

# Lincolnshire Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2016

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE LINCOLNSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE**

**This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of standard 18 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2002, amended (2005,) (2011) and (2013) and the Children and Families Act 2014.**

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## AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

### The main aims of the Lincolnshire County Council Adoption Service are to:

Provide a range of quality services which can promote best outcomes for children who need a permanent placement.

Meet and comply with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services.

Ensure that all staff are appropriately recruited, supervised and developed to fulfil their agency functions.

To identify children for whom the plan is adoption and to work with them and their carers to ensure children enjoy outstanding developmental outcomes, with quick progress to successful placements with their adoptive parents.

Adhere to best practice for permanency planning timescales as set out in adoption legislation and the Public Law Outline, in order to maximise each child's opportunity to experience a stable and secure family life.

Provide appropriate choice of adoption placements for children within Lincolnshire County Council and beyond where appropriate, making full and prompt use of the East Midlands Adoption Consortium, other adoption and voluntary adoption agencies and the National Adoption Register.

To recruit, prepare, assess and fully support prospective adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children requiring adoptive families, including those who take a direct/Foster for Adoption placement.

The focus of assessments will be the applicants' ability to meet the assessed needs of children, promote attachment, improve their understanding of the adoption task and their suitability to be an adoptive parent through on-going quality assurance, and sustain a high standard of assessments. Assessments will be completed within the timescales set out within Statutory Adoption Guidance (2014) wherever possible.

Applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

Ensure that children are well prepared both practically and emotionally for a move to a new permanent family.

Provide links for children, for whom adoption is the plan, with families who can meet their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic needs, whilst recognising that no child should wait indefinitely for the "ideal" match.

Provide a comprehensive support package, including financial support where appropriate to achieve stable and successful placements.



Provide effective and efficient adoption panels to enable adoption plans for relinquished children, prospective adopter assessments and links with children to be progressed without delay.

Ensure that children's plans for adoption are agreed by the Agency Decision Maker and Placement Order applications are made to meet court timescales.

Ensure that issues for contact with the birth family are carefully considered and meet the individual needs of the child.

Ensure that where possible and appropriate, siblings will be placed together and that decisions to separate siblings are made in a timely manner, following a sibling assessment.

In conjunction with other agencies provide a comprehensive range of support services, pre and post order, as detailed in the Adoption Passport, to children, birth parents, relatives and adoptive parents and those involved in the process of special guardianship applications. To access funding where appropriate on behalf of adoptive families, via the Adoption Support Fund.

To ensure that accurate and up to date records and management information is kept in relation to individual children, adoptive parents and services and to maintain confidentiality and security.

Ensure that customers are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development.

Treat all customers with respect and without prejudice or discrimination

Lincolnshire County Council delivers its adoption service through a dedicated Adoption Team managed by a Team Manager.

### **The main principles underpinning the service are:**

Lincolnshire County Council and its adoption agency believe that, wherever possible, it is best for children to be brought up within their birth families. Only where this is not possible, and other appropriate options short of adoption have been considered, then adoption should be considered as a positive alternative for children to enable them to grow and reach maturity within a stable and loving family.

The Statement of Purpose links all sections in the document to the relevant Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 and shares its values with those Standards.

## VALUES

### Children

- 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 always be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- 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.
- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians, families and adoptive parents will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the National Minimum Standards to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

### Adopted adults and birth relatives

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved including adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.

- Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

## STANDARDS OF CARE TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE AGENCY

The Adoption Service aims to provide safe, secure and high quality care in family settings for children whom a plan for adoption has been agreed. This will be achieved to the standards set out in the Adoption Services Regulations 2002, 2011 and The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 (referred to as the "Regulations"), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005), The National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014) and The Statutory Guidance amended (2011) and July (2013 and 2014)

Working together with the Adoption Team, the Adoption Panel and the Panel Adviser, we strive to continuously improve standards of care, informed by inspections, quality audits, safeguarding assurance days as well as new legislation and guidance to evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery.

## STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE AGENCY

Lincolnshire County Council is an approved Adoption Service provider and will be inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Adoption Service is managed by the Children's Services Manager through a Team Manager for Adoption. The Team Manager acts as the Adoption Support Services Advisor. (Standard 15).

The Assistant Director for Children Services is the Agency Decision Maker (Standard 17)

Lincolnshire Adoption Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 17)

The adoption panel only considers whether:

- A child who is looked after by Lincolnshire County Council should be placed for adoption, where a parent relinquishes their child or consents that adoption is the best outcome for their child.
- Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt, and
- Particular adopters are suitable for a particular child or children

There are sufficient appointed panel members including an independent Chair. The Members of the Adoption Panel will be appraised annually against performance objectives. From 1 April 2011, the Regulations regarding the make-up of panel changed and allowed the adoption agency to draw its members from a list of people known as "the central list" these members the agency considers to have the "appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the adoption panel



for its consideration.” There is no limit to the number of people on the central list and the same people do not have to be appointed to every panel meeting.

The agency can decide how many panel members should sit at each panel meeting, subject to the panel meeting being quorate.

The members of the central list must include (in addition to the independent chair): an adoption social worker with at least three years’ relevant post qualifying experience in child care social work, including direct experience in adoption work. The medical adviser to the adoption agency is a panel member; also the agency can appoint other people whom the agency considers suitable. Suitable members could include specialists in education, child and adolescent mental health, race and culture; and those who have personal experience of adoption.

A Legal Adviser who provides advice in writing to the panel on any legal issue with implications for a child whose plan is being considered by panel. The Legal Adviser also gives advice to the Agency Decision Maker – the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

Lincolnshire Adoption Agency has medical adviser(s) who examine all children being considered for adoption and report to panel members on the child's health needs. The adviser will also meet with prospective adopters to consider health requirements of individual children.

The Agency Medical Advisers also advises panel members on health issues relating to prospective adoptive parents.

There is a Professional Adviser to the Adoption Panel who advises panel members on procedures, policies and professional issues.

Government has issued new guidance and regulation which came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 which impact significantly on the work of the Adoption Panel.

The primary change made by the Regulations is that Adoption Panels must not be involved in deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption when the Court will be involved in the decision, where care proceedings are on-going or where the child has no parents, the case must be referred direct to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the decision.

Panel will however still consider cases and make recommendations where the child’s parents will consent to the child being placed for adoption.

## THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

The named manager of the Lincolnshire Adoption Service is:

Tara Jones – Service Manager, Regulated Services  
Council Offices  
Eastgate  
Sleaford  
Lincs  
NG34 7EB

Telephone: 01522 552686

Email: [Tara.Jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tara.Jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

*Qualifications:* DipSW  
Diploma in Higher Education  
PQ1  
PQCCA  
Post Graduate Certificate in Child Care Social Work  
Post Graduate Certificate in Management (Health and Social Care)

*Experience:* 25 years' experience working in the field of social care, specialising in the area of children and families since 1991. Since 2004 has held first line and senior management posts with the local authority, predominantly within fostering, adoption and looked after children.

The nominated manager to manage the Adoption Service in the absence of the named manager under Regulation 5 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 is Anne Johnson.

The adoption teams are locality based and deliver a comprehensive service. These teams manage the permanency planning and family finding role, the recruitment, assessment, approval, support and placement processes which enable children looked after in Lincolnshire County Council to be placed in a range of appropriate adoptive placements.

Nicola Brangam is the dedicated Professional Advisor for both the Adoption and Permanence panels.

The organisational structure of the Service is shown in Appendix 1. The list of current staff is set out in appendix 3. This information in its fullest form is only available to Ofsted.

### Monitoring and evaluation of the Service

The Adoption Service works within the overall Quality Assurance Framework for Children and Families, which sets out a range of general and service specific standards and methods by which these standards are monitored. Children for whom adoption is being

considered or who have been placed for adoption are reviewed by Independent Reviewing Officers. The Adoption Service is subject to a monthly quality assurance meeting, chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer.

Lincolnshire Adoption Service continually monitors and evaluates its service at every stage of the adoption process to ensure quality and effectiveness. Lincolnshire welcomes feedback from all involved in the adoption process

The activity and performance of the Adoption Service is scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

As part of the regional Adoption Leadership Board and the East Midlands Adoption Consortium, Lincolnshire Adoption Service actively considers and shares good practice and policy development.

The Adoption Service is inspected by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), under the single inspection framework for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers. All local authorities will be inspected under this framework within a three-year period.

Performance of the service is monitored through the National Adoption Scorecard and a range of performance indicators.

## THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Lincolnshire County Council's vision is

*"that every child in every part of the county should achieve their potential"*

The principles that the Council adheres to are:

- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Safeguarding
- Aspiration and Well being
- Learning and achievement
- Best use of Resources

In addition to the principles, four strategic outcomes for children have been agreed by Children's Services.

- Children and young people are; Healthy & Safe
- Develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Learn and Achieve
- Children and young people are; Ready for Adult Life

The Adoption Agency has the expectation all children in its service is encapsulated into these principles, and will work with children to champion the importance of these aspirations.

We will work to develop self-esteem, self-belief and resilience in all children encouraging all children to be the best they can be.

We will use resources to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities.

The Adoption Agency strives to match, wherever possible, a child to an appropriate family, including considerations of ethnic origin and religion. However no child will wait indefinitely for the ideal placement. (Standard 13) The Children and Families Act 2014 supports the adoption reforms set out in "An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay" by ensuring that a search for a perfect or partial ethnic match does not become a barrier to finding a child an adoptive family.

Unless there are clear and specific reasons why this should not happen our aim is to place siblings together. (Standard 13)

All children approved for adoption will receive a guide, which will give age appropriate information about adoption. (Standard 18)

The Adoption Agency will provide support from an individual social worker and, when required, other professionals to enhance a child's understanding of and preparedness for placement. (Standard 15)

Life storybooks and other information which will help children understand their family and background will be provided by the Adoption Agency within the prescribed timescales. (Standard 3, 5, 12)

The Adoption Agency will undertake assessment of needs and placement considerations, which inform matching process to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities. (Standard 1 &10)

Where we anticipate local resources cannot meet their needs the opportunity to be matched with an adoptive family from within the East Midlands Adoption Consortium, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the National Adoption Register (Standard 13) shall be actively pursued.

Therapeutic support is provided directly, commissioned or met by referral to other agencies if required as an outcome of assessment. (Standard 15)

For those seeking information counselling and advice in adulthood on tracing birth family members and reunion is available and provide individuals with counselling about the circumstances of their adoption. (Standard 16)

The Agency will offer supervision and support throughout the adoption process. (Standard 15).

To operate an adult to adult information exchange via the Lincolnshire letterbox system. (Standard 16)

To give an opportunity to talk with other young people who may be separated from members of their birth family. (Standard 16)

The Agency will offer information about how to contact the advocacy service provided by Barnardos/TotalVoice Lincolnshire. (Standard 16)

Through collaborative working with other agencies we will deliver and co-ordinate support for children, especially those with attachment difficulties, to facilitate the transition to new adoptive families). (Standard 1, 3, 10)

### **Aspiration and Well Being**

All prospective adoptive carers are, as part of their assessment and training required to inform the Agency of the plans that they will make to safeguard and maintain the child's welfare when they are adopted. The Agency will undertake to support carers to locate such services as GP, dentist and education services if required.

Before making the placement the Agency must give the notifications required by AAR 35.6. These are important in ensuring as smooth a transition as possible in the child's health care and education, and in the safeguarding and support arrangements for the child.

Working collaboratively with adopters, local agencies and the Statutory Authorities a plan will be presented to panel outlining the resources that the child needs and how the adopters will be assisted in meeting these needs.

Through the Agency's partnership with Adoption UK's Safe Base Parenting Programme, all adoptive families in Lincolnshire are offered this programme to empower them to make a positive and sustained change to their family relationships. Lincolnshire County Council Adoption Agency also offers its adopter's therapeutic parenting advice including "Theraplay" which is presented through the initial training course and is designed to assist adopters in identifying areas that may present challenges to them and where identified as a need, further support from "Theraplay" is available to adopters.

Prior to consideration of the child's plan, a health assessment under regulation 7.1 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 is carried out and a report of this assessment in accordance with those regulations is prepared. Once the agency is considering adoption for the child, it immediately consults its medical adviser to ascertain whether the health information already obtained is sufficient, and sufficiently up to date, this report is needed to fulfil the requirements of the regulations and the need for full information for the child, the adoption panel and the prospective adopter.

This report is presented to Panel and the needs of the child are fully discussed to ensure that any future placement has both the information about the child and a plan as to how these needs are to be met.

## Safeguarding

Lincolnshire's Children and Young People's Service and its Adoption Service are part of Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children's Board.

The assessment of adopters includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited.

All adopters have a safer caring assessment prior to approval which highlights key aspects of the safer caring process. Safe caring is an important part of the training offered.

This training is mandatory and covers specific areas such as safer caring, the implications of looking after children who may have been abused and the implications of how a child's attachment may have been affected in their early years.

Allegations that are made against adopters prior to an order being made are investigated using an established procedure whereby all are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process to ensure its timeliness. Where allegations are made following the



granting of an adoption order these are managed using standard Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

### **Aspiration, learning and achievement**

Lincolnshire County Council are committed to maximising a child's potential in both academic attainment and personal achievement and will work collaboratively with prospective adopters, local agencies and any party it considers as necessary to plan and maintain the child's education.

From 2013, adopted children were given priority school access and in 2014 all adopted children aged 2 yrs became entitled to free early education. Furthermore, the Pupil Premium was increased and now includes all adopted school children from Reception class through to year 11.

A record of the child's achievements prior to being placed will be available to the prospective carer and information sharing will consider the short medium and long term needs of the child in education. Research has shown that that in the vast majority of cases adoption works. Education and health outcomes are as good as for children growing up with their birth parents. To assist, it is essential that information about their birth families is available to adopters and that there is a Matching Information Meeting before an application is made to the Adoption Panel to match a child with applicants. (Standard 1, 3, 10).

At the Information sharing meeting a well presented contact plan for children with birth relatives and siblings will be available. However Lincolnshire County Council considers that unless there are clear and specific reasons why this should not happen, it is our aim to place siblings together. (Standard 13).

Lincolnshire County Council will provide support from an individual social worker and, if required, other workers to enhance a child's understanding of and preparedness for placement (Standard 15). Alongside of these life storybooks and other information which will help children understand their family and background will be provided. (Standard 3, 5, 12).

### **Supporting the Adoption Service**

All of the work of the Service is delivered through the following relationships and support functions which are described below.

#### **1. Prospective Adopter's Social Worker**

The role of the prospective adopter's social worker is to give support to the adopter throughout the assessment process, through placement to order. They also assist and advise with practical difficulties and the provision of equipment. They are a crucial link between the adopter and the child's social worker and the two workers need to work closely to prepare the adopters and share with them information that they need to assist in planning for the placement of a child.

## 2. Child's Social Worker

The child's social worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child in line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations (2010) the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014), however in some circumstances the visiting pattern will be more frequent particularly in the early stages of a placement or when there are particular difficulties, up to the time when the adoption order is made.

## 3. Adoption Support Social Worker

The role of the adoption support social worker is to provide specialised therapeutic support to those families who require direct adoption support to the family with tailored plans of support. Support is underpinned by an assessment of need which is made in line with the Adoption Support Regulations 2005. The Adoption Support Services Adviser is the Team Manager for Adoption who will deal with any enquiries regarding the eligibility for support services and the services provided.

The service is provided on a tiered basis dependent on assessed need

<b>Tier 1</b>	Support to adopters includes: Contact co-ordination, helpline advice, information via the Lincolnshire adoption website. Birth records counselling for adults. Also included in this tier is counselling for birth relatives whose children have been adopted as well as seminars for grandparents of adopters.
<b>Tier 2</b>	All of tier 1 and in addition adoption support groups/activities for adopters and for children affected by adoption. These include a programme of activities which bring adoptive children together to share experiences of adoption as part of leisure activities.
<b>Tier 3</b>	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support include assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and Theraplay clinic sessions to promote attachment. This tier also includes access to primary mental health services and CAMHS. Since the launch of the Adoption Support Fund, therapeutic interventions can be claimed from the central fund to ensure that adoptive families have access to therapeutic support.

## 4. Adoption Support Groups

There are locally held support groups for adopters to attend, their social worker will assist them to join a local support group and discuss with the adopters issues such as information sharing within the group. The Adoption Service will provide adopters with access to our website which provides links to useful information relating to all aspects of adoption and signposting to services and resources. In addition, in 2014 we introduced a

quarterly newsletter for adopters, which is sent to all current and past adopters with children under 18.

## TRAINING

The Adoption Service ensures that adopters are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of a child placed in their care.

Training is not an option but a clear expectation of all adopters and is evaluated prior to approval.

The training is delivered by qualified and experienced social workers in partnership with people who have experienced adoption, there is an adoptive carer and an adult who was placed for adoption in the past, and these people's experiences have been positively recognised by those attending the training.

Each experiential adoption preparation course is run over a two day period and covers:

### Day One

- Introduction
- Short Icebreaker
- Exploration of the changes that becoming an adoptive parent will bring
- Awareness of separation and loss
- Life story work
- Resilience

### Day Two

- Attachment cycle
- Therapeutic Parenting
- Adopted person talking about tracing
- Adopted parent discussing experiences of contact
- Managing behaviour
- Managing contact

In addition to the two day experiential learning all prospective adopters are provided with a workbook during stage 1. Each subject in the workbook has an exercise for prospective adopters to complete. During the experiential learning days, the course facilitators refer to the subjects in the workbook and later in the assessment stage, the completed exercises are discussed with the assessing supervising social worker.

Each workbook covers:

- The adoption process
- Why children come into care: Background factors
- Child Care Law
- Abuse of children and the possible effects

- Effects of early trauma
- Effects of separation and loss in childhood
- Lifestory work and family books
- Child development
- Discrimination
- Resilience
- Contact
- Telling children about their adoption
- Task description of an adoptive parent
- Social networking/e.safety
- Reading list

Pre-approval training is complimented by post approval learning and development opportunities, delivered through E.Learning and more traditional training seminars. All approved adopters are encouraged to attend the 4 day Safebase parenting programme, delivered in partnership with Adoption UK.

## THE PROCESS OF RECRUITING AND APPROVING ADOPTERS

The recruitment of carers is currently managed and effected from within the joint Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Team.

All initial enquiries relating to adoption are completed online through the Lincolnshire County Council website and are then passed to the Recruitment Co-ordinators or the Recruitment Co-ordinators are telephoned directly. The Recruitment Co-ordinators aim to make contact with all enquirers within 24 hours of them registering their interest online.

The Recruitment Co-ordinators role is to ensure that enquirers have all the information they need and following an initial discussion an initial expression of interest can be completed over the phone and/or a detailed information booklet is made available to all interested applicants about the adoption process which is sent within 5 working days. We are focusing on enhancing the overall customer experience and the Recruitment Co-ordinators represent the Local Authority in a professional manner, being respectful to all enquirers and acknowledging their individual journey to embark on this process.

Within 5 working days of applicants completing their initial expression of interest, the enquirers will receive a telephone call from the agency to arrange an individual interview. Initial enquiry forms can also be filled in on our interactive website. Following this visit, applicants will then submit their formal registration of interest to the agency. Adopters are recruited and assessed in line with Lincolnshire guidance based on the National Minimum Standards and Adoption Regulations.

Recruitment involves:

- Utilising social media to reach wide audiences
- Holding drop-in sessions at Community establishments
- Newspaper advertisements
- Newspaper articles
- Distribution of posters
- Information distributed through displays and presentations
- Word of mouth through existing carers
- Lincolnshire County Council LCC Connects website
- Targeted activity within specific communities in county.
- Participation in a range of county wide events.

The Adoption Agency continues to focus on two specific areas for recruitment; recruiting adopters for sibling groups, children aged over 4 and children with complex health needs and recruiting Foster to Adopt carers.

Foster to Adopt carers will be approved as both foster carers and adopters, but with the purpose of early placement stability for those children where rehabilitation home is unlikely and adoption is a very likely outcome. This would mean that the children in these placements would not have to move from a fostering placement into an adoption placement, thus minimising disruption for the child at a crucial stage in development.

The recruitment strategy has both a community focused approach coupled with digital marketing as it is recognised that we need to maximise our reach to prospective adopters and so we cannot rely on a single method to achieve this.

We have continued to advertise through local media channels and parish magazines but also utilised social media and the Lincolnshire County Council website to advertise events throughout the county.

The Recruitment team continues to co-ordinate informal information drop in sessions where individuals have the opportunity to discuss their present situation and their thoughts on becoming an adopter. Staff are on hand at the events are able to outline the process to them and what this entails. Adopters have also attended events with the Recruitment team and this allows prospective adopters the opportunity to explore the adoption process on a more personal level with someone who has gone through the process themselves.

The prospective carers can be provided with information booklets about Adoption and Foster to Adopt at these events or they can complete a form that will trigger contact from a Recruitment Co-ordinator who can begin to obtain details with the hope of progressing to an initial home visit.

The process for the assessment and approval of adopters was reformed on the 1st July 2013 and a new two stage approval process has been introduced, so that prospective adopters can be approved to adopt a child more quickly. Under the new two part process, adoption agencies must assess and approve adopters within 6 months. The new process comprises a two month initial training and preparation stage (Stage One). Stage One commences when applicants have formally registered their interest and will end with the agency's decision on whether the prospective adopter can proceed to Stage Two. In Stage One, all required checks and references will be completed. This process is now fully embedded.

Stage Two consists of an in depth assessment and will end with presentation of the prospective adopter report to the adoption panel and the agency decision maker's decision about the suitability of the prospective adopter to adopt a child.

The prospective adopter report is completed by a social worker who is compliant with the restriction on the preparation of adoption reports regulations 2005 and a person is within a prescribed description for the purposes of section 94(1) of the 2005

Act if:—

(a) She is a social worker who is employed by a local authority or registered adoption society and who satisfies at least one of the conditions set out in paragraph (2)(a) or (b);

(b) She is a person who:—



- is participating in a course approved by a Council under section 63 of the 2000 Act for persons wishing to become social workers;
  - is employed by, or placed with, a local authority or registered adoption society as part of that course; and
  - satisfies the condition set out in paragraph (2)(b); or
- (c) She is acting on behalf of a local authority or a registered adoption society and is a social worker who satisfies the conditions in paragraph (2) (a) and (b).

The conditions referred to in paragraph (1) are that the person—

- (a) has at least three years' post-qualifying experience in child care social work, including direct experience of adoption work;
- (b) is supervised by a social worker who:—
- is employed by the local authority or registered adoption society in question; and
  - has at least three years' post-qualifying experience in child care social work, including direct experience of adoption work.

The report is presented to the Adoption panel for consideration and a recommendation of their suitability is made. The organisation and composition of this panel is in accordance with Adoption Service Regulations 2011

The Adoption Panel makes recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters; this recommendation is passed, along with the prospective adopter report, panel's final minutes and any other supporting documentation to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Assistant Director for Children's Services. National Minimum Standards 23.17 sets out the qualifications, knowledge and experience decision-maker must have. The Assistant Director for Children's Services does not have direct line management responsibility for the adoption panel but has the authority to make decisions on its behalf as to whether the prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child. (AAR 27)

Prospective Adopters are invited to attend panel and participate in the panel discussions.

Feedback is received from those applicants who have commented on the process and have for the most part been satisfied with the experience of being at panel.

## Number of Adoptive Carers

A total of [48] adoptive parents were approved to adopt children during 2015/16. There were no approvals for inter country adoption. The figures for the year are very similar to those for the previous year with a significant increase in the numbers of adopters approved under the foster to adopt scheme. This increase is in line with the government focus on early placement for children with a plan for adoption, and some of the prospective adopters who would have wanted to have babies placed have opted for this route.

<b>Profile of adopter approval:</b>	
Adopters approved for 1 child	[31]
Adopters approved for 2 children	[15]
Adopters approved for 3 children	[2]
Total:	[48]

<b>Adopters approved to adopt in following age ranges:</b>	
0 – 5	[44]
5+	[ 4]
Adopters approved for Inter country adoption	[0]
Adopters approved for a Foster to Adopt placement	[17]
Adopters applying to adopt a sibling of their adopted child/ren	[5]

In order to reflect the government's aspiration to encourage foster carers who then go on to adopt, we supported four families with children in placement to apply directly to the courts for the making of an adoption order. As reported the number of families approved under the foster to adopt banner has increased to 6 with 11 placements made this year.

The only other notable change is that there has been an increase in the number of adopters being approved to adopt a sibling of their adopted child. This has increased from 2 to 5 which is positive for the siblings as they will be able to stay together.

We will continue to maximise our capacity to recruit for larger sibling groups through a mixture of targeted recruitment and the flexible use of support packages for families seeking to adopt three or more children. The matching process is robustly managed to ensure children are placed as early as possible and this is further enhanced by our introduction of early placement schemes under a 'Foster to Adopt' strategy as part of overall recruitment activity.

## Number of Children Placed

With regard to placements made this year [37] children were placed as opposed to [44] the previous year. Of these, [24] were singleton placements, [10] children were placed in [5] sibling groups of 2 and one group of three were placed. Overall in terms of children placed as part of sibling groups this is a small decrease from the previous year and is a reflection of the low number of children waiting for a placement in Lincolnshire and the reduction in the overall number of Placement Orders granted.

Of these sibling groups [5] of the groups had one or both children over five. All the other children placed were under five with 29 of them being placed before they were 2 years. There were [22] boys placed and [15] girls.

## FINANCE

Adopters can be assessed for a means tested allowance based on the needs of the children placed. This allowance is discretionary and is reviewed annually in respect of the needs of each placement and the child. Additional support through a one off settling in grant may also be made.

## COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

### Summary of the Complaints Procedure

The Directorate has a statutory complaints service, the detail of which is contained in the guide for staff 'Handling Comments and Complaints'. It is a three stage process:

- Stage 1 – Informal or problem solving
- Stage 2 – Formal stage at which an independent investigating officer is appointed
- Stage 3 – A formal review by a panel of elected members, chaired by an independent individual

If complainants remain unsatisfied at Stage 3 they can ask for their complaint to be examined by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Staff must ensure that all carers know how and to whom to complain.

Complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate.

The Customer Relations & Complaints Manager is Tanya Marten

Telephone number: 01522 555237

Email: [Tanya.marten@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tanya.marten@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

The Named Manager monitors all complaints and liaises with the Customer Relations & Complaints Manager and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Business Manager. This information is available to authorised persons only. All adopters have access to support and information regarding the complaints procedures.

## **Independent Reviewing Mechanism**

Prospective adopters are given written information about the role of the independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) as part of their preparation process. They are also provided with leaflets about the IRM when information is being prepared for presentation to panel.

### **NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES**

Eight complaints were made to the Adoption Service during 15/16

Of these complaints, the outcomes were – [3] were Unsubstantiated, 1 is currently at Stage [2] of the complaints procedure and [4] were partially unsubstantiated.

All of the issues raised in complaints were used in order to make changes to the service where this was appropriate.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), for prospective adopters who wish to challenge decisions made by panel in respect of their approval status. There have been no representations made to the IRM in 2015/2016.

### **Allegations**

Adopters can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures with all allegations managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. In addition to the role of the supervising social worker, adopters can have access to an independent social worker who can offer practical and emotional support.

All allegations and other matters listed in the Regulations are monitored by the manager who ensures that the appropriate notifications to Ofsted and other agencies are carried out.

In 2015/16, there were no allegations in respect of any adoptive carers.

## ADVOCACY AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Lincolnshire County Council commissions its advocacy for children through Voiceability "Total Voice"



Total Voice Lincolnshire

Referral and Information Line: 01529 400 479

Text:

07860 018 887

Email:

tv1@voiceability.org

Website: [www.totalvoicelincolnshire.org](http://www.totalvoicelincolnshire.org)

**When might you want an advocate?**

You can ask to speak with advocate if you:

- Have serious concerns about the care you are getting
- Want to be more involved in decisions being made about you and your future
- Want to fight decisions being made about you
- Want to make a complaint



### Children's Commissioner for England

#### Advice guidance and assistance

If you are child or young person who lives away from home or who receives social care, who needs advice or assistance, you can call us on the free phone number **0800 528 0731** or email to [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

If your enquiry involves an urgent concern about a child protection issue, you should contact your local police or social services. Adults can also call the **NSPCC child protection helpline on 0808 800 5000**. Children can call **Childline on 0800 1111**.\*

\*Above information sourced from:

<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info/advice>

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Lincolnshire Adoption Service works to the Lincolnshire County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which is available on the council's intranet site.

The Adoption Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout their approval process. The adoption agency embraces the Customer Care and Service Standards, endorsed by the DfE, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Adoption UK, and the Consortium for Voluntary Adoption Agencies. Applicants wishing to be approved as adopters will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation or disability providing the adoption service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence. The minimum age for applying to adopt is 21 years old.

Every attempt will be made to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability. However Lincolnshire's Adoption Service recognises that it is unacceptable for a child to be denied adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and prospective adopter do not share the same racial or cultural background. If the prospective adopter can meet the majority of the child's needs, the service must not delay placing a child because they do not share the child's racial or cultural background.

The Lincolnshire Adoption Service recognises that no child or young person should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

All policies and procedures concerning the adoption service are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.



## OFSTED

Ofsted is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

### **Questions or complaints**

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is the Ofsted National Business Unit.

The telephone number is 08456 40 40 40. The National Business Unit manages all calls and will redirect them as necessary; they can also be contacted at [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or write to:

Ofsted National Business Unit  
Piccadilly Gate,  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The Adoption Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.

If you require this document in a different language or an alternative format such as large print, audio tape or Braille, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team on 01522 552246 or email [diversity@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:diversity@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

The Statement of Purpose, Children's Guides and other information are also available on the Lincolnshire County Council website: [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk)

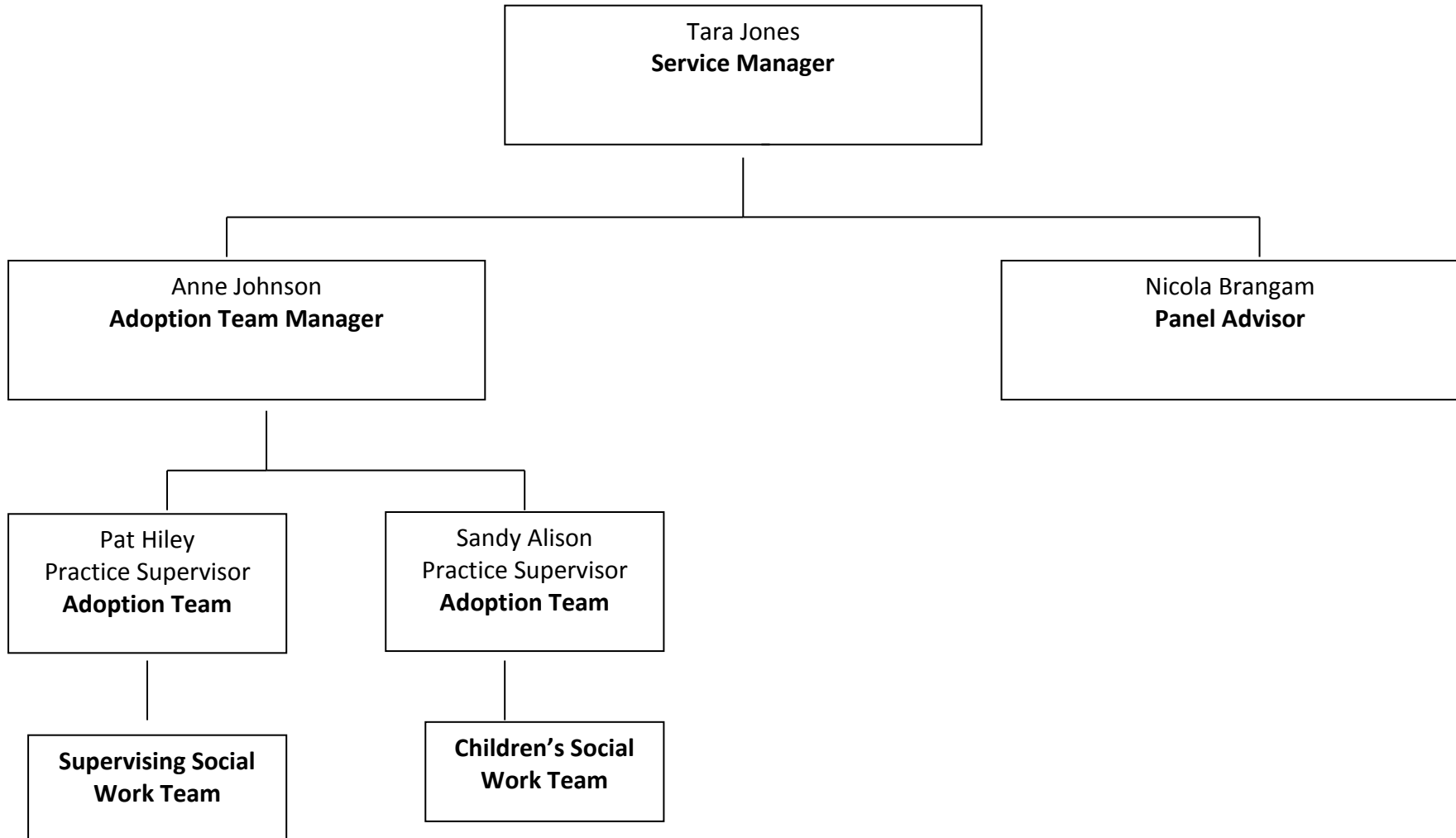
A copy can also be obtained from the registered manager:

Tara Jones – Service Manager, Regulated Services  
Council Offices  
Eastgate  
Sleaford  
Lincs  
NG34 7EB

Telephone: 01522 552686

Email: [Tara.Jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tara.Jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

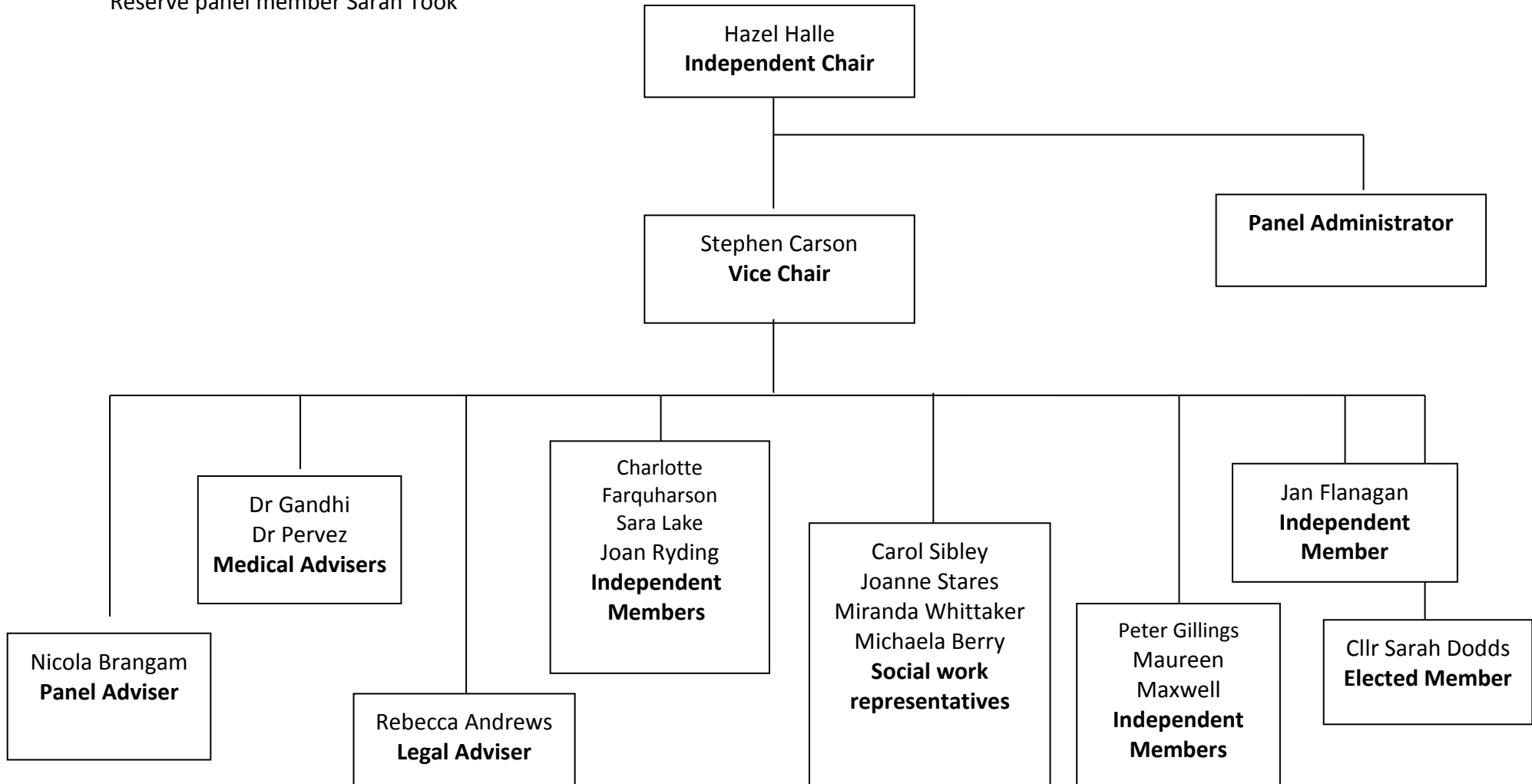
Appendix 1  
Management structure



Appendix 2

Adoption and Permanence Panel

Reserve panel member Sarah Took



**Appendix 3**  
**Adoption Service - Staffing**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Length of time in LCC Adoption Services</b>
<b>Services Manager Regulated Services (Tara Jones)</b>	DipSW Diploma in Higher Education PQ1 PQCCA Post Graduate Certificate in Child Care Social Work Post Graduate Certificate in Management (Health and Social Care)	<b>15 years in regulated Services</b>
<b>Team Manager Adoption Services (Anne Johnson)</b>	Certificate in Qualified Social work Certificate of Education Diploma in management PQ6[ Practice Teaching award]	<b>40 years (22 years in Regulated Services)</b>
<b>Practice Supervisor Adoption Services (Pat Hiley)</b>	CQSW MA Social Work B Ed (Hons)	<b>25 Years</b>
<b>Supervising Social Worker (Di Farrell)</b>	BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies CQSW	<b>25 Years</b>
<b>Supervising Social Worker (Julia Mann)</b>	CQSW BA Combined Studies MA Health Services Studies Post graduate diploma in Social Studies PQ1	<b>13 Years</b>
<b>Social Worker (Sharon Meldrum)</b>	BTEC ND Social Care BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies DipSW	<b>12 Years</b>
<b>Supervising Social Worker (Debra Green)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Worker	<b>6 year</b>
<b>Supervising Social Worker ( )</b>	Vacant	<b>Years</b>
<b>Social Worker (Sandy Allison)</b>	BSc (Hons) Social Work and Social Work Policy DipSW	<b>15 years</b>
<b>Social Worker (Wendy Jennings)</b>	BA (Hons) Social & Behavioural Studies MA, DIPSW Social Work CACDP Level 1 CACDP Level 2	<b>6 years</b>

<b>Position</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Length of time in LCC Adoption Services</b>
<b>Social Worker (Mark Abdul)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Work	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Social Worker (Kristin Daniilidis)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Work	<b>6 Years</b>
<b>Social Worker (Claire Liddan)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Work	<b>2 years</b>
<b>Supervising Social Worker (Hannah Fawn)</b>	BSc (Hons) Social Work	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Supervising Social Worker (Kelly Shaw)</b>	BSc (Hons) Social Work	<b>2 year</b>
<b>Family Finding Coordinator (Claire Davison)</b>		<b>2 years</b>
<b>Adoption Support Worker (Dawn Button)</b>	HNC Business and Finance	<b>18 Years</b>
<b>Adoption Support Social Worker (Jeanette Philbin)</b>	DipSW	<b>5 Years</b>
<b>Post Adoption Support Social Worker (Pat Mills)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Worker Higher diploma in therapeutic play MA Integrative psychotherapy/ child psychotherapy Level 1 /2 and advanced EMDR Theraplay 1 and 2 DDP 1 and 2	<b>5 Years</b>
<b>Post Adoption Support Social Worker (Jane Thornton)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Worker	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Adoption Support Social Worker (Jo Poole)</b>	BA (Hons) Social Science CQSW Certificate in Counselling Advanced Certificate in Counselling	<b>12 Years</b>