

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

REVISION TO THE ADOPTION SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the approval for the revised Statement of Purpose for Adoption in North Lincolnshire

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Adoption Service is required by The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards (Adoption) – updated and introduced 1 April 2011 - to have in place a Statement of Purpose that is reviewed on a regular basis and updated as appropriate.
- 2.2 The Statement of Purpose is an integral component of the 3 yearly inspections of the service undertaken by OFSTED. The next inspection of the service is now due and we are awaiting notification.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Following the yearly review of the Statement of Purpose for the adoption service, revisions have been made which ensure they reflect current practice.
- 3.2 Revised and updated Adoption National Minimum Standards came into force on 1 April 2011. The Statement of Purpose has also been updated to reflect these. The new standards require the Statement of Purpose to focus on achieving positive outcomes centred around the child and focus on the importance of effective partnership working. The Statement of Purpose is now structured to reflect this and also includes how adoption links to the new Care Planning Regulations which also came into force on April 1st.
- 3.3 On 1 July 2013 new regulations in respect to assessing prospective adopters were implemented and the Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the new process.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Adoption Agency Regulations require that the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually and updated to reflect any changes in staffing, practice or procedures.
- 4.2 If the Statement of Purpose is not updated and approved as above, the service will not meet its regulatory requirements
- 4.3 To meet these requirements, the Statement of Purpose may be accepted without changes, or amendments as deemed appropriate by the cabinet member will be included in the Statement of Purpose.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Statutory - The Adoption Service operates under the regulatory framework of The Adoption and Children Act 2002, The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005, the National Minimum Standards 2011 (Adoption) and revised statutory guidance implemented in September 2012.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1 An integrated impact assessment has been completed and there are no unresolved issues.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1 Overall, the feedback received is positive with many people commenting on how easy their adoption social worker has made the process and that they have felt confident in requesting support where required. Consultation forms have been updated and there are various different consultations underway with birth families, adopters and children / young people. This will be reported upon more fully within the next six monthly business report presented to cabinet.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the revised Adoption Statement of Purpose.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Date: July 2013

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Statement of Purpose 2013 - 2014



North Lincolnshire Council
Children's Services

The Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2013 – 2014

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This information in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in other languages, in large print, Braille or on audiotape. Please phone 01724 296500 if you need any of these or any other help to access North Lincolnshire's services.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This document is produced in compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 and the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005 and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 and the Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulation's 2011 and 2012.

All information is correct as at 30th April 2013 and has been approved by North Lincolnshire Council elected members.

This document will be revised annually. Significant in year changes will be put in writing to the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

The Adoption Service delivers an adoption service on behalf of North Lincolnshire Council. All involved in delivering permanency for children, work together as a team around the child. The aim is to provide permanent care for children at the earliest opportunity and in a timely manner. The views, wishes and feelings of children, their families and carers are integral to this and are taken into account throughout. The Adoption Service is registered with;

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North Lincolnshire Council believes that family care is the best provision of alternative care for most children or young people who become looked after by the Local Authority. It has therefore invested in the development and expansion of its family placement provision including investment in the Adoption Service.

The Adoption Service has highly experienced workers who promote high standards and best practice in delivering all areas of this service. We continually strive to improve our practice and increase our learning and knowledge. Our Adoption Service in North Lincolnshire works in partnership to achieve legal permanence for children. We work very closely with colleagues in the case management teams, our partner agencies across North Lincolnshire and within the Yorkshire and Humber Adoption Business Consortium.

We are as ambitious for our children and young people as we would be our own, where we listen to them, champion their rights and enable our children to have

access to a stable home, a first class education, opportunities for further learning and employment, experience good health, have swift access to services they require and most importantly to enjoy life safe from harm in safe, stable, permanent placements.

North Lincolnshire Council has agreed with its partners a vision for all children and young people living in North Lincolnshire a vision for all children and young people living in North Lincolnshire and this vision is expressed through the North Lincolnshire's Children's Trust and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and the Council's Striving for Excellence Improvement plan.

2. FOCUS ON OUTCOMES THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN (CYPP) AND STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE PLAN

The North Lincolnshire Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) sets out the strategic direction for the transformation of services for children, young people and their families or carers in North Lincolnshire. It sets out the Children's Trust vision for the future, the values and principles as well as key priorities. The vision, values and key priorities are a major component part of the golden thread running through our adoption service.

North Lincolnshire Children's Trust is a partnership of professionals from all agencies, who work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. The Children's Trust vision is one of **"Safe Children, Supported Families, Transformed Lives"**

North Lincolnshire Children's Trust has identified six strategic priorities, which are reflected in the Children and Young People's plan. The six priorities are:-

- Raise Aspirations
- Children and Young People Feel Safe and are Safe
- Best Start
- Close the Gap
- Celebrate and Engage Children and Young People
- One Vision One Workforce

North Lincolnshire Council introduced a Striving for Excellence Improvement Plan for the People Directorate. This identified a number of six key priorities. These include:

- Safeguard and Protect
- Close the Gaps
- Raise Aspirations
- Prevention and Early Intervention

- Enhance Well Being
- Support Independent Living

A number of improvements have been achieved and includes:-

- An increase of 4% for children achieving a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage.
- An increase in the percentage of pupils at Key Stage 2 making two levels of progress in English and Maths
- An increase of 7% for pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSE grades including English and Maths.
- An increase of 13% for pupils achieving 5 or more A*-G GCSE or equivalent
- An increase in the number of young people aged 16-19 years starting an apprenticeship from 44 to 424 in 2011
- Performance in the suite of National Indicators relating to social care has been consistently in the upper quartile and includes initial and core assessments being completed within timescales, stability of looked after children in placement, children placed for adoption within timescales, and child protection & children looked after reviews being held within timescales. Fewer children and young people are becoming subject to a second or subsequent child protection plan.
- An anti-bullying tool kit for schools has been produced and distributed survey undertaken found that there has been a reduction in reports of bullying in the autumn term of 2010.
- Learning outcomes for children in care has improved
- The educational achievement of young people with special educational needs has improved
- There has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people with disabilities accessing a wide variety of short breaks provision.
- There is now a single duty team in place for professionals and the public to access locality preventative/targeted services and child protection services.
- There is a safer recruitment strategy in place which ensures that all employees are DBS checked and these are renewed every 2 years and all staff are required to undertake child protection training.

The improvement priorities for 2011 – 12 as detailed in the Striving for Excellence Improvement Plan are as follows and are embedded in our aims and objectives:-

Strategic Priority	Action focus	
Raise Aspirations	1	Raise standards in attainment at primary phase (KS2) and secondary phase (KS4) As identified from our self assessment and the Children's Service Assessment letter
	2	Improve inspection outcomes for primary and secondary schools As identified from our self assessment and in our Ofsted Performance Profile
Children and young people feel safe and are safe	3	To remodel the common assessment (early intervention process) in line with Munro recommendations
Best Start	4	Improve inspection outcomes for childminders As identified in our Ofsted Performance Profile
Close the gaps	5	Improve the education progress/attainments of children in care As identified from our self assessment or our previous improvement plan
	6	Closing the gaps between the attainment of vulnerable learners and their peers at post 16 level 3 As identified from our self assessment and our Children's Service Assessment letter
Celebrate and engage children and young people	7	To improve service provision to and case management of young offenders so that more achieve a positive outcome As identified in the outcome of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation Inspection
One Vision One Workforce	8	To review and redesign professional development to underpin implementation of a single and child centred system As a requirement of National policy development

3. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

North Lincolnshire Council's Adoption Service shares the values and principles that underpin the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and are reflected in the Department for Education's document "An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay" published in March 2012. These can be summarised as follows:

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are paramount and central to all aspects of the adoption process.
- 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 should be actively sought and taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delay for children waiting to be adopted can be seriously detrimental to their health and development.
- A sense of identity is an important part of their well-being. As such, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be recognized and positively promoted.
- The needs of disabled children and those with complex needs are fully recognized and taken into account.
- Inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family for those children who cannot be appropriately cared for in their country of origin.
- Children, birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive families will be valued and respected.
- Successful outcomes for children require a genuine and effective partnership between the Government, local authorities, Voluntary Adoption agencies (VAA's) and Adoption Support Agencies.
- Adoption is a life-long process for children, adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. To reflect this, information and services must be provided to take account of the different or specific needs of all parties. Similarly, and with regard to decision making due account should be taken of their wishes and views.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity and confidentiality protected as well as their right to decide whether to enter into direct or indirect contact or communication with birth relatives.

We are currently working to the National Adoption Charter. This Charter outlines what we will do to support children and young people going through adoption as well as what are expected from adoptive parents. It is as follows;

Children Come First

- Adoption is first and foremost a service for children and young people who cannot live with their birth family. Children and young people will be helped to understand what adoption means and will be supported throughout the adoption journey and beyond by experienced professionals.
- Adoption is a life-changing decision that affects the child, and his or her birth and adoptive families. It must be made with the child's best interests, wishes, feelings and needs at its heart and on the basis of sound evidence and high quality assessments.

North Lincolnshire Adoption Service will:

- Ensure that the children and young people are placed, with siblings wherever possible, within a timescales that is best for them and without unnecessary delay.
- Treat prospective adopters and adopters with openness, fairness and respect.
- Make prospective adopters' first points of contact informative and welcoming.
- Approach adopter recruitment in the spirit of inclusiveness with a view to identifying potential and opportunity –no-one will be automatically excluded.
- Recruit prospective adopters who can meet all or most of the needs of children and young people waiting for, or likely to need, adoption and signpost prospective adopters to other agencies if there is insufficient local demand.
- Explain to prospective adopters the needs and profiles of the children and young people waiting to be adopted.
- Ensure preparation and training, the home study assessment and approval processes are explained and proceed efficiently.
- Regularly review progress on matching with prospective adopters, and inform them about the Adoption Register and refer them to this within required timescales.
- Provide adopters and prospective adopters with information, counselling and support, as and when needed, throughout the adoption journey and beyond.
- Provide prospective adopters with information about the Independent Review Mechanism.
- Work in partnership, and with other agencies and the Courts, to ensure that all decisions are timely and joined up.

Adoptive Parents must:

- Be aware that adoption often brings challenges as well as joy, be realistic about the needs of children and young people awaiting adoption, and accept that with support they may be able to consider adopting a child with a different profile to the child they originally envisaged adopting.
- Make the most of opportunities to develop their parenting skills, and seek support when needed at the earliest stage.
- Do all they can to enable their adopted child to feel loved and secure and to reach their full potential.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

Aims of the service

North Lincolnshire Council Adoption Service is committed to delivering a range of high quality adoption services. These services recognise the life-long impact of adoption for all parties concerned and will meet the needs of children, birth families, prospective adopters, adoptive families, adopted adults and significant others affected by adoption.

Where it is not possible or safe for children to be brought up within their own family we will work with everyone concerned to help the child to move on to a permanent and stable alternative family. Adoption is seen as a positive means of providing stability and permanence for children who cannot live within their birth family.

A range of pre and post Adoption Support services will be provided by North Lincolnshire Children's Services and partner agencies.

We will ensure that children feel safe and are safe and that they understand how to protect themselves. The safety and protection of children will be promoted and addressed through the functions of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), effective multi-agency working and clear procedures in line with 'Working Together' guidance 2013. Safer Recruitment practices and regular child protection training for staff, volunteers and adoption panel members will all be integral to our safeguarding strategy.

We will also prepare and support prospective adopters to help children keep themselves safe when using the Internet or social media. In addition, we will apply our health and safety policy/checklist as part of our assessment and post placement responsibilities to eliminate or minimise preventable accidents or risks posed both in the home environment and wider community.

We will promote the physical, social development and emotional well-being of children by ensuring they have prompt access to relevant services including specialist health services when required. Children and young people will be given regular opportunities to attend health assessment days.

The preparation and assessment of prospective adopters covers both children's generic or basic health needs and particular needs resulting from children's experiences of past trauma, abuse and neglect. Implications for re-parenting children with developmental delay and attachment problems are fully explored.

Following receipt of the regulations supporting the new framework of assessing prospective adopters, we will be updating our procedures in line with the two-stage process outlined within the Adoption Action Plan.

Where a family has been identified for a child the prospective adopters are provided with full and detailed information regarding the child's health. They will also have the opportunity to meet with medical professionals. Thereafter, the child's health needs are addressed as a key part of the adoption support plan or where there is an

assessment for adoption support services post adoption. In certain cases referrals are made to the CAMHS service who, subject to their criteria and assessments, will undertake work with adoptive children and/or their families in partnership with Children's Services.

The objectives of the services are:

1. To place the welfare, safety, voice and needs of children at the centre of the adoption process.
2. To ensure that the child's needs take precedence over those of anyone else in the process.
3. To ensure that for children where adoption is identified as the appropriate care plan we work together with all others involved in the child's life to ensure that this happens without delay. This is achieved through early intervention, timely decision making, and effective planning with regard to relevant timescales as set out in National Minimum standards as well as Chapter eight of statutory adoption practice guidance 2011. Children with a plan of adoption are referred to the adoption service early to enable initial family finding to begin before intensive work commences once a Placement Order is made by the court.

Our approach is underpinned by children's and adoption teams working closely together, performance reporting and monitoring processes that review family finding activity, the assessed needs of children and identifies specific additional steps to be taken in order to secure a suitable adoptive or permanent placement. Throughout we will remain mindful of each child's stage of development and 'time in the life of the child'.

4. To ensure that each child who receives a service from the Adoption Service is provided with the opportunity, through the care offered by their adoptive family, through the support of North Lincolnshire Children's Services and partner agencies, to develop to their full potential and achieve positive outcomes in terms of their safety, education, health, leisure activities, and self-esteem and identity.
5. To actively promote the educational achievement of children in partnership with prospective adopters. This is achieved through the implementation of our broad education policy - 'Creating Success for Children in Care', together with our priority to raise aspirations and attainment, as outlined in North Lincolnshire's 'Children and Young People in Care Strategy'.
6. To help children to develop a positive self-esteem, emotional resilience and knowledge of their background as a means of supporting and valuing their diversity and identity needs. We recognise that achieving these outcomes demand a clear focus on the specific individual needs of children coupled with an awareness of the life-long nature of adoption and being an adopted person. Some of the main elements of this are:

- high quality assessments and child permanence reports, which are quality assured by the Adoption Service Manager before being presented to the adoption panel and/or agency decision maker;
- a commitment to the careful preparation of children through direct work and keeping children informed throughout the adoption process;
- the creation of Life Story books coordinated by the child's social worker who also provides a Later in Life Letter;
- preparation of prospective adopters;
- contact plans that are based on the assessed needs of the child, and reviewed over time taking into account the wishes and views of adopters.

The voice of children in care and/or adopted is critical to achieving the best possible outcomes for them. We are therefore committed to listening to children and to taking their views, wishes and feelings into account when making decisions on their behalf. We have developed a range of consultation and participation processes to ensure that all children are consulted, unless by virtue of their age – for example a baby or infant - and level of understanding makes ascertaining their views, wishes and feelings not possible.

A variety of methods or approaches are used to establish children's views including play or direct work, questionnaires, and interviews. Where children are disabled and are unable to express their views and feelings verbally or in writing we ensure that they have access to other means of communication such as IT or through a specialist professional who possesses the requisite communication skills.

Children are also made aware of how they can access advocacy and are also given advice with regard to contacting the Children's Right's Director and Ofsted.

7. To recruit or locate sufficient numbers of prospective adopters to match the wide range of individual needs of North Lincolnshire children requiring adoption. North Lincolnshire Council celebrates diversity and will not act in a discriminatory manner in relation to issues of age, gender, sexuality, disability, race or religion. The needs of individual children are considered as paramount and each case is considered on the basis of how individual children's needs can be best met. No child will be left waiting indefinitely for a 'perfect match'. We seek to ensure that we recruit the "right" adopters who can reflect the needs of children in our local community and who have the potential to address the needs of all of our children.

Where in-house adopters are not available we utilise the Yorkshire and Humber Adoption Consortium and the National Adoption Register without delay. Where this proves fruitless a variety of other publicity avenues are used such as Be My Parent, Children Who Wait and country wide circulars. Once children are placed we continue to provide a high level of support to the adopters and the child providing a range of after adoption support.

We ensure that all enquiries concerning adoption are dealt with promptly. All prospective adopters are welcomed and treated with respect. They are provided with clear written information and good quality preparation training. They are assessed fairly and thoroughly against their ability to provide safe and appropriate care and commitment to a child for life.

8. To value and respect birth families wishes and feelings and to take account of their views when planning for their child's adoption.

9. To help birth families maximise the contribution they can make to promoting and preserving their child's heritage and sense of identity. We recognise the specific needs of birth families in the adoption process and provide or help access services which take account of their feelings of loss and grief.

10. To value and respect the role of adoptive parents by maintaining informal links and helping to deliver a range of appropriate support services in response to assessed needs.

1. To work in partnership with education professionals, health professionals and other organisations to develop and deliver informed, responsive and effective support services to all parties affected by adoption. These services should reflect the lifelong implications of adoption. Within North Lincolnshire, we have an excellent partnership with the local CAMHS.

Our Adoption Support Plans always include information about children's needs and how we believe they can best be addressed. We work strongly in partnership with adopters particularly where children have been identified as having therapeutic needs. In conjunction with local Health commissioners we commission special services and packages of care beyond local provision in other areas to address their needs if this is required.

5. PERFORMANCE OF THE SERVICE

Children

The number of adoption orders has increased gradually and reached 14 in both 2011/12 and 2012/13. Predictions for 2013/14 indicate that 20 adoption orders should be granted. This is measured nationally as a % of those children ceasing to be looked after in the same year. In 2010/11 this was 11% but had risen to 19.4% in 2011/12, with a slight increase to 19.7% in 2012/13. We are already performing above the England (13%) average and compare well with the Statistical Neighbour (18%) and Yorkshire & Humber region (17%) averages. The 2008-11 3 year average was 12%. This has increased to 15% for 2009-12 and 16.7% for 2010-13. 2009-12 performance was running better than the England average of 12%. This ranked North Lincolnshire at 39 in England, an improvement from 77 for the 2008-11 data.

In respect to the average time between a child entering care and moving in with it's adoptive family we continue to perform within the thresholds set by the Adoption Scorecard. The 2008-11 3 year average was 597 days. This increased slightly to 612 days for the 2009-12 3 year average but remained under the threshold of 639 days. It was below the England average of 636 days and SN average of 622 days. This ranked North Lincolnshire at 71 in England. Within the Yorkshire and Humber region the average for 2009-12 was 613 days, with an average ranking across the region of 67. Data for 2012/13 gives an average of 547 days based on the 14 adoption orders granted. This reduces the 3 year average to 588 days, remaining below the

threshold of 639 days. We predict that 20 adoption orders will be granted in 2013/14. The average for these children would be around 485 days, resulting in a 3 year average for 2011-14 of around 544 days, just below the new threshold.

Adopters

There were 10 approvals of adopters and 8 matches of North Lincolnshire Adopters in 2012/13. The approvals took an average of 5.8 months from application to approval. All were completed within 8 months of application. Matches took an average of 2.6 months from adopter's approval until matching. All were matched within 5 months of approval.

Action planning for continued improvement

North Lincolnshire Council has been at the forefront of developing a business model in relation to the operation of the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium which includes 15 Local Authorities and 2 independent adoption agencies and from April 2012 became the provider authority responsible for managing and coordinating the business and activities of the consortium on behalf of all of the member local authorities and agencies. This approach will increase collaboration on the recruitment of adopters across the region and to the benefit of all local authority members.

The Adoption Service seeks to continue to improve its performance. The service has its own on-going improvement plan 2013 / 2014. We have identified a number of areas to further improve the service, these include:

- Increase the number of adoptive carers recruited by the service
- Continue to improve the timescales by which children are placed with adoptive carers
- Ensure compliance with the government's Action Plans for Adoption
- Continue to ensure compliance with the adoption NMS and regulations

In recognition of the adoption reform agenda there has been considerable investment in the Adoption Service with the creation of a Service Manager post which was formally appointed to in January 2013. An experienced Agency Adoption Social Worker has created additional capacity for the Adoption Service. Two further Adoption Social Worker posts have been created and interviews are to be held July 2013.

Pilot Ofsted Inspection of the Adoption Service, November 2011

A pilot Ofsted Inspection of the Adoption Service took place at the end of November 2011. North Lincolnshire was chosen to pilot the new inspection process undertaken by Ofsted as part of their development of a revised framework for inspecting adoption services.

The key changes in the draft inspection framework were:

- A significant reduction in notice given before an Inspection to 10 working days. This is aimed at giving inspectors 'as true a picture as possible of the provision'.

- Ofsted making judgements under five headings: *outcomes for children; safety of children; quality of provision; leadership and management; and overall effectiveness*. Consideration of how well a service promotes equality and values diversity is also key in each area.
- Involving children directly and routinely in the inspection of adoption services and continuing, where possible to meet with birth parents.
- Ofsted will also report on how well agencies do in ensuring the timely and effective identification of children for whom adoption is the right option and the approval and placement of children with adoptive families, helping make sure the process is as smooth and quick as possible.

Although this was not a statutory inspection, it was undertaken following the full process and was undertaken by 2 inspectors to measure the authority against the newly developed framework.

The service was judged to be 'Good' with some features close to 'Outstanding'. Among the comments made in their report, the inspectors described the adoption service as:

- '...a flexible service which places the child at the centre of decision- making',
- '...efficiency in early identification of children whose plan may be adoption, robust planning and monitoring of plans',
- 'robust family finding and matching ensures that children are placed without delay'.

The inspectors made no requirements. They made 3 recommendations to further enhance practice. These recommendations have been implemented and inform the on-going children in care action plan. Ofsted inspectors at the inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children during April 2012 confirmed that the recommendations have been addressed and incorporated into practice.

A number of actions have been taken in response to these recommendations and to ensure the service continues to develop and improve. The recommendation and actions taken are as follows:

- *Ensure that feedback is sought from service users and partner agencies, on the success of the service provision (NMS 15.6)*

As a result of consultation and participation events in September 2012 the service has developed a list of experienced adopters who are available to act as mentors or 'buddies' for new adopters.

The service has also produced a newsletter and developed activity sessions for adopted children.

The service has a number of processes in place to gather feedback, it now ensures that this information is routinely collated and will be reported into the Quarterly Performance Review.

- *Ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the agency (NMS 25.1).*

Feedback from the inspectors was that the service effectively gathered performance information, but that greater analysis would enable the information to be used more effectively.

A full analysis of the care population was undertaken in January 2012. This enabled an analysis of entrants to care, an enhanced understanding of the progression of strategies in achieving permanence planning and helped in a clear understanding of the newly developed adoption scorecard.

The information team now publishes a monthly analysis of adoption information and indicators. This provides a full analysis of the key information relating to adoption and achieving permanence for children. It helps inform service developments and provides a clear picture of the service in comparison to previous periods, national comparators and like authorities. Six weekly Adoption Cohorts meetings are held with Senior Management to monitor performance against the Adoption Scorecard and to ensure positive outcomes for children by way of early identification and intervention and prompt action to ensure that there is no delay for children who require a permanent placement. We measure our success in achieving positive outcomes for children in the following ways;

1. By meeting the thresholds set by the Adoption Scorecard.
2. Ensuring that there is robust matching which leads to successful placements minimising the risk of disruption. Positive outcome measured by way of no placement disruptions. In 2012 – 2013 we experienced no adoption disruptions.
3. By considering the feedback we receive from children and young people, adopters, birth families and partner agencies and using this to develop the Adoption Service.
4. That every child placed for adoption has a clear plan of post adoption contact and rationale for this. Every child has a contact file post placement.

- *Ensure that entries in records are appropriate, up to date and contribute to an understanding of the child's life (NMS 27)*

This was in relation to a specific record. The information has been fed back to the relevant teams and is now incorporated into management oversight and quality assurance processes for all reports relating to adoption.

To ensure a high quality service is maintained the Service Manager is now monitoring performance against the Ofsted grade descriptors on a quarterly basis.

6. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Preparation for Adoption

North Lincolnshire Council recognises the importance of sensitive and age appropriate preparation for children to enable them to successfully move on to their adoptive placement. The primary responsibility for preparing a child for adoption rests with the child's social worker. However, foster carers, health service professionals, fostering social workers, adoption social workers and birth family members can assist the social worker in this task.

Family Finding & Matching

Children referred for adoption are allocated an adoption social worker to act as a family finder. The family finder has a number of key responsibilities in respect of the child: -

- To consider the specific needs of the child, so that an appropriate family can be sought which most closely matches those needs.
- To offer support, advice and assistance to the social worker, and significant others, including foster carers and birth family members, in preparing the child and supporting them throughout the adoption process.
- To speedily identify a suitable adoptive family through a range of family finding activities which are carried out concurrently and include the use of the regional consortium for Yorkshire and Humber as well as the national adoption register and publicity.
- To work alongside the child's social worker in carrying out thoroughly all the preparatory tasks prior to presenting any proposed match to the North Lincolnshire's Adoption Panel.
- To take a lead role in the planning of introductions of the child to prospective adopters to ensure a successful transfer.
- To review, with others, the placement.
- To work with the child's social worker to prepare a report for Court in relation to the Adoption hearing.

Whilst North Lincolnshire Council will seek, where appropriate to place children with adoptive families approved by the Council, family finding activity will be vigorous and designed to minimise delay in placement.

Where suitable adoptive placements are unavailable either locally or through the consortium, North Lincolnshire Council will consider possible families generated by the National Adoption Register, BAAF's 'Be My Parent', 'Children Who Wait' and make use of a wide variety of family finding methods and mediums. These include

the circulation of profiles via secure email, telephone contact with other local authorities and VAA's and exchange days across the country.

Information and Support

North Lincolnshire Council is committed to ensuring that children are provided with information and support throughout the adoption process.

All children, allowing for age and understanding, are provided with a copy of the Children's Guide, once a decision has been taken that adoption is the plan or when appropriate. This guide summarises the stages of the adoption process and provides information regarding making complaints as well as how to access an independent advocate.

Children will also be given information about prospective adopters who have been identified for them. This information will take the form of photograph albums, or DVD recordings.

After the placement has been made, if appropriate, the child may receive indirect information from their birth family, via the council's Adoption Contact Letterbox Service. All letterbox arrangements are child focused and must be in the child's best interests. The system, which is administered by the Adoption Service, passes information between birth family members and children (or adopters acting on behalf of children). The type of information passed on, together with the frequency of exchange, are set out in a written agreement which all parties sign and are expected to adhere to.

The child's needs for adoption support services are assessed at different stages of the adoption process. These are as follows: -

- Where North Lincolnshire Council is considering adoption for the child.
- Where it is proposed that a child be placed with particular prospective adopters.
- When a child is matched with an adoptive family support plans are put in place.
- Where a child's placement for adoption is being reviewed.

Examples of adoption support services provided for children include: -

- Information, advice and counselling.
- Therapeutic services.
- Support for contact arrangements between adoptive children and birth relatives.
- Financial support.
- Social Events for Adoptive families.

- Group meetings for adopted children.
- Newsletters.

Where children are being provided with adoption support they are provided with a copy of the 'Children's Guide to Adoption Support' appropriate to their age. This guide is also available to other adopted children who may wish to seek adoption support at any time.

The support needs of any child placed for adoption by North Lincolnshire will also be assessed following a request from the child or the adoptive parent(s) for up to three years after the making of an adoption order. For adopted children who live within North Lincolnshire, adoption support assessments will be made upon request at any point unless their placing authority continues to be responsible for three years after the making of an adoption order.

Any support plan may make reference to other services such as those provided by education or health professionals. These services will, therefore, be consulted in the preparation of the plan.

The primary goal of the provision of adoption support services is to ensure the continuance or success of adoptive placements.

Examples of adoption support services for children include: -

- Information, advice and counselling.
- Therapeutic services.
- Support for contact arrangements between adoptive children and birth relatives.
- Financial support.

7. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

Recruitment

No person has an automatic right to become approved as an adopter. It is recognised, however, that people with a range of experiences and from a wide range of backgrounds, with varied personal circumstances, can be effective and loving adoptive parents.

The Council will not act in a discriminatory manner in relation to issues of gender, sexuality, disability, race, religion, marital or employment status. Applicants will not be excluded on the grounds of age, health or other factors except for certain criminal convictions.

All applicants are assessed on their ability to care for children, through adoption, safely, effectively and in a way that will enable them to develop to their full potential and achieve positive outcomes.

North Lincolnshire Council reserves the right to prioritise, at certain times those applicants most likely to match the specific needs of children in need of adoption in North Lincolnshire and regionally.

An on-going recruitment strategy and programme of events is in place for the recruitment of prospective adopters to meet the needs of children who require adoption. We also aim to raise the profile of the Adoption Service. This work will be further enhanced through the appointment of a dedicated Communications Officer for the Fostering and Adoption Service.

Recruitment Activities include the following;

- Investment in dedicated Communications Officer Post
- Advertising in Local Newspapers
- Attendance at Community Events
- A sponsored roundabout in central Scunthorpe
- Information Events
- Posters in the local community, for example; GP surgeries, libraries, community centres, supermarkets and other strategic points within the community.
- Revamped Adoption specific pages on North Lincolnshire Council's website
- Ongoing recruitment activity within the Consortium

Prospective adopters in North Lincolnshire will receive a service that responds to their interest in adoption promptly, fairly, openly and with respect.

Prior to the 1st July 2013 the adoption process in North Lincolnshire was as described below;

Prospective adopters are supplied with high quality written information about adoption within five days of their enquiry.

Following their enquiry, the prospective adopters are visited at home by an adoption social worker. This provides an opportunity for them to further explore their interest in adoption and learn about the assessment as well as the types of children in need of adoption.

Where the authority believes the enquirers are suitable and ready for the process of assessment, the prospective adopters will then be invited to submit a formal application to be assessed as adoptive parents.

On receipt of this application the local authority will undertake certain checks and references including:

- DBS Check
- Local Authority Checks
- Identity Checks and Right to Work in UK
- Three Personal References
- Checks with NSPCC and Probation
- Employment checks
- Education
- Home Health and Safety Assessment
- Medical Assessment

The purpose of these checks and enquiries is to reassure North Lincolnshire Council that there are no factors that prevent someone from adopting, for example – having a criminal offence against children.

A full medical health assessment is required for anyone who wants to adopt. Prospective adopters need not be in perfect health, but do need to be medically fit enough to parent a child through to adulthood.

Preparation

North Lincolnshire Council provides prospective adopters with a comprehensive preparation course. This is delivered in partnership with a neighbouring local Authority. The programme utilises materials and exercises from 'Preparing to Adopt' - a course devised by BAAF (British Association for Adoption & Fostering). Prospective adopters are also given the opportunity to meet with experienced adopters and an adopted young person in order to learn from their experiences.

The aim of the course is to equip prospective adopters with an understanding of the complexities that are often associated with adoption. The preparation course is a vital part of the process of raising awareness and informing prospective adopters of the challenges and difficulties as well as the rewards of adoption. In this way prospective adopters are helped to make informed decisions about whether they can make the lifelong commitment of adoption.

Prospective adopters are expected to attend the whole course.

Courses are regularly evaluated and reviewed incorporating feedback from participants.

Home Study Assessment

Following completion of the Preparation to Adopt course applicants are allocated an adoption social worker to work with them on the Home Study Assessment and complete the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR).

The home study consists of a series of interviews usually carried out in the home of the applicants. North Lincolnshire Council uses the BAAF Prospective Adopter's Report format and guidance for gathering a range of information about applicants, their lifestyle and their capacity to parent a child via adoption. Applicants are invited to contribute by completing self assessment exercises and providing evidence of their own knowledge and skills. The assessment is evidence based and is about ensuring that applicants are equipped to meet the needs of children through adoption. Among the issues under assessment are: -

- The applicants' ability to build and sustain close relationships.
- The stability and resilience of any marriage or partnership.
- The capacity of each prospective adopter to look after an adopted child in a safe and responsible way, which will meet the child's changing developmental needs over time.
- The ability to acknowledge and understand how past events or experiences have impacted on the child and the actual or likely implications for parenting.
- The applicants' ability to acknowledge and understand how a child's feelings towards being adopted may change over time.
- The applicants' ability to acknowledge and value the child's birth heritage.
- How the applicants own personalities, past experiences and relationships have shaped their personality and attitudes and the implications of these for adoptive parenting.
- The quality of support networks and the applicant's attitude to using support and guidance.

Approval

Following the assessment, the Adoption Social Worker will write a detailed Prospective Adopters Report using a nationally agreed format BAAF form PAR outlining the applicants' history, current circumstances and assessed strengths and vulnerabilities as prospective adopters. A recommendation about their suitability to adopt will be made reflecting the assessment information.

Prospective adopters will receive a copy of the assessment report before it is presented to the Council's Adoption Panel and will have at least ten days to comment on, amend or challenge the contents of the report.

Prospective adopters are invited to attend the Adoption Panel which considers their application, along with their adoption social worker, to answer questions about their application. The panel will make a recommendation and a decision will be made by the agency decision maker.

There will still be some prospective adopters who will be working within the above process as their assessments are ongoing and have not been completed prior to the 1st July 2013.

From the 1st July 2013 new regulations supporting the new framework of assessing prospective adopters are to be implemented. There will be a change to the above adoption process described introducing a new, shorter two stage approval process for prospective adopters. The aim of this process is to enable prospective adopters to learn about adoption within the first stage and then move through the approval process. The new approval process will be 6 months in total with Stage One taking 2 months and Stage Two taking 4 months. There is also a new fast track process for some previous adopters and approved foster carers.

Pre-Assessment Information Stage

The Adoption Services receives enquiries by telephone, email or by web enquiries.

A Duty Officer is available during normal office hours (Monday to Friday) to respond to any enquiries.

Enquiries will be followed up within 24 hours via telephone contact and with the information booklet being sent the same day either by email or post.

Follow up contact will be made within 5 working days and where enquirers request further information this will progress to a referral and an initial visit will take place within five working days (unless enquirer is unable to do so). A Registration of Interest form will be completed and submitted to the Adoption Service. Within 5 working days of receipt of the registration of interest form the decision will be made by the Adoption Service as to whether it proceeds or not. A letter will be sent notifying of the decision.

Upon decision being made to proceed then an Adoption Social Worker will be allocated and prospective adopter begins Stage One.

Where the Adoption Service declines registration a written explanation is provided and will refer to other agency where appropriate.

Stage One – Initial Preparation / Training Prospective Adopter-led

Stage One begins when the agency accepts a prospective adopter's registration of interest. This stage should take no longer than 2 months. At Stage One the Adoption Service and prospective adopter will produce a written agreement which will set out the responsibilities of them both.

Within Stage One police and health checks will be undertaken. The prospective adopters will need to give names of three referees, two of whom cannot be related to them. The Adoption Service will interview each referee and make a written report of the interviews with them.

During Stage One 'Self Learning Packs' will be given to support the adopter-led learning. A workshop will also be held which will go through the adoption process (Stage Two of the assessment process, approval, matching and placement). There will also be the opportunity to learn from experienced adopters and adoptees. More information will be given about the children waiting for adoptive placements.

Within the above the Adoption Social Worker will explore with the prospective adopter the preparation and learning style most suited to them and support / adaptations can be made.

The Adoption Service will inform the prospective adopter of their decision at the end of Stage One and explain that they must tell the Agency if they wish to proceed to Stage Two within 6 months of the decision. A prospective adopter is able to take a break of up to 6 months between Stage One and Two.

Stage Two – Agency-led Intensive Training / preparation and assessment

Stage Two of the Adoption Process will not begin until a prospective adopter has completed Stage One and have notified the Adoption Service that they want to proceed to Stage Two.

Stage Two should take 4 months and is about intensive training and assessment. The Adoption Service and prospective adopter need to create an assessment plan; this will detail for example, the assessment process, dates of meetings / visits and agreed training. The Adoption Social Worker will guide prospective adopters through this process.

Stage Two ends when the Adoption Service decides whether the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a looked after child. The Adoption Service will provide the prospective adopter with a copy of the report and invite them to send observations on the report within 5 working days. The report then goes before the Adoption Panel. Once the Panel have met the Agency Decision Maker will make the decision.

Agency Decision

Suitable to adopt: Where the prospective adopter is approved the agency should inform them about the role of the adoption register and refer them as soon as possible, no later than 3 months.

Unsuitable to adopt: The prospective adopter has the right to request an independent review. The agency must provide a letter detailing their full reasons. The prospective adopter has 40 days to make representation to the agency.

Stage Two ends when the decision is made about whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt. Where an adopter is approved they will then be matched with a child. This will be a time of reflection for the prospective adopter to consider the characteristics of the children they feel able to parent.

Information about North Lincolnshire Adoption Panel

The Adoption Panel has three key functions in relation to children and families, it must consider:

- From 1st September 2012 - children where a Placement Order will be required are no longer being presented to the Adoption Panel and will, instead, be presented directly to the Agency Decision Maker.
- The case of the prospective adopter referred to it by North Lincolnshire, and make a recommendation as to whether the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt.
- The proposed placement referred to it by North Lincolnshire, and make a recommendation as to whether the child should be placed for adoption with particular prospective adopter(s).

The recommendation of the panel is then passed to the 'Decision-Maker' for a final decision to be made. In North Lincolnshire this is the Assistant Director (Children's Services).

The panel is made up of professional and lay people, who have knowledge or experience of adoption through their work or their personal lives. The Panel is chaired by an independent chair who has extensive experience of chairing both adoption and fostering panels.

Approved and prospective adopters are asked, at different stages, for their opinion on the services they have received. Comments made during 2012 – 2013 include the following;

'We live in a different area but decided to come to North Lincolnshire because they placed our first child with us and we got an excellent service from them. Following us being approved at North Lincolnshire Adoption Panel we were matched with a child a month later!'

'Very good. Quick, good relationship with our Social Worker. Very pleased'

'We have found the whole process very enjoyable and relaxed. We have received an excellent service, with no complaints'

'We have been listened to and given lots of information and questions have been answered'

'Our Social Worker was organised, sensitive and supportive throughout. We have been very pleased with the Service we have received especially given the geographical distances involved'

'The workshops in particular were enjoyable, an opportunity to meet other prospective adopters'

Inter-country Adoption

North Lincolnshire has a Service Level Agreement with **Yorkshire Adoption Agency Ltd**, to provide initial counselling and information services to prospective adopters considering adopting a child from overseas. Prospective adopters considering inter-country adoption are also able to access Yorkshire Adoption Agency Ltd, for full assessment services which carry a charge.

Foster Carers who wish to adopt their fostered child.

Foster carers who make a formal application to adopt children that are in their care are entitled to the same information and preparation as other prospective adopters. However, the new regulations implemented from the 1st July 2013 do introduce a new fast track process for some foster carers.

Where foster carers are accepted as potentially suitable to adopt a child in their care, they can be expected to be assessed in the same way as other prospective adopters. However, the assessment will also focus on the specific long-term needs of the child in question. Here some of the primary considerations are to do with: -

- The quality of the attachment between the child and the Foster Carers.
- The wishes and feelings of the child.
- The assessed ability of the foster carers to provide permanent care for the child through adoption.
- The impact on the child now, and for the rest of their lives, of being adopted by these particular carers.

8. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES FOR APPROVED ADOPTERS

Following approval, prospective adopters will receive clear information about how a child will be matched with them using local resources, consortium arrangements or the Adoption Register. Regular contact will be made to ensure that adopters' circumstances remain updated and that discussions on potential children for placement are held regularly.

Approved adopters are reviewed annually if a match has not occurred.

When a potential match is identified, prospective adopters are given full written information about the child, which includes their emotional, developmental and health needs. The prospective adopters will also be provided with clear and detailed information about any areas of uncertainty regarding the child's future development and the possible implications of these for the child and themselves. Prospective adopters will have the opportunity to attend a Life Appreciation day about the child. This will enable them to meet and hear from different professionals who have been involved with the child. At the same time, the meeting serves to convey a sense of the child's journey.

Preparation work prior to placement focuses on not only the prospective adopters but also other members of the household. North Lincolnshire Council makes every effort to prepare and protect all those involved.

Prospective adopters will be given ten days to consider the placement report which will cover areas such as contact plans, and support plans as well as the reasons for believing the family will meet the child's assessed needs over time.

Adopters will be invited to the Council's adoption panel when the placement is considered. Once a decision has been made, the adopters will be invited to a Planning Meeting to arrange their introductions to their child and plan for the administrative and formal information sharing.

Adopters will be supported financially to meet basic safety needs at the point of placement and any costs associated with the introductions.

Approved adopters are supported by regular contact, advice and visits by the adoption social worker and the child's social worker from the point that the child is introduced to them through to the making of the adoption order.

After the making of the Adoption Order, support may also be provided if a support plan is in operation or it is decided to provide services as a result of an assessment of needs.

Adoptive parents, adopted children or any member of the household including any other children of the adopters, are entitled at any time to request an assessment of their needs for Adoption Support Services under the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.

A range of support services is available to adoptive parents in North Lincolnshire and these include the following: -

- Training events provided by CAMHS on Attachment and Development and Mental Health and Resilience.
- Occasional workshops – Contact in Adoption 'Explaining Adoption'.
- Therapeutic support from a dedicated CAMHS worker.
- Additional support with contact arrangements.
- Informal social events at points in the year for adopters and children.
- Loan of the Adoption Team's library materials.
- Financial support – subject to an assessment and meeting the eligibility criteria.
- A year's Membership of Adoption UK (following approval).
- Counselling advice and information.
- Adopt Support Group for adoptive parents and young children.

Adoptive families or others affected by adoption may choose to seek advice and assistance through North Lincolnshire's Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA).

The role of the ASSA is to act as a single point of contact and respond quickly to provide advice, resolve problems, or to help to arrange, where appropriate, for

services to be provided. The ASSA also works closely with other departments such as health and education to help develop and improve services.

The ASSA may be contacted by writing to:

The Adoption Support Services Advisor
North Lincolnshire Council
Hewson House,
Station Road
Brigg,
North Lincs
DN20 8XJ

Further information regarding Adoption Support including the legal framework can be obtained on request.

9. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES FOR BIRTH FAMILIES

North Lincolnshire Council will value and respect the wishes and feelings of birth families and will take account of their views when planning for their child's adoption.

North Lincolnshire Council will work with birth families to help them maximise the contribution they can make to promoting and preserving their child's heritage and sense of identity.

North Lincolnshire Council recognises that adoption is an evolving, life-long process for all those involved and will provide support to birth families at all stages of the process, both during adoption, and throughout life.

A birth families group has been established and this will take place four times a year. The group will help develop services for birth families.

Those birth families working with the Adoption Service will be invited to give feedback in respect to the Service they feel they have received and this will also influence service development.

Birth families are able to obtain independent support through After Adoption Yorkshire, a specialist service for people involved in adoption. North Lincolnshire has a Service Level Agreement with **After Adoption Yorkshire**, which includes the provision of Intermediary services and the facilitation of birth parent support groups.

Counselling

It is the role of the child's family finder to offer and provide adoption counselling to birth family members. This can be accessed at any time during the adoption process, including after the child has been adopted. This service may also be provided by After Adoption Yorkshire should the birth family wish.

This is a delicate and sensitive role and there is an acknowledgement for the birth families experience of grief and loss. Birth family members often access this support, which is seen as Independent from the childcare team.

The Adoption Service can support birth families by helping them to produce materials which give an account of their circumstances and feelings surrounding the loss of their children and which may contribute to Life Story books.

The team also carries out work with birth parents enabling them to create memory books. These books can have benefits not only for the birth parents themselves but also their adopted children as they grow up.

Adoption Contact Letterbox

The letterbox facilitates the indirect contact between children, adoptive families and birth families throughout the adopted child's childhood. There are currently around 130 on-going arrangements in operation. Arrangements are reviewed on an annual basis but can be reviewed at any time in accordance with the child's needs.

Birth relatives may request an assessment in relation to support for contact arrangements with their birth children.

The adoption social worker's role is to act as intermediary between all parties. Acknowledgment is given that all children's needs may change and it is the adoption social worker's role to mediate between everyone involved.

Birth relatives may need assistance in writing letters and responding to news received through the letter box and this is provided by the Adoption Social Workers

Other Intermediary Activities

Birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption for them. North Lincolnshire Council provides services to respond to this need. This may include:

- Information about other resources or adoption support agencies.
- Assistance to write letters to place on an adopted child's file.
- Information about the Adoption Contact Register.

The provision of intermediary services in relation to birth family members who wish to seek information about adopted children who have reached adulthood, with or without a view to establishing direct contact. In these circumstances the formal consent of the subject is required before information can be disclosed.

10. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES FOR ADOPTED ADULTS

Birth Records Counselling and Information

This service is provided to adults who were adopted before 30 December 2005 to enable them to access their original birth record details and to consider the likely implications and meaning for them of exploring their birth family of origin.

The purpose of counselling is to ensure that the adopted person has considered the possible emotional impact of any enquiries, both on himself/herself and on others as well as uncertainties surrounding any searching or possible reunions.

Adopted adults will be supported and may pursue their enquiry via obtaining an original birth certificate, requesting access to information in their adoption file or requesting help to locate birth relatives with a view to meeting.

File access and information sharing is provided in line with government guidance. It is imperative that the information sought, is provided in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

A Service Level Agreement is in place with After Adoption Yorkshire to provide Schedule II birth record counselling when required.

Intermediary Services and Vetoes

Adopted adults who were adopted before 30 December 2005 are also able to request that there is an absolute or qualified veto placed on their records and on the Adoption Contact Register should they wish for no contact or no contact with specified people.

Adopted adults can request Intermediary services to provide for mediated contact with birth relatives. This service can be provided by the Adoption Service or through a registered adoption support agency After Adoption Yorkshire.

11. COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

At times, adopters, children, birth families and other people affected by adoption may feel unhappy about the services they receive. The adoption service works within North Lincolnshire Council's complaints procedures. In the first instance it is hoped that the adoption service would attempt to resolve any complaint or representation on an informal basis. However if this is felt inappropriate or the service user remains unsatisfied, then all adopters and children, have complaints information and leaflets that show how to complain and how complaints are dealt with.

The Council's Independent Complaints Officer is:

Julie Pointon
North Lincolnshire Council
People Directorate
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ

Telephone Number 01724 296487

Dave Basker is Principal Social Worker (Safeguarding) and he is North Lincolnshire's Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA). He can be contacted at: dave.basker@northlincs.gov.uk or telephone 01724 296495

Children's Rights Director for England

In addition to the North Lincolnshire complaints and representation procedures children, or adults acting on their behalf, have access to the Children's Rights Director for England.

The Office of the Children's Rights Director, St Nicholas Building, St Nicholas Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1NB.

Free phone 0800 5280731

e mail: theteam.rights4me@ofsted.gov.uk

www.rights4me.org.uk

OFSTED

The contact point for all questions, queries and complaints to Ofsted is the NBU via the central number, or you can email them.

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Telephone 08456 404040

Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

12. DESCRIPTION OF OTHER PERMANENCY OPTIONS

Permanency Planning, Special Guardianship and Residence Orders:

In addition to providing the range of adoption services as outlined above the Adoption Service also plays a key role in the permanency planning for all children in care.

It is the aim of North Lincolnshire Council to ensure that children who are admitted to our care are returned to their own family and community networks at the earliest opportunity, whenever it is safe to do so

Where this is not possible, we will endeavour to work with everyone concerned to help the child move on to become part of a stable and permanent, alternative family. This may be an adoptive family but in some cases where this is not possible a Special Guardianship Order or a Residence Order may be the most appropriate alternative.

Special Guardianship

North Lincolnshire Council has a commitment to supporting families who have obtained a Special Guardianship Order in respect of a child who was in care after immediately prior to the making of the Special Guardianship Order, and to supporting the birth families of such children.

Support available include:

- Counselling, advice and information.
- Financial support in some circumstances.
- Assistance, including mediation services, in relation to contact between the child and their birth parents or any other people with whom contact is in the child's best interests.
- Therapeutic services for the child and family.

Special Guardianship Support Services should not be seen in isolation from mainstream services and children and families involved in Special Guardianship should be assisted to access mainstream services where appropriate.

Residence Orders

North Lincolnshire Council has a commitment to supporting families who have obtained a Residence Order in respect of a child who was looked after immediately prior to the making of a Residence Order and to supporting the birth families of such children.

Support available includes:

- Counselling, advice and information.
- Financial support in some circumstances.
- Assistance, including mediation services, in relation to contact between the child and their birth parents or any other people with whom contact is in the child's best interests.
- Therapeutic services for the child and family.

Residence Order Support Services should not be seen in isolation from mainstream services and children and families involved in a Residence Order should be assisted to access mainstream services where appropriate.

APPENDIX 1

Financial Support to Adoption and Special Guardianship

Additional financial support to adoptive parents or special guardians will be considered only in the circumstances prescribed in the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 and the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005

In order to comply with principles of a base rate applying to all types of substitute parenting which involve council funding, the base rate is the same whichever route is chosen so that there is no financial incentive or disincentive for a carer to opt for one route rather than another.

A means test is used to determine the amount of finance which adoptive parents, special guardians and holders of residence orders receive.

Age Group	North Lincolnshire Base Rate
Babies and Pre Primary (0-4)	£108.00
Primary (5-10)	£119.00
Secondary (11-15)	£137.00
Secondary (16+)	£159.00

Discretionary additional financial support may be given due to the needs of the children placed with adoptive parents or under special guardianship. Where carers are able to claim disability and/or other allowances for the child, these are deducted from any enhancement prior to placement.

Any enhancements and financial support will always need to have sufficient flexibility to deal with the most extreme cases of need.

APPENDIX 2

NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE REGISTERED PROVIDER AND REGISTERED MANAGER

The Registered Provider
Mrs Tracy Eaden Principal Social Worker (Regulatory & Support Services) North Lincolnshire Council Hewson House Station Road Brigg North Lincolnshire DN20 8XJ
The Registered Manager
Mrs Karen Everatt Service Manager (Adoption) North Lincolnshire Council Church Square Scunthorpe North Lincolnshire DN15 6NL

RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS

Registered Provider
DIPSW PQCCA PQ Post Graduate Certificate Diploma Child Social Work Studies CMI Level 7 Leadership
Registered Manager
BA Hons (Social Policy & Criminology) Diploma in Social Work Masters in Social Work PQCCA Diploma in Counselling ILM Level 3 Management

Staffing Qualifications and experience

Post Title	Gender	Qualifications of Current Post holder	Experience of current Post holder
Adoption Social Worker full time	Female	Diploma in Social Work PQ Child Care 1-6	14 years in adoption and previous statutory child care experience
Adoption Social Worker full time	Female	Degree in Social Work CQSW PQ1	13 years in adoption and previous statutory child care experience
Adoption Social Worker full time	Female	Diploma in Social Work Diploma in Counselling PQ1 Consolidation – children and families Enabling Others 1 and 2	6 years in adoption and previous statutory services experience
Adoption Social Worker part time (currently on maternity leave until June 2014)	Female	MA in Social Work BA Hons Social Science Certificate in Social Work	6 months in adoption and additional to this previous childcare experience
Adoption Social Worker full time (currently on maternity leave until January 2014)	Female	Diploma in Social Work Degree in BA Social Work PQ1	2 years in adoption and additional to this previous childcare experience
Adoption Social Worker full time (maternity cover)	Female	First Class Honours in Social Work Diploma in Social Work	3 months in adoption and additional to this over three years statutory childcare experience
Adoption Social Worker full time – in post currently as support officer as awaiting qualification	Female	Awaiting confirmation of social work qualification. Until such time she is working as support officer within the team	Undertook final placement in Adoption Team. Previous experience within Women's Refuge. Awaiting qualification.
Adoption Social Worker full time – awaiting start date	Female	BSc Social Work NNEB	4 years experience in statutory childcare services.
Adoption Social Worker part time – to commence September 2013	Female	BA in Social Work	4 years experience in statutory childcare services

Agency Decision

Name	Post	Decision to be Made
Mr Dave Basker	Principal Social Worker Safeguarding	A child should be placed for adoption
Mrs Tracy Eaden	Principal Social Worker Regulatory Services and Support	A child should be placed for adoption
Mr Mick Gibbs	Assistant Director – People’s Directorate	<p>Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child or continues to be suitable to adopt a child</p> <p>A child should be placed for adoption with particular prospective adopters</p> <p>To disclose protected information about adults under section 61 of the Act and regulation 15 of the Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005 when determining an application</p>
Annmarie Brierley	Principal Social Worker Case Management	<p>Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child or continues to be suitable to adopt a child</p> <p>A child should be placed for adoption with particular prospective adopters</p> <p>To disclose protected information about adults under section 61 of the Act and regulation 15 of the Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005 when determining an application</p>

Appendix 3

Organisational Structure

