

Appendix A

Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose

1 April 2016 - 31 March 2017

Statement of Purpose
Central Bedfordshire Council - Adoption Service

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 2011, Standard 18.

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1. Background

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 2011, Standard 18.

The Adoption Service is an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.

2. Aims and Objectives

The Adoption Service recognises the life long nature of adoption with the following aims and objectives:-

Aims

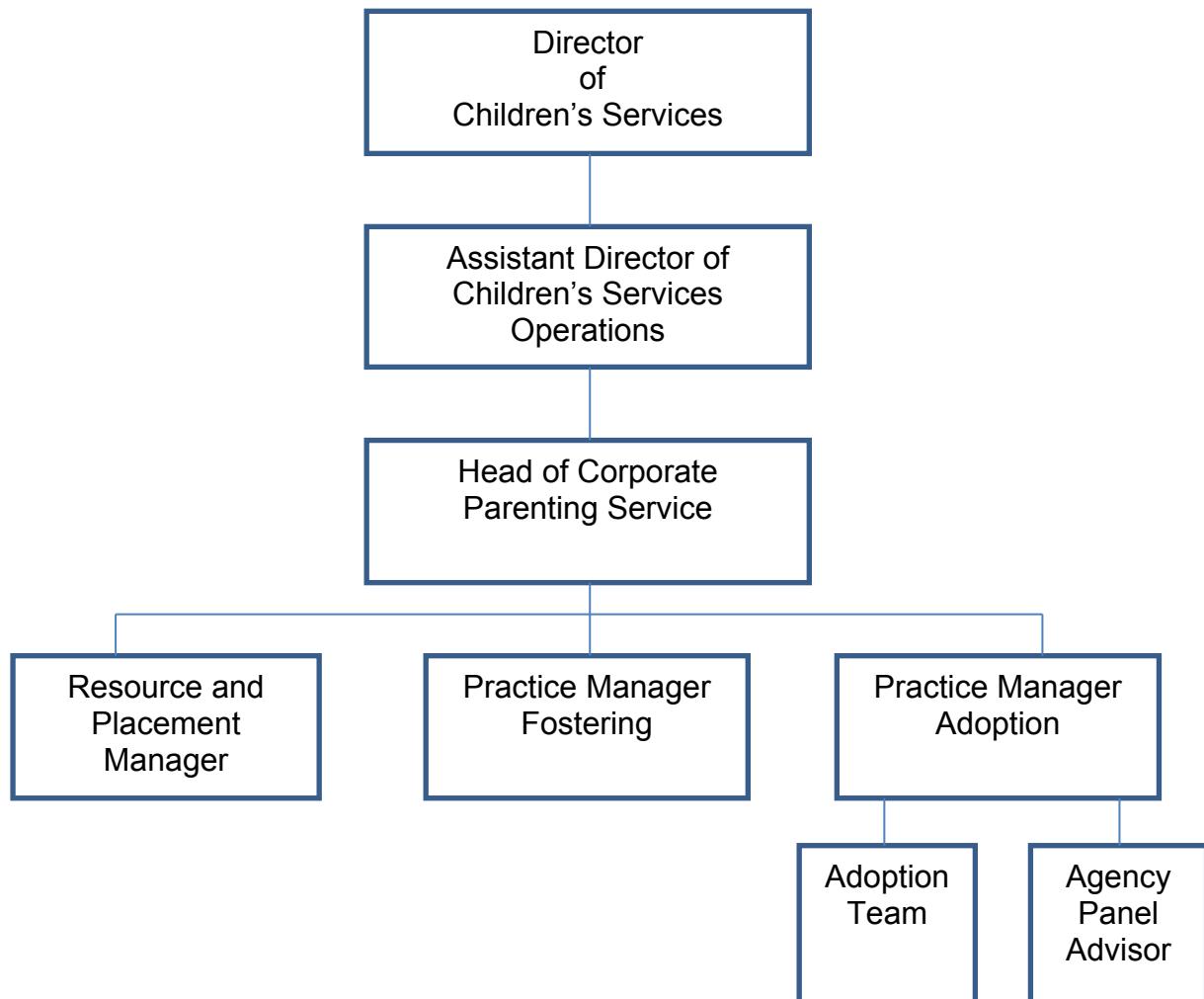
To provide adoptive placements for children who have a Care Plan for adoption and ensure early permanence is achieved.

To provide high level adoption support to ensure the placement and stability of children placed for adoption to enables them to experience good quality parenting to achieve their potential.

Objectives

- To provide a high quality adoption service for the residents of Central Bedfordshire.
- To provide a suitable and timely adoptive placement for every child with a plan for adoption.
- To ensure that recruitment of adopters is targeted to meet the needs of children requiring adoptive families.
- 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, language and identity of children are fully recognised and valued.
- To provide support services that ensure successful outcomes for children placed for adoption.
- 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 within Central Bedfordshire.
- 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 are placed for adoption by Central Bedfordshire Council.
- To ensure that the Adoption Service adheres to Adoption Regulations, National Minimum Standards Children and Families Act 2014 and best practice.

3. Management and Organisational Structure



The Registered Manager

Nickie Phillips

Central Bedfordshire Council Adoption Service, Unit 16, Stephenson Court, Priory business Park, Fraser Road , Bedford, Mk44 3WJ
Direct Dial: 0300 300 8090 Fax No. 0300 300 8255
Email: nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

HCPC registered with a recognised Social Work Qualification. Twenty years experience of Children's Services social work of which ten years have been within an Adoption Service.

Ultimate responsibility for the Adoption Service rests with the Elected Members. The Adoption Service forms part of Central Bedfordshire Council's Children's Services for which the Director of Children's Services is responsible.

The Assistant Director Operations has overall management responsibility for the Adoption Service. Operational managerial responsibility sits with the Head of the Corporate Parenting Service. The Practice Manager for the Adoption Team supervises the adoption social workers

and the Agency Panel Advisor for adoption. The Resource Team, which is managed by the Head of the Corporate Parenting Service, supports the adoption service in relation to the recruitment of adopters, publicity and communications.

4. Services Provided by Central Bedfordshire Adoption Service

The Adoption Service provides the following services:

- Providing advice 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 advice and a wide range of social work and therapeutic services.
- Training opportunities for all adopters.
- Assistance to access birth records and counselling for adult adoptees.
- Intermediary services for adults adopted through the former Bedfordshire County Council and for adopted adults living in Central Bedfordshire.
- Support to birth relatives of Central Bedfordshire children with a plan for adoption.
- A Post Adoption contact support service for all parties involved in ongoing contact
- A permanence planning, matching and family finding service for Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Social Care Teams.
- Access to counselling services for birth family members including those with a prescribed relationship.

5. Procedures

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

Central Bedfordshire Council has detailed policies and procedures for the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters. The following is a summary of the recruitment, assessment and approval process in Central Bedfordshire. This follows the two stage adopter recruitment and approval process as introduced by the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and Statutory Adoption Guidance 2013 which came into force in July 2013, as part of the Government's Adoption Reform.

- Enquirers can telephone the Service on 0300 300 8090 or email interest via the website. They can also download an information brochure from the website. The Adoption Duty Worker will gather basic information about the enquirer and answer questions about adoption to assist them to consider whether adoption is the right choice for them.

- Prospective adopters contacting the Service are provided with information about adoption within 5 working days. They are given the opportunity to meet with a social worker and attend an Information Session.
- If the enquirer submits a Registration of Interest Form, this is passed to the Adoption Practice Manager, who will consider whether or not to accept the Registration of Interest.
- If accepted the prospective adopter(s) are invited to a meeting with a member of the Adoption Team to complete a Stage One Plan (Agreement), detailing what will be expected of them and the Agency, during this stage.
- The applicant should use this time to gain childcare experience and explore the extent of their interest in and capacity for adoption, including considering whether they could offer a Fostering for Adoption placement. The Agency carries out Statutory Checks, in accordance with the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005.
- These Checks include:
 1. Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS)
 2. Three written personal references, one family member and two friends
 3. Employment references
 4. Local Authority checks
 5. Medical checks
- In addition, DBS Checks are taken up on any other person in the prospective adopter's household aged 18 and over.
- Central Bedfordshire Council will offer support to prospective adopters during Stage One as appropriate, the process being monitored by a co-ordinator within the team.
- Towards the end of Stage One, prospective adopters are offered an end of Stage One Interview in order to consider the information gained during the period including the completed checks.
- Following the end of the Stage One Interview, social workers will discuss with the Adoption Manager whether the Agency feels able to progress the application to Stage Two.
- Should the Adoption Manager decide that a prospective adopter is not suitable to adopt, either during Stage One or at the end of Stage One, they will provide the prospective adopter with a written explanation of the reasons.
- If the Adoption Manager decides that the prospective adopters can proceed to Stage Two, the case will be allocated to a Social Worker once the applicants are ready to proceed. A Stage Two Plan will be completed and the Social Worker will carry out an adopter assessment to complete the Prospective Adopter Report. The report and the decision as to the applicants' suitability to adopt should be completed within four months of the date of the Stage Two Plan.
- Applicants will be expected to attend Preparation Groups during Stage Two.
- Once the assessment is completed this will be presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation. The recommendation is then presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a final decision on the applicants' suitability to adopt. Should the Agency

Decision Maker be minded not to approve the application, prospective adopters can either make representations to the Service or to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

- The report and the decision as to the applicants' suitability to adopt should be completed within four months of the date of the Stage Two Plan.
- The Adoption Team demonstrates a positive and supportive approach towards applications to adopt from previous adopters and foster carers wishing to adopt a child in their care. These assessments will be fast tracked, with prospective adopters moving directly to Stage Two.
- Following approval, Central Bedfordshire Council will seek to place a child with the prospective adopters as soon as possible; either children in the care of the Council or nationally. This includes the active consideration of Fostering for Adoption placements alongside other adoptive placements in order to make the most suitable and timely placement for each child requiring adoption.
- Adopters for whom a match has not been identified will be referred to the National Adoption Register.
- The Adoption Team aims to provide ongoing support to adoptive families, and an adoption support plan will be drawn up before placement which identifies the likely support needs of the placement. This is then reviewed prior to the Adoption Order being granted and annually thereafter as required.
- Children in adoptive placements are reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Review helps identify when it is appropriate for an Adoption Order to be lodged by the applicants. In most cases, this would be decided by the time of the second Review. Adopters are supported by their Social Worker in making the application.

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

Central Bedfordshire Council provides a range of ongoing support to adoptive families, including family events and activity groups for adopted young people. In line with legislation, adopters for whom we are the responsible Adoption Agency can ask for an assessment of their adoption support needs.

The Adoption Support Services Advisor for Central Bedfordshire Council is Nickie Phillips who can be contacted on 0300 300 8090.

Central Bedfordshire Council provides a service to Adopted Adults and their Birth Relatives.

Details of these services can be found on our website and in the Adoption Support Leaflet which can be downloaded. A Children's Guide to Adoption Support is also available.

The Adoption Team ensures that all those seeking to adopt are fully informed as to their entitlements in regards to adoption support from the very beginning of the process. Updated information is provided upon request and via the periodic newsletters.

6. Staffing

The current complement is:

1 Practice Manager (full time)

- 1 Senior Practitioner (part time)
- 4 Social Workers (3.5 Full time equivalent)
- 1 Social Work Assistant (full time)
- 1 Business Support Officer (full time)

The Manager and Social Workers are all professionally qualified with commensurate social work experience and are registered with the HCPC. All staff have a Personal Development Review (Your Year) and have an identified training plan from which training will be provided on a bespoke basis or from Central Bedfordshire's Learning and Development Programme.

The Practice Manager for Adoption provides operational management, quality assurance, performance and budget management for the team and panel and co-ordinates the work of the team. In addition to supervising the work of the staff the manager also supervises the Adoption Panel Advisor and reports to senior managers on service activities and issues of concern.

The Adoption Agency is supported by specialist staff who work across the Adoption and Fostering Service. These include a Recruitment and Marketing Officer, a Training Coordinator, a Professional Panel Adviser and Panel Secretaries who support the Adoption Panel and the Fostering Panel.

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 prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child
- b) Whether a child should be placed for adoption with a particular prospective adopter
- c) Whether on the information so far available a prospective adopter is unlikely to be suitable to adopt a child
- d) Whether a prospective adopter, following review, is no longer suitable to adopt a child

The Adoption Panel in Bedfordshire is a joint panel for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. It meets twice per month but can meet more frequently if need be. The Panel is chaired by an independent person who has considerable professional experience of adoption. The Agency Panel Adviser and a Panel Secretary are in attendance but are non-voting members. Written legal advice is available to the panel from the Legal Adviser who on occasion may be present but is not a panel member.

Decisions about whether a child should be placed for adoption are made by the Agency Decision Maker without recourse to the Panel. The exception of this are children relinquished by consent from the parent.

Agency Decisions

The Assistant Director for Children's Services Operations is the delegated Senior Manager for Central Bedfordshire who makes the decision based on the Panel's recommendation. These decisions are made within seven working days of receipt of the minutes of the Panel meeting.

8. Quality Monitoring

The quality of the work of the Adoption Service is monitored through staff supervision. In addition, the Agency Panel Adviser provides scrutiny and feedback as does the Adoption Panel Chairperson.

Monthly Adoption tracking meetings are undertaken alongside monthly performance reporting.

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.

9. Complaints

All local authorities are required to ensure a complaints process is provided under the Children Act 1989.

All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Central Bedfordshire local and national requirements.

Complaints by children are dealt with under the Children's Services 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 2 more stages. Information on these further stages is available from the Adoption Service or from Central Bedfordshire's Customer Relations Department.

10. Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption

Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption are dealt with in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and Central Bedfordshire procedures for managing allegations.

11. 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 the Corporate Parenting Service and the Practice Manager of the Adoption Agency. Any changes to the document will be formally approved by the Director of Children's Services and the Executive Member for Children's Services and will be notified to the Registration Authority within 28 days.

This statement of purpose will next be reviewed in March 2017.

13. Arrangements for the Revision and Circulation of the Statement of Purpose

The Registered manager is responsible for the annual revision of the Statement of Purpose. Revisions may occur at other times if necessary.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be presented to the Adoption Panel annually for their consideration.

The Statement of Purpose will be available to all staff via the Councils Intranet and to members of the public via Central Bedfordshire Council.

14. The Registration Authority

The Registration Authority is:

Ofsted

Ofsted National Business Unit

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

15. Contacts

For more information about Adoption in Central Bedfordshire please contact:

Adoption Team

Corporate Parenting Service

Central Bedfordshire Council

Unit 16 Stephenson Court

Fraser Road

Priory Business Park

Bedford

MK44 3WJ

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 Corporate Parenting Service, Adoption and Fostering Service, Unit 16 Stephenson Court, Fraser Road, Priory Business Park, Bedford, MK44 3WJ

This document can be provided in large print and other languages.



Approved:

Signed.....

**Sue Harrison
Director of Children's Services**

Dated.....

Signed.....

**Cllr Carole Hegley
Executive Member for Children's Services**

Dated.....