



Central Bedfordshire Council  
and Bedford Borough Council  
working together

# Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2009/2010

**Authors:** Alison McDaid and  
Stephanie Bishop  
**Reviewed:** April 2009  
**To be reviewed:** April 2010

**This document can be supplied  
in large print and in other languages**

## **Statement of Purpose – Central Bedfordshire Adoption Agency**

---

**This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) regulations 2003, and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2003, Standard 1.**

---

### **CONTENTS**

- 1. Background / Context / Status of the Adoption Service**
- 2. Aims and Objectives**
- 3. Management and Organisational Structure**
- 4. Services Provided by Bedfordshire Adoption Service**
- 5. Procedures**
- 6. Staffing**
- 7. Adoption Panel**
- 8. Targets for 2009/2010**
- 9. Quality Monitoring**
- 10. Complaints**
- 11. Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption**
- 12. Reviewing the Statement of Purpose**
- 13. The Registration Authority**
- 14. Contacts**

## **1. Background / Context / Status of the Adoption Service**

The Adoption and Fostering Service is a shared Service with Bedford Borough Council as it provides services to them under a Service Level Agreement.

The Adoption Service, together with the Fostering Service, forms the Adoption and Fostering Service, which is part of Children, Families and Learning Directorate in Central Bedfordshire Council. The Adoption Service is based at Unit 5 Franklin Court, Priory Business Park, Bedford, MK44 3JZ. The Adoption Service is known as the Adoption and Permanence Support Team.

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

Central Bedfordshire Council recognises the life long nature of adoption and aims:-

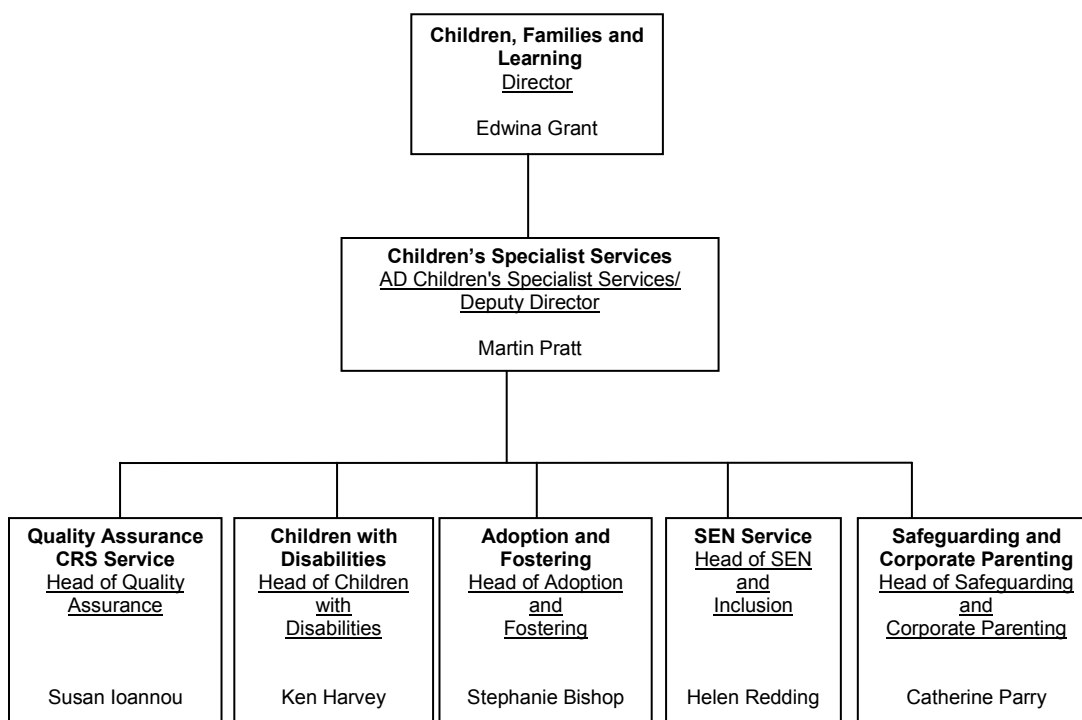
- To provide a high quality adoption service for the residents of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
- To provide a suitable adoptive placement for every child with a plan for adoption.
- To ensure that recruitment of adopters is targeted to meet the needs of children from Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
- To recruit a range of prospective adopters able to meet the diverse needs of children.
- To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed for adoption.
- To ensure that the ethnic origin, cultural background, religious heritage and language of children are fully recognised and valued.
- To provide support services that ensure successful outcomes for children placed for adoption and for adopted children.
- To ensure that adoptive families are enabled to meet the health and education needs of children placed with them.
- To provide a range of support services for adopted adults.
- To offer timely information, advice and counselling to members of the public enquiring about adoption.
- To ensure support is provided for the birth relatives of the children who were placed for adoption by Bedfordshire County Council and who are placed for adoption by Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council.
- To ensure that at all times the Adoption Service complies with legislation and policy requirements which affect its activity.

The Adoption Service actively promotes the five outcomes endorsed in “Every Child Matters”:

- Being Healthy.
- Staying Safe.
- Enjoying and Achieving.
- Making a Positive Contribution.
- Economic Well-Being.

### 3. Management and Organisational Structure

Ultimate responsibility for the Adoption Service rests with the Elected Councillors. The Adoption and Fostering Service forms part of Central Bedfordshire Council's Children's Services for which the Director of Children's Services is responsible. The Assistant Deputy, with overall management responsibility for the Adoption Service is the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services.



Operational managerial responsibility sits with the Head of the Adoption and Fostering Service. The Team Manager for the Adoption and Permanence Support Team and the Deputy Team Manager supervise the adoption social workers. Recruitment and Retention forms part of the Fostering Service. The Agency Advisor is managed and supervised by the Head of the Adoption and Fostering Service.

## 4. Services Provided by Bedfordshire Adoption Service

The **Adoption Service** provides the following services:

- Advice/counselling to those enquiring about adoption.
- Recruitment, assessment, approval and ongoing training and support of prospective adopters.
- Support for families who have adopted and for adopted children through assessment of adoption support needs and provision of services. These services may include financial assistance, education support and a wide range of social work and therapeutic services.
- Training opportunities for all adoptive parents.
- Out of hours telephone support to prospective adopters with children placed for adoption and to adoptive families receiving adoption support.
- Access to birth records and counselling for adult adoptees.
- Intermediary services for adults adopted through Bedfordshire County Council and for adopted adults living in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
- Support to birth relatives of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough children with a plan for adoption.
- A contact support service for all parties involved in ongoing contact for all adopted children.
- A permanence planning/matching service for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council Children's Social Care Teams.
- Through a Service Level Agreement with PACT (Parent and Children Together) Central Bedfordshire Council offers an adoption service to those wishing to adopt from overseas.
- Through an Agreement with Adoption UK adopters and adoptive families are offered a "buddy scheme", support group, newsletter and family days.
- Through a Service Level Agreement with Adoption Plus birth relatives are
- Offered an Independent Birth Family Member counselling Service.

## 5. Procedures

### a) Recruitment, Preparation, Assessment and Support to Prospective Adopters

Central Bedfordshire Council has detailed policies and procedures for the recruitment, counselling, preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters. The following is a summary of the recruitment, assessment and approval process in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.

- Call the free phone information line (0800 2182002) or 0300 300 8090.
- Prospective adopters contacting the service are provided with written information about adoption within one working day.
- If prospective adopters wish to find out more, they are invited to an Adoption Information Evening. These are held every seven/eight weeks.
- Following attendance at the Information Evening, prospective adopters wishing to pursue their enquiry will be offered a counselling interview with a social worker.
- The initial counselling interview allows the prospective adopter to further explore the adoption process whilst providing the adoption service with the opportunity to determine which applicants are most likely to meet the needs of children requiring adoptive placements.
- If the Adoption Team Manager decides that the enquiry should be progressed, prospective adopters are invited to make a formal application and to attend Adoption Preparation Training. An assessment is undertaken by a qualified adoption social worker.
- If it is not possible to accept an application at that time, the prospective adopter is advised of the reasons for this decision and possible action they may wish to take such as counselling in relation to their own life experiences or extending their knowledge of the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan. If appropriate, they are given information on other adoption agencies they could approach.
- In accordance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, Bedfordshire County Council carries out statutory checks and references in relation to all applicants. These include:
  1. Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks (CRB).
  2. Six written personal references of whom at least three are visited.
  3. Employment references.
  4. Local authority checks.
  5. Medical checks.
- In addition CRB checks are taken up on any other person in the prospective adopter's household aged 16 and over.
- Once the assessment is completed it is presented to the Adoption Panel, which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, who will make a decision in relation to the approval of applicants within seven working days of the Panel recommendation. All prospective adopters are supported by a social worker

throughout their assessment and approval and throughout the process of matching and placement of a child.

- If the prospective adopters are not recommended for approval, they are able to submit further representation to the agency or apply to the Secretary of State for a review by an independent review panel. Information in relation to the independent review mechanism is available on the website: [www.irm-adoption.org.uk](http://www.irm-adoption.org.uk).
- If a child has not been placed within 12 months of the adopter's approval or if there is any significant change of circumstance the approval of the prospective adopter will be reviewed in a formal minuted meeting chaired by an Adoption Manager.
- Central Bedfordshire Council asks approved adopters to remain available for Bedfordshire children for three months after approval. If three months after approval no potential match with a child is identified, Central Bedfordshire Council will, with the adopter's consent, refer their details to the National Adoption Register ([www.adoptionregister.org.uk](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk)) and the consortium of five other neighbouring local authorities.
- Prior to any placement of a child both the adoptive family and the child's support needs will be assessed. Support plans are agreed with the adopters as part of the placement report and plans are reviewed regularly up until the time an adoption order is made.

**b) Adoption Support for adoptive parents and their children, adopted children and adults and birth relatives of adopted children and adults**

People whose lives are affected by adoption who wish to enquire about adoption support and professionals enquiring about adoption support should contact the Central Bedfordshire Adoption Duty Desk on 0300 300 8090 or write to the Team Manager, Adoption and Permanence Support, Unit 5, Franklin Court, Priory Business Park, Bedford MK44 3JZ.

The role of Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA) sits with the Head of Adoption and Fostering who is also available at the above address and telephone number. A leaflet on adoption support services in Bedfordshire is available on request.

## **6. Staffing**

In addition to the Head of Service, there is one Team Manager, a Deputy Team Manager, three full time equivalent Senior Practitioners and seven full time equivalent Social Workers.

The Managers and Social Workers are all professionally qualified with commensurate social work experience. All staff have a Personal Development Review and have an identified training plan from which training will be provided on a bespoke basis or from Bedfordshire County Council's comprehensive Learning and Development Programme.

The professionally qualified Social Work staff are supported by the equivalent of 2.5 Social Work Assistants, a dedicated part-time administrator to the contact service, and an administrative team of three staff. The Adoption & Permanence Support Team have also been committed to providing placements for Social Work students over the past three years.

The Adoption Team is further supported by the Recruitment and Retention section of the Adoption and Fostering Service which comprises a Recruitment and Retention Manager, a part-time Training Officer and 1.5 Co-ordinators.

## **7. Adoption Panel**

The Adoption Regulations require the Adoption Panel to consider the case of every child, prospective adopter, and proposed adoption placement referred to it by the adoption agency for consideration, prior to making its recommendation as to:

- 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.
- d) Whether on the information so far available a prospective adopter is unlikely to be suitable to adopt a child.
- e) Whether a prospective adopter, following review, is no longer suitable to adopt a child.

The Adoption Panel in Bedfordshire meets every month but can meet more frequently if need be. The Panel is chaired by an independent person who has considerable professional experience of adoption. In addition, there are the Head of Service for Looked After Children in Bedford Borough Council, Head of Adoption and Fostering, Team Manager of Fostering, the Medical Advisor who is an experienced Paediatrician, a Councillor, an Educational Psychologist, two adoptive parents and an adopted adult. The Agency Advisor and a Panel Secretary are also in attendance but are not panel members. Written legal advice is available to the panel from the legal advisor who on occasion may be present but is not a panel member.



## **Decisions**

The Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services makes decisions based on the Panel's recommendations. These decisions are made within seven working days of the panel meeting.

## **8. Targets for 2009/2010**

In the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 the Adoption Service aims to:

- Approve 16 new adoptive households, in accordance with the team plan.
- Ensure that 8% of children looked after for six months or more have their future legally secured through Adoption or Special Guardianship Order.
- Ensure that 100% of new adoptive applicants are considered at Panel within 8 months of application, unless there is a management decision to put the application on hold.
- Ensure that 100% of children are placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision or authority to place.
- Ensure that 100% of birth relatives whose child has a plan for adoption are informed of independent birth family member support.

## **9. Quality Monitoring**

The quality of the work of the Adoption Service is monitored at all levels through staff supervision. In addition the Agency Advisor provides scrutiny and feedback as does the Adoption Panel. Recruitment information is tracked through weekly management reports and management information is considered at fortnightly managers meetings. Regular reports are provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel. Feedback from service users is sought at regular intervals e.g. after Information Evenings, Preparation Training, Panel, Adoption Order.

In addition the Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted.

## **10. Complaints**

The Adoption Service uses the Children's Services Complaints Policy and Procedure, for dealing with and monitoring complaints by prospective adopters, adopters, birth relatives, staff and other parties with a relevant interest in the Adoption Service.

Complaints and their outcomes are recorded by the Customer Relations Department of Central Bedfordshire Council, but a central record is also kept within the Adoption Service. This is for statistical purposes and to enable the Service to respond and learn from complaints made. The Council is developing a database which will in future enable customers to make and track a complaint via the Council's website.

Complaints by children are dealt with under the Children's Services Children Act Complaints Procedure, which means a shorter time for responding to children's complaints and the provision of independent advocacy for complainants.

The Complaints Procedure has several stages: Stage 1 applies to local resolution but if this is not achieved, there are two more stages. Information on these further stages is available from the Adoption Service or from Central Bedfordshire's Customer Relations Department.

## **11. Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption**

Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption are dealt with in accordance with LSCB procedures and Central Bedfordshire procedures for managing allegations regarding such children.

## **12. Reviewing the Statement of Purpose**

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually, but may be amended at any time, in the light of major legislative or policy changes. This review will be carried out by the Head of Service of the Adoption and Fostering Service and the Team Manager for Adoption and Permanence Support. Any changes to the document will be formally approved by the Children's Services Senior Management Team and the Executive and will be notified to the Registration Authority within 28 days.

This statement of purpose will next be reviewed in April 2010.

## **13. The Registration Authority**

The Registration Authority is:

Ofsted

Royal Exchange Buildings

St. Ann's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404045

E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## 14. Contacts

For more information about Adoption in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough please contact:

The Adoption and Fostering Service  
Unit 5  
Franklin Court  
Priory Business Park  
Stannard Way  
Bedford

Tel: 0300 300 8090

For copies of the Complaints Procedure or further copies of this Statement of Purpose, please contact the Adoption Service on the contact details above.

If you wish to comment on this Statement of Purpose, on the Adoption Service or make a complaint, please contact:

Head of Service , Adoption and Fostering Service, Unit 5 Franklin Court, Priory Business Park, Bedford, MK44 3JZ Tel: 0300 300 8090.



Central Bedfordshire Council  
and Bedford Borough Council

**working together**

**Approved:**

Signed.....

**Edwina Grant  
Deputy Chief Executive and  
Director of Children, Families and Learning**

Dated.....

Signed.....

**Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis  
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services**

Dated.....