panel, plus travel expenses.

The Agency provides an annual training day for Panel members and Adoption Agency staff. Panel members are also offered opportunities to attend other relevant internal and external training events.

Panel's Function

The Panel meets at least 3 weekly, but if necessary in an urgent case will convene an extra Panel at short notice. A schedule of meetings is prepared in advance and circulated to Panel members and all locality and family placement teams.

The Panel's main function is to make recommendations to the Agency's Decision-Maker (the Service Director, Children & Families), who makes the Agency decision on the following matters:-

- (a) whether a child should be placed for adoption
- (b) whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child
- (c) whether a child should be placed for adoption with a particular prospective adopter.

The Panel must also consider and may give advice to the Agency on:

- (a) the Agency's proposals for the provision of adoption support services to the adoptive family
- (b) the arrangement the Agency proposes to make for allowing any person contact with the child
- (c) whether an application should be made by the Agency for a Placement Order
- (d) whether the parental responsibility of any parent or guardian or the prospective adopter should be restricted and if so the extent of the restriction.

In considering the recommendation to make, the Panel must bear in mind that the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration and:-

- (a) shall take into account and give consideration to all reports and information passed to the Panel
- (b) shall request any further information that the Panel considers necessary
- (c) shall obtain legal and medical advice on each case presented to Panel
- (d) should consider whether all other possible options have been explored and discounted

The Panel is required to keep minutes of its meetings and a written record of any recommendations it makes and the reasons for them. If the Panel cannot reach a consensus on its recommendations, the minutes should clearly set out the reasons.

The Panel receives regular update reports on children and adopters who have been to Panel, in order to track their progress.

As part of its monitoring function, the Panel considers, at quarterly intervals, a spreadsheet detailing the position of all the children and adopters currently in the adoption process.

The Agency Decision

The Agency Decision-Maker is required to make the Agency Decision based on Panel's recommendation, within 7 working days and to notify certain people in writing of its decisions.

See Appendix 2 for details of the current Adoption Panel members.

Services Provided

As an Adoption Agency, Wiltshire provides a range of adoption services to children needing adoption, prospective adopters, adoptive parents, birth parents, birth families, adopted adults and the general public. These services are provided by:

Family Placement Teams

- The Family Placement Teams recruit, train, assess and provide support to prospective adoptive parents.
- The Family Placement Service provides a counselling service for adopted adults who wish to find out information about their adoption.
- The Family Placement Service, through the contract with a Voluntary Adoption Support Agency (VASA), provides an intermediary service for birth relatives and adopted adults who wish to trace each other.
- The Family Placement Service allocates Family Placement Officers to act as the 'nominated homefinder' for children needing adoptive placements.
- The Family Placement Service provides a consultation service to the fieldwork teams on matters relating to adoption placements.

Locality Teams

- Locality Teams undertake the task of planning for permanence and preparing children and their birth families for adoption.
- The child's social worker will provide each child (depending on age and understanding) with a Children's Guide to Adoption, which includes information about making complaints and a summary of the Statement of Purpose.
- Locality teams arrange for the child's birth parents to receive independent support and counselling during the adoption process. Part of this service is contracted out to a Voluntary Adoption Support Agency.
 - Locality and Family Placement Teams collaborate in homefinding, matching, supporting adoptive placements and in contact arrangements, at least until the Adoption Order is made.
 - Locality Teams provide a service to step-parents who wish to adopt, including preparing a report for court.
 - Locality Teams are responsible for managing direct contact arrangements between children and their birth families, pre and post Adoption Order.

- **New for 2010 update:** Locality teams are responsible for ensuring that the child's Lifestory Work and Later Life Letter are completed by the time of the Adoption Order.

Adoption Support Service

The Adoption Support Service undertakes assessments of need for adoption support, including financial, to all eligible parties, throughout the adoption process and ongoing after the Adoption Order is made. The Adoption Support Service also undertakes assessments of need for Special Guardianship support services.

The Adoption Support Service is also responsible for:

- developing a range of adoption support services to meet the needs of adopted children and adoptive families e.g. support groups, newsletters and training for adopters and staff
- preparing Adoption Support Plans for children and reviewing the plans at regular intervals, as required
- accessing specialist therapeutic help for children
- accessing counselling and advice for adoptive parents
- managing the post-box service (to enable adopted children to maintain indirect contact with their birth families)
- reviewing direct contact arrangements
- accessing universal services and benefits
- organising training events and conferences for adopters and staff
- providing practical help and support to adoptive families
- preparing Special Guardianship support plans and reviewing them on request
- acting as single point of contact to provide information and advice to adopters and Special Guardians.

Systems for Monitoring and Evaluating Service Provision

Departmental Monitoring

- An annual report and a 6 monthly interim report is presented to Elected Members, detailing the activity of the Adoption Agency.
- The supervision and annual appraisal system for all staff assures the monitoring of individual performance and identification of training needs to compensate for any gaps in knowledge.
- A File Audit system is in place for managers to regularly check on the quality of children's adoption records and adopters' files, to ensure that all departmental policies and procedures are being followed.
- Training on adoption issues is part of the 'training pathway' for staff involved in adoption work and staff complete post-training evaluation forms, which feed into reports produced by the Staff Development Team.
- The Senior Independent Reviewing Officer produces 6 monthly reports on the work of the Service, including the progress on permanence plans being achieved.
- A Family Placement Recruitment Strategy is in place to identify and inform recruitment needs for adoptive parents, based on the profile of the children needing adoption. This is reviewed and updated annually and is being used to inform our prioritisation principles for assessing applicants.
- Family Placement Officers routinely review and evaluate the quality of the Adoption and Permanence training courses **for adoptive applicants**, including seeking and collating feedback from applicants.
- Contracts with VASAs are reviewed 6 monthly and statistics provided quarterly to monitor performance and ensure value for money.
- The Homefinder Management Group meets quarterly to track and monitor the children and adopters currently in the adoption process, with particular focus on suggesting ways forward those without an identified placement

Adoption Panel

- The Adoption Panel's monitoring and quality control functions include:
 - receiving regular LAC Review reports on the progress of children in the adoption process, up to the making of the Adoption Order
 - receiving regular update reports on prospective adopters awaiting a placement

- monitoring the quality of Child Permanence Reports and Form Fs and ensuring they are Act compliant
 - feeding back through the Chair to the Agency Decision-Maker on any cases involving poor or particularly good practice
 - receiving prospective adopters' reviews where a change of approval is being recommended.
- There is an annual training day for the Adoption Panel, which helps to ensure Panel members are kept up-to-date with current issues in adoption. In order to meet the requirements of the National Minimum Adoption Standards, part of this day involves a session with the Agency's adoption managers and staff.
 - The Agency Decision Maker meets with the Adoption Panel quarterly and will pick up on any issues of concern raised by Panel members. A spreadsheet showing the current position and progress of all the children and adopters in the process is shared and discussed with the Agency Decision Maker.
 - All Panel members are required to undergo an annual review of their performance.
 - The Agency Decision-Maker meets quarterly with the Panel Chair and Agency Adviser to discuss issues connected with Panel business, including developmental, quality control and any other issues of concern.
 - The Adoption Panel has a system for receiving feedback from applicants who attend Panel, social workers and FPOs, which are discussed at subsequent Panels and suggestions for improvements to Panel's practice are considered.

Service Development

In the last year a County Adoption Manager has been appointed, as well as 2 FPOs (Adoption) and a third one in the process of being appointed. The long term aim is to move towards a multi-agency specialist, countywide adoption service. Meanwhile, the shorter term developments include:

- Opportunities to publicise the adoption service in Wiltshire continue to be developed to raise public awareness of the children needing adoption and the sorts of support that adoptive families can expect to receive in order to help them with this challenging task.
- An ongoing programme of training for staff on adoption issues is in place, embedded into the Training Pathway and reviewed regularly, based on the requirements of the Adoption & Children Act 2002.
- Multi-agency involvement in the provision of adoption support services, including multi-agency assessments, is being developed and encouraged, including providing training to school staff on matters relating to the needs of adopted children in school.
- Joint work is being developed with Pathways and CAMHS to prioritise services to adopted children, including:
 - direct therapeutic work with children
 - assessments of children's ability to form new attachments, parenting needs, etc
 - helping children to prepare emotionally for their move to adoptive placements
 - developing attachment programmes for adopters with newly placed children
 - advice on the likely ongoing therapeutic adoption support needs of the child/adopters
 - consultancy and advice to adoptive parents on managing challenging behaviour
 - training for staff and adopters e.g. on attachment theory.
- The Department's Recruitment Strategy needs to be reviewed in order to consider ways of increasing placement choice for children needing adoption.
- To continue to look at ways of increasing the Adoption Support Service and create further capacity to meet ever growing need.
- To develop a Departmental Policy with regard to Concurrent Planning, as one of the placement options for babies and young children, as well as Guidance for staff and a leaflet for prospective adopters.

- To develop a Lifestory Work Policy and Practice Guidance, to raise the profile of this important work for adopted children and consider how best to provide support, dedicated time and access to resources for social workers and others engaged in this work.
- To develop a Policy and Practice Guidance for staff with regard to the permanent placement of siblings, together or apart, including when, how and by whom the decision should be made and recorded.
- To develop a specific, targeted, user-friendly campaign website, separate from the Wiltshire Council's website, for adoption and fostering.

The Service to Prospective Adopters

The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters are set out in detail in our Adoption Agency procedures, which are available on the intranet.

In brief the process is as follows:

- The Family Placement teams have Recruitment Officers FPOs (Adoption) whose job is to find imaginative ways of encouraging people to consider adoption, in line with our Recruitment Strategy
- Within 5 working days of their enquiry, all enquirers are sent an information pack about adoption, including:
 - a letter of invitation to attend an Information Session
 - our information leaflet for prospective adopters
 - our policy with regard to smoking
 - the DfES leaflet on adoption
 - our criteria for prioritising assessments
 - leaflet on Concurrent Planning (in development).
- Enquirers are invited to attend an Information Session about adoption, to meet adopters and Family Placement staff. The session provides the opportunity to learn more about adoption and about the necessity for us to prioritise applications, to meet the needs of the type of children requiring adoption (i.e. older children with challenging behaviour, sibling groups and children with special needs).
- All applicants have to meet standard requirements and in addition, our prioritisation principles include giving priority to applicants who:
 - have been in a stable relationship for at least 2 years
 - are prepared to consider a child up to five years of age or more
 - wish to be considered for a sibling group of two or more children.
 - are open to contact with birth families
 - have completed treatment for infertility.
- Those interested in knowing more are invited to complete an Adoption Enquiry Form and, if they meet the prioritisation requirements, an Initial Assessment may be offered.
- Applicants are then prioritised to attend a Preparation Course, which provides more detailed information and helps people decide whether adoption is for them.
- Those wishing to proceed to the next stage, and deemed suitable, are asked to complete a formal application form and are allocated a Family Placement

Officer to work with them through the assessment process, which involves a number of home visits, CRB and other checks, references and a medical.

- The assessment must be completed and presented to the Adoption Panel within 8 months of the receipt of the formal application form.
- Applicants receive a copy of their completed assessment report and are invited to comment on it, within 10 working days.
- Applicants are invited to attend Adoption Panel when their approval is being considered. Their Family Placement Officer will help to prepare them for attendance and will provide them with a leaflet about the Adoption Panel.
- The Panel will make a recommendation as to whether the applicants are suitable to be approved as adopters. The Panel must consider and may give advice to the Agency about the number of children, age range, gender, likely needs and background that the prospective adopters may be suitable to adopt.
- After the Agency Decision-Maker has made the decision on their approval, based on the Panel's recommendation (within 7 working days of the Panel) the prospective adopters must be notified of the decision orally within 2 working days and in writing within 5 working days.
- If the applicants are not deemed suitable, they will be able to have the decision reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Mechanism.
- Following their approval, the prospective adopters' Family Placement Officer keeps in touch with them and ensures they have access to information about the children needing placements (through the monthly Homefinder newsletter).
- If no child has been placed with them within a year, there must be a review of their approval as suitable to adopt. After the review the prospective adopters must be informed whether they remain suitable to adopt.
- When a 'match' with a child is identified, the Adoption Support Co-ordinator will make an assessment of the adoption support needs of the placement, together with the child's social worker, the adopters and their FPO.
- This information is incorporated into the Adoption Support Plan which, together with the Adoption Placement Report, is presented to Adoption Panel when the 'match' is being considered.
- Adopters may also request an assessment for adoption support services at any future point, following the making of an Adoption Order. The assessment

will be conducted by an Adoption Support Co-ordinator and the Department has the discretion to decide whether to provide adoption support services.

The Complaints Procedure

In seeking to constantly improve the quality of the adoption service, the Department for Children and Education welcomes and encourages feedback from service users, providers and partners.

The Department recognises that children, their, birth parents, adoptive parents and prospective adopters are best placed to identify the strengths and deficiencies of the adoption service and, therefore, to inform the changes and developments needed to ensure continuing improvement.

There is a clear, robust framework in place for responding to and ensuring that the views of the parties to the adoption process are heard and the Children's Guide provides information to children about how to make a complaint.

In most adoption situations, areas of potential tension or conflict can be minimised through careful planning, open communication and early discussion/negotiation involving the child's social worker, the adopters' Family Placement Officer, the Adoption Support Co-ordinator, as appropriate.

Any of the parties to the adoption process can use the Children Act Complaints Procedure if they have a dissatisfaction or concern with the service provided. This includes a complaint by:

- any child who has been placed for adoption by Wiltshire County Council (including adults who were formerly adopted)
- a birth parent of a child who has been or is being adopted
- adoptive parents
- prospective adoptive parents during the preparation/assessment process and after approval whilst awaiting a placement
- one person on behalf of another e.g. an adoptive parent on behalf of an adopted child.

Under the Adoption & Children Act 2002, the following are examples of adoption-related functions that may be the subject of a complaint:

- **Adoption Support Services:** assessments and related decisions (s.4)
- **Placing children for adoption:** including parental responsibility, parental consent, placement orders and contact issues (s. 18, 19, 22, 25, 26 and 27)
- **Removal of children:** including the removal of children who are or who may be placed for adoption by an adoption agency(s.30-35)
- **Removal of children:** non-agency cases (s.36-40)
- **Intention to adopt:** duties on receipt of notice of intent, in non-agency cases (s.44)

- ***Suitability of Adopters:*** including the matters to be taken into account in determining suitability to adopt (s.45)
- ***Making adoption orders:*** including consent, placement for adoption, applications (s.46-51)
- ***Information in relation to a person's adoption:*** including information to be kept, disclosure, restrictions on disclosure, counselling (s.56-63)

Duties set out in Regulations

The following are some of the duties set out in the Regulations, on which complaints may be made:

- Duties of Adoption Agency where the Agency is considering adoption for a child (Part 3, Adoption Agency Regulations 2005) (**AAR**)
- Duties of Adoption Agency in Respect of a Prospective Adopter (Part 4, **AAR**).
- Duties of Adoption Agency in respect of proposed placement for a child with prospective adopters (Part 5, **AAR**)
- Placement and reviews (Part 6, **AAR**)
- Records (Part 7, **AAR**)
- Modifications to the Children Act 1989 regarding parental responsibility and contact (Part 8, **AAR**)
- Provision of Adoption Support Services (Part 2, Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 (**ASR**))
- Provision of financial support (Part 3, **ASR**)
- Assessments and plans (Part 4, **ASR**)
- Reviews of support services (Part 5, **ASR**)
- Applications for Intermediary Services (Part 2, Adoption Information & Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005 (**ISR**))
- Procedure for Applications (Part 3, **ISR**)

N.B. Making a complaint will not jeopardise the complainant's position in any other way.

A copy of the Department's Complaints Procedure and Guidance is available on request.

There is a leaflet available for children and young people, which explains the complaints process and how to make a complaint.

The Registration Authority

Ofsted is an independent non-governmental public body responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services, under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. Their aim is to “inspect and regulate to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages”.

The address of the local Ofsted area office is:

**Ofsted South Regional Centre
Freshford House
Redcliffe Way
Bristol BS1 6NL**

The national Ofsted address is:

**Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann’s Square
Manchester M2 7LA**

**Email:
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**

**Tel:
08456 404045 about education, adult skills, or local authority children’s services
08456 404040 about anything else**

**Minicom/TTD:
0161 618 8524**

The Registered Manager and Staff in the Adoption Service

1. The Registered Manager

The Registered Manager of the Wiltshire Adoption Service is:

Shannon Clarke, Head of Children Looked After Placement
and Support Services,
County Hall, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 8LE

Her qualifications are: MSW and CQSW and NVQ Level 5.

The Registered Manager has many years of experience working in the field of child care, including adoption and fostering. She has held two senior management posts:

1999-2002: Service Manager in Bournemouth, managing three children's homes, the fostering and adoption team and Aftercare.

2002-present: Head of Looked After Children Placement and Support Services, managing one children's home, the Family Placement Service Manager and the Aftercare team.

2. Staff in the Adoption Service

The County Adoption Manager has overall responsibility for the development of the Adoption Service and line management responsibility for the Adoption Support Service. She is an experienced social worker, with management qualifications.

Adoption Support Staff

There are two Adoption Support Co-ordinators, with specific responsibility for undertaking assessments for adoption support services and developing the service, as follows:

North Wilts and Kennet (based at Chippenham Resource Centre)

**1 x Adoption Support Co-ordinator (fte)
1 x Adoption Support Worker (part-time)**

Salisbury and West Wilts (based at Trowbridge Resource Centre)

1 x Adoption Support Co-ordinator (fte)

1 x Adoption Support Worker (part-time)

Overall operational responsibility for the Family Placement Service rests with the Family Placement Service Manager, who is an experienced social worker, with management qualifications. The post-holder is responsible for line-managing the three Family Placement Managers.

There are three Family Placement Teams in the county, with some FPOs having specific responsibility for adoption work. Their staffing establishment is:

North and Kennet (based at Chippenham Resource Centre)

1 x Family Placement Manager
10 x Family Placement Workers (working various hours)

West Wilts (based at Trowbridge Resource Centre)

1 x Family Placement Manager
11 x Family Placement Workers (working various hours)

South Area (based at Riverside Resource Centre)

1 x Family Placement Manager
11 Family Placement Workers (working various hours)

Staff Qualifications and Experience

All the managers, Family Placement Officers and Adoption Support Co-ordinators hold the minimum social work qualification and it is a requirement of employment within the Family Placement Service that staff will have had a minimum of 2 years' experience in children & families social work or closely related field.

The managers all have or are studying for a management qualification.

All the managers and Family Placement Officers are registered with the General Social Care Council.

Three members of the service have successfully completed the PQCCA; another five have achieved Part 1 (PQ1).

The Adoption Support Workers and Family Placement Support Workers have relevant experience as children's support workers and as child care providers.

Other Staff

The post of Adoption Co-ordinator is held by a Strategy and Development Officer, who has a CQSW and Certificate in Management. She has many years experience in child care work and is also Agency Adviser to Wiltshire's Adoption Panel.

APPENDIX 2

Members of the Adoption Panel

Liz Martins	Independent Chair
Lynne Mitchell	Independent Member
Jeff Ligo	Independent Member
Ann Merrills	Independent Member
Dianne Weeks	Independent Member
Michael Tichelar	Independent Member
Margaret White	County Councillor
Stuart Murray	Medical Adviser (attend alternate panels)
Sarah Seal	Medical Adviser (attend alternate panels)
Pier Pritchard	Locality Team Manager (Vice-Chair).
Andrea Viner	County Adoption Manager

Special Advisers to the Adoption Panel

Mary Tasker	Legal Adviser
Jane Dobson	Agency Adviser.

Shannon Clarke
**Head of Looked After Children & Young People,
 Placement & Support Services**
 County Hall
 01225 713665

**CHILDREN & FAMILIES
 BRANCH**

