

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LEARNING AND LEISURE CABINET MEMBER

ADOPTION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2018 - 2019

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To present the reviewed and updated Adoption Statement of Purpose 2018 – 2019 and the Young Person’s Statement of Purpose 2018 – 2019.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Following the annual review of both the above documents, revisions have been made which ensure they reflect current practice, revised guidance and updated legislation. The revisions are summarised below;
- The contact details of the Local Authority’s Complaints Officer has been updated to reflect the worker change from Julie Pointon to Lesley Cooper.
 - The recent Ofsted Inspection and outstanding judgement has been incorporated into the Statement of Purpose. The Adoption Statement of Purpose provides key information to those either working with North Lincolnshire adoption or thinking about working with North Lincolnshire adoption. Therefore, it provides key information as to the quality of service that they can expect to receive. Adoption in North Lincolnshire is judged to be outstanding and this will be a significant factor for those who are considering working with us as an adoption agency.
 - The Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the change in Registered Provider to Rob Murray, Head of Service, Safeguarding Organisation.
 - The final revision has been to update the Statement of Purpose with the current position of North Lincolnshire Council with regards to the regionalisation of adoption.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The Adoption Services (England) Regulations require that the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually and updated to reflect any changes in staffing, practice or procedures.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 There is no other option to consider.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement that the Statement of purpose is approved by the lead member for children on an annual basis.

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

- 5.1 The Statement of Purpose details the regulatory functions of the adoption service, alongside staffing.

6. OUTCOME OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1 The Statement of Purpose summarises feedback received over 2017 – 2018.
- 7.2 No conflicts are declared.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Children, Families, Learning and Leisure Cabinet Member approves the revised Adoption Service Statement of Purpose.

DIRECTOR: CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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Date:8.9.18

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Statement of Purpose 2018 - 2019

Young Persons Statement of Purpose 2018 - 2019

North Lincolnshire Council

Statement of Purpose for Adoption 2018 - 2019



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The information in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in other languages, in large print, Braille or on audiotape. Please phone **01724 297024** 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 Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption. It explains the aims, objectives and services provided by North Lincolnshire Council's Adoption Service. It is made available to staff and the general public.

The main responsibilities the service has, which the Statement of Purpose, sets out are to:-

- Recruit, assess, support and supervise adopters to meet the needs of children who require permanency by way of adoption.
- Constitute an adoption panel to make recommendations in respect of approval, reviews and terminations of approval of adopters.
- To family find and facilitate appropriate matches between adopters and children that meet the child's assessed individual needs.
- Provision of post adoption support services where required to all those connected to adoption.
- The organisation and running of North Lincolnshire Council's Post Adoption Letterbox Contact Service. Currently, we are managing 164 arrangements for children. Within each of those individual arrangements are different agreements with respective birth family members.
- Offer and provide Intermediary Services.
- The provision of support services in respect to Special Guardianship Orders.

North Lincolnshire Adoption is an 'Outstanding' provider [Ofsted 2017]

The Young Person's Statement of Purpose has also been updated. This is a document that originates from the adopted young person's group, 'Superkidz's' and which was completed in partnership with adopted young people.

All information is correct as at 8th May 2018.

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 is registered with;

OFSTED

**Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Telephone 0300 123 1231
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**

2. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE ADOPTION

North Lincolnshire Council's Adoption Service shares the values and principles that underpin the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014; the values that are contained within the Adoption Charter and the values that are reflected within the adoption reform agenda. They can be summarised as follows;

Values – Children and adoptive families

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, inter country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents / guardians, families, adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the National Minimum Standards (NMS) to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.



Values – adopted adults and birth relatives

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved – including adopted adults and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

We also continue to work to the values within the Adoption Charter, which was published in 2011. The Charter was one of the first developments which preceded a period in which there has been significant adoption reform. This Charter outlines what we will do to support children and young people going through adoption as well as what our expectations are 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 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 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.



3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

- North Lincolnshire Council aims to deliver a high quality adoption service and adoption support service each of which meets the needs of its service users. This includes children in its area who may be or are placed for adoption; children and adults who have been adopted and their birth parents and relatives. It also includes people who may wish to adopt a child or have applied to become adoptive parents or have adopted a child.
- The welfare of any child who has been, or may become, adopted is the paramount consideration of all adoption services provided by the Council and the safeguarding of every child's welfare, safety and security is at the heart of the work of the adoption service. 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 2014. Safer Recruitment practices and regular child protection training for staff, volunteers and adoption panel members will all be integral to safeguarding.
- 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. Where adoption is identified as the appropriate care plan for a child we will 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. Children with a plan of adoption are referred to the adoption service early to enable initial family finding which includes the consideration of early permanence.
- Our approach is underpinned by all working closely together, performance reporting and monitoring processes that review family finding activity; the assessed needs of children and identified 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'.
- We recognise the lifelong impact of adoption and we aim to deliver support to all parties at all stages in the process. Adoption support services will be both universal and particular to the needs of individual service users. Provision of services will reflect the assessed needs of each service user. The overall aim being 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 and 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.
- We will actively promote the educational achievement of children in partnership with prospective adopters / 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.
- We aim 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:

1. *High quality assessments and child permanence reports, which are quality assured at a senior level.*
 2. *A commitment to the careful preparation of children through direct work and keeping children informed throughout the adoption process.*
 3. *Children with a plan of adoption will be carefully prepared for adoption, using direct work techniques and the appropriate Children's Guide. They will have a personalised record of their family and personal history to keep.*
 4. *Utilisation of the following guides;*
 - a. *A Younger Child's guide to Adoption (boy version and girl version)*
 - b. *A Child's Guide to Adoption (boy version and girl version)*
 - c. *Young People's Guide to Adoption Support Services in North Lincolnshire*
 - d. *North Lincolnshire Adoption Service After 18 Guide*
 5. *Prospective adopters will be assessed on their capacity to safely meet the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan.*
 6. *Contact plans that are based on the assessed needs of the child and which are reviewed where required, taking into account the wishes and views of all involved.*
- 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 can also access advocacy and be given advice with regard to contacting the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted.
 - The Adoption Service has a sound understanding of the sufficiency needs with regards to children in North Lincolnshire who may require an adoptive placement. Ongoing targeted recruitment activity aims to meet the needs of children requiring adoptive placements by ensuring that we have sufficiently skilled and approved adopters able to meet the needs of children who require an adoptive placement both locally and nationally.

- 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 Adoption Link, British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Activity Days, Profiling Events and publications such as Be My Parent, Children Who Wait and country wide circulars.
- The needs of individual children are considered as paramount and each case is considered on the basis of how individual children's needs can best be met. No child will be left waiting indefinitely for a 'perfect match'. Children's needs will be accurately assessed and they will be matched with adopters who are able to provide a safe, loving and permanent home. Support will be provided to help achieve a successful and lasting placement.
- 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.
- 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 Adoption Support Fund is also utilised when we meet their criteria in respect to a request for funding of a therapeutic service.
- 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.



- Enquiries from all prospective adopters will be responded to promptly and without prejudice, we are committed to ensuring no one experiences discrimination in terms of personal differences such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, colour, religion, racial,

ethnic or social origin, marital or partnership status or employment status. Each enquirer will be given clear information about recruitment processes and the preparation, assessment and approval process.

- People wishing to adopt children from overseas will be provided with relevant information and initial counselling from the Adoption Service. If enquirers wish to take their interest further, this can be obtained by receiving more detailed preparation from Yorkshire Adoption a regional Voluntary Agency as per a service agreement. However, should applicants wish to have a full assessment carried out, this is a private arrangement and they will become responsible for the payment of a fee to the Yorkshire Adoption Agency.
- Adopted adults will be enabled to gain access to their birth records and will be given assistance in making choices about search and reunion. Services may be provided through a service level agreement between the council and a registered Adoption Support Agency or the council's own Adoption Service staff.
- The service aims to involve birth families as much as possible, treating them with openness and respect and encouraging full participation wherever possible. 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. Free access to independent support services will be available in all cases.
- Assistance to birth relatives regarding intermediary services will take account of the likely impact of disclosure on all parties involved and wherever possible will obtain consent before progressing to contact.
- Appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners will deliver all services.

4. OUR FOCUS ON OUTCOMES 2018 - 2019

As a service we have continuously shown improvement in our performance.

In June 2017 we were inspected by Ofsted with the report of this inspection being published in September 2017. Adoption was judged as **outstanding**. The following comments were made within the Ofsted Report;

'The Adoption team offers a service that is highly effective, forward thinking, sensitive, increasingly timely and child focused, and the support offered to children and adopters throughout their adoption journey is valued and a real strength'.

'Achieving permanence through adoption for children is a high priority in North Lincolnshire. Comprehensive permanence planning and consideration of adoption being at the earliest possible stage, and concurrent and twin tracking planning ensures that children do not experience drift and delay. Decision-making and progress are effectively monitored, further supporting timely permanence'.

'North Lincolnshire has shown continuous improvement in the average timescales for children entering care and moving in with their adoptive families. Current published data indicates that North

Lincolnshire is performing better than national and statistical neighbour averages, ensuring that children are placed with their permanent family as soon as possible.

'Arrangements for the recruitment, assessment and training of prospective adopters are highly effective and timely'.

'There are effective and timely assessments of adopters in line with national requirements and the service is responsive and sensitive to the needs of adopters within the process'.

'Well attended and highly valued child appreciation events are held for all children prior to children being introduced to prospective adopters. These draw together a range of professionals, carers and significant people in children's lives to give information, tell stories and to give a real sense of the children who may be placed with them'.

'Preparation and planning for the child's transition to the adoptive family are thorough, sensitive and effective. Adopters reported that children are prepared well for adoption by their foster carers and their worker'.

'Impressively effective and responsive adoption support is offered in a variety of creative ways, dependent upon need'.

*'Adopters and children spoken to by the inspectors stated, for example, "**you can always speak to someone who will listen and help you**". Adopters spoke of the invaluable support that they receive from 'buddying' arrangements that put them in touch with adopters who have experienced similar circumstances'.*

Our performance information does tell us that for many children we are achieving timely permanence. This in turn impacts positively upon the life outcomes for those children. This sums up the overall aim of our service and this value is embedded in all staff within the service.

We will continue to use the performance information to identify performance priorities and to ensure monitoring processes are in place to ensure optimum performance and attainment of targets set. This includes the use of a monthly performance tracker.

The Department for Education (DfE)/Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) published the 2017 Adoption Scorecard on the 8th May 2018. Our 3 year averages in the 2 main timeliness indicators have continued to improve and both have top 25 rankings.

We continue to promote early permanence placements with the aim being to place children much earlier with those who could offer permanency, should it be the case that the child cannot live with their birth family.

In order to achieve good outcomes for children the adoption service works closely with Social Work Services and it is this that makes a significant difference in many aspects of adoption work. The differences it makes includes for example; knowing what children are likely to require an adoptive family and being able to target recruitment accordingly; timely planning; child focused planning; having adoption experience readily available and good sense of local performance in respect to the adoption scorecard.

As a Service we are ready for any challenges and we have worked hard to be a cohesive staff group who will support each other through challenge and change. Our ultimate focus is ensuring that children remain at the heart of adoption work and at the heart of adoption decisions made. As an authority we have always worked hard to ensure that we have the right care plan for a child. As a smaller authority we have a history of working with other agencies; as it is not always the case that we can match in-house and so this should stand us in good stead.

Moving forward into 2018 – 2019 adoption continues to remain high on the agenda in North Lincolnshire and our key outcomes remain;

- **To encourage more people to adopt and in particular to consider early permanence placements and also providing placements for harder to place children.**
- **To reduce the time it takes for children to be placed with a loving family.**
- **To make sure adoptive families get the support they need.**

We will do the above by ensuring;

- Where prospective adopters have identified that they would like to parent a very young child we are now preparing them for the wait they may experience. Regionally there are now more adopters waiting for very young children than there are very young children. For those adopters who want very young children we do discuss with them early permanence whilst also being mindful that for some adopters the risks associated with this is not something they feel able to consider, which we respect. It is increasingly likely that if approved adopters want to experience parenting a young child then this will be via an early permanence arrangement.
- We work closely with prospective adopters and approved adopters to help them understand the profiles of those children who are waiting for an adoptive family. We offer further training / activity sessions in thinking about caring for siblings and harder to place children via the Regional Hub and via their one to one sessions with their Adoption Social Worker. We work hard to connect our adopters with children who are waiting and a valuable resource in doing this is Adoption Link and Activity Days. By using these methods adopters waiting can visibly see and understand the needs of the children waiting and connections can be made. It also enables adopters waiting to feel more proactive in their own family finding.



- We continue to monitor the plans of children closely by way of the Adoption Cohorts and the Pre-Birth Cohorts so that we can ensure that we are tracking assessments to ensure no delay

and where appropriate early permanence is considered and we can seek an early permanence placement.

- The provision of universal adoption support and also timely adoption support assessments where requested / required, with referrals to the Adoption Support Fund where appropriate and where the Fund Criteria is met.
- We will continue to work closely with the Regional Hub.

Regionalisation of Adoption Services

The current position in North Lincolnshire

In June 2015 the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services by proposing that all adoption services should consider adoption services being delivered on a regional basis by 2020. The rationale for this was to ensure improved outcomes for both adopters and children.

North Lincolnshire was part of the DfE pilot to explore moving towards the regionalisation of adoption services. Approval was given, 'in principle', in February 2017 to progressing the exploration of forming a North and Humber Regional Adoption Agency with York as the single host authority. Cabinet Member agreed to consider a further report when the resources and finance implications were available for consideration.

Following full consideration of the resource and financial implications a further report was presented to cabinet with the recommendation that adoption functions continue to be carried out locally by North Lincolnshire's Adoption Service. This was endorsed by Cabinet Member.

It was felt that the current proposal of the regional adoption agency offered no tangible benefit to offset the local success of the in house adoption service. Local management and flexibility is a significant success factor in managing our local service, and ensures best value for North Lincolnshire. It was felt that the proposed arrangements of the regional adoption agency would restrict how we could develop locally. As a service it is our consistent aim to strive to improve our performance and ensure good outcomes for children and family. This would always be a key consideration and what we would prioritise when considering any change to service provision.

Maintaining a North Lincolnshire service would enable us to build upon the outstanding service. The service has significant ambition for the future and whilst retaining a local service will raise concern there is a genuine belief the service can deliver, sustain and build upon the outstanding judgement.

Locally the service believes that they can manage the improved outcomes within a financial energy that releases potential to develop and grow even further and on a wider footprint as well as across the "permanence" agenda.

5. WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE ADOPTION

Example feedback that we have received over 2017/2018 is as follows;

- *The Adoption Team have become part of my family, as well as my Mum and Dad* **[adopted young person]**
- *'Kids love the events they attend (if they are happy we are) and it normalises adoption and it's nice to keep in touch with the adoption team'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'Always appreciated and it is clear how much thought / effort and resource goes into all events'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'The children really enjoy all the events arranged for them'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'Celebrating adoption event – really lovely event, children loved the activities' and 'we thought it was really good and a good chance to catch up with everyone and all the kids seem to enjoy themselves'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'Very happy with the service...currently being assessed again!'* **[second time adopters]**
- *'The training was very good and it was great to speak to other adoptive parents and foster parents'* **[prospective adopters]**
- *'We feel that North Lincolnshire adoption service is well organised, knowledgeable and easily accessible. We have had a great social worker.'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'The events are a great idea especially celebrating adoption because it should be celebrated'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'I have had fantastic support from the adoption team'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'Congratulations on outstanding. Very well deserved'* **[adoptive family contacted us following Ofsted report being published]**
- *'Fantastic training'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'Keep doing 'more of the same'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'North Lincolnshire Adoption Service have worked really well with us each time we have adopted and we feel content working with the service. Our children know our social worker really well and are happy and confident speaking to her. They also know other social workers from the fun events. The team feels like part of our family'* **[adoptive parents who have been assessed to adopt for a third time]**
- Single adopter sent an email with positive feedback about the adoption service and in particular commented on the way the service managed information evenings. She felt that what was a daunting experience was made much easier due to the approach of the team.
- *'The support had been badly needed and I wanted to say how far we have come as a family, I feel the support from the Adoption Service in bringing together tools, strategies, a range of services and family meetings has made such a difference to our family. I now feel empowered as a parent to put in place consistent boundaries'* **[A single adoptive parent experiencing child on parent violence]**

- *'Thank you so much for finding my daughter. I hope to get to meet her soon. I appreciate the time you have spent talking to me, it has been a huge help, thank you'* **[a birth mother who relinquished her child for adoption 55 years ago]**
- An email has been received from an adopted young person, 18 years of age. The worker she had emailed has known the young person since she was 3 years of age and was involved in her placement. The worker and young person had been revisiting her life story and helping the young person work through some of the issues that had raised for her. As part of this work the worker had sensitively helped the young person understand her birth families current situation and also the situation of her younger birth siblings who had been born following her having been adopted but who had subsequently been able to remain with their birth mother. The worker received a text message from the young person stating; *"I cannot thank you enough for all the work you have done for me. Not just recently but from being a little girl. Thank you from the bottom of my heart"*.
- *'From my first contact with the service at an information evening to now I have felt confident in the level of service being provided'* **[prospective adopter]**
- *'Thank you for your support this morning. We both found it very reassuring and very helpful'* **[adoptive family in crisis]**
- *'Thank you for recommending the book by Dr Amber Elliott it has helped me begin to understand [child] and also the importance of how I respond to everyday challenges. We've had a lovely Easter together, he is growing up in so many ways'* **[adoptive family]**
- *'All of the workshops were very informative whilst being delivered in a friendly and informal way'* **[approved adopters commenting on their preparing to adopt training]**
- *'The report gave a good sense of the couple, was well written and their strengths were clearly identified'* **[Social Worker commenting on a prospective adopters report she had been given to read]**
- *'Adoption team provides a high quality consistent service'* **[Independent Reviewing Officer]**
- *'I was so very pleased to see that all your hard work, obvious passion and the inspiration that you bring to the job, to the benefit of the children who come through your care, has been recognised [Ofsted]. A wonderful achievement!'* **[Local Magistrate]**



6. SERVICE AND STAFF PROFILE

The Adoption Service continues to be based at Church Square House, 30 – 40 High Street, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 6NL. The office is situated in the town centre and is accessible by way of frequent public transport.

There is a strong culture within adoption and amongst all staff of continuously looking at ways in which we can improve and develop the services we provide. This is reflected in our performance.

Retention of staff is excellent within the Adoption Service. It is worthy of note that most staff within the adoption element of the service have extensive experience in respect to adoption work. The longest serving staff member within the service has been in the team for eighteen and a half years. This is closely followed by two other staff members. The experience within the team is extremely well regarded and this knowledge and experience within the team is shared across and benefits the whole service.

Currently the adoption element of the Adoption and Fostering Service comprises of:-

- 1 Service Manager with a lead responsibility for adoption
- 1 Practice Supervisor post
- 7 FTE Social Worker posts
- 0.5 FTE Panel Coordinator post

All appointments working directly with children are subject to safer recruitment procedures and all staff receives regular supervision, appraisal and development opportunities including training and shadowing. Weekly team meetings are held and regular team days. The staff have a strong value base of providing our children in care with high quality, safe and nurturing family based care which best meets their needs and achieves optimal outcomes.

It is the responsibility of the social workers within the Adoption to undertake the below adoption tasks;

- Family finding for children
- Recruiting and assessing prospective adopters
- Step parent adoption
- Facilitating training
- Family finding for adopters
- Supporting adoptive placements
- Post Adoption Support assessments
- Support Groups
- Birth Record Counselling

We do not have separate post adoption workers / team. Our rationale for this is due to us being a smaller Local Authority. We have not wanted to limit any workers skill set in any particular area i.e. to have only one support worker and be reliant upon that person to provide post adoption support, which could also then impact upon capacity of the support services we can provide. Instead, we have workers who are skilled in all areas of work but who also have the opportunity to take lead roles based upon their areas of interest.

We have found that this approach works well for us as a smaller authority and the benefit (also evidenced via the feedback we receive) is that we know our families in North Lincolnshire and that our families feel confident in approaching the team to request support. Our adoptive families have the opportunity to meet all of the team at the various social events we hold.

The Adoption Support Advisor (ASSA) for North Lincolnshire is Di Rees. Di is a Service Manager who fulfils the requirement of the ASSA role by having many years of experience across Children’s Services and this also includes experience in adoption work.

Please see appendix 1 for the Structure Chart.

Staffing Qualifications and Experience

Post Title	Gender	Qualifications of current post holder	Experience of current post holder
Practice Supervisor – Adoption Lead	Female	Diploma in Social Work	Qualified Social Worker since 1996.
Social Worker full time	Female	BA in Social Science Post Graduate Diploma in Careers Guidance Masters in Social Work	Qualified Social Worker since 2014.
Social Worker full time	Female	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Qualified Social Worker since 2009.
Social Worker part time	Female	BA (Hons) Social Work Post Qualifying Award Children and Families	Qualified Social Worker in 2007.
Social Worker full time	Female	Diploma in Social Work Diploma in Counselling Consolidation – Learning and Professional Development Children and Families (Masters level)	Qualified Social Worker since 1997.
Social Worker part time	Female	BA (Hons) Social Work Bsc (Hons) Psychology	Qualified Social Worker since 2007.
Social Worker full time	Female	BA (Hons) Social Work	Qualified Social Worker since 2013.
Social Worker part time	Female	Diploma and Masters in Social Work	Qualified Social Worker since 2010.
Social Worker full time	Female	Diploma in Social Work Child Care Award	Qualified Social Worker since 1997.
Social Worker full time	Female	BA (hons) Social Work PQ Consolidating Practice EPD	Qualified Social Worker since 2010.

Name and address of the registered provider and registered manager

The Registered Provider	Relevant qualifications;
<p style="text-align: center;">Rob Murray Head of Safeguarding Organisation North Lincolnshire Council The Angel Market Place Brigg North Lincolnshire DN20 8LD</p> <p style="text-align: center;">rob.murray@northlincs.gov.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01724 297024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA Hons Social Work (First) 1999 • Diploma in Social Work 1998
The Registered Manager	Relevant qualifications;
<p style="text-align: center;">Karen Everatt Service Manager (Adoption) North Lincolnshire Council Church Square Scunthorpe North Lincolnshire DN15 6NL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">karen.everatt@northlincs.gov.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01724 297024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA Hons (Social Policy & Criminology) • Diploma in Social Work • Masters in Social Work • Post Qualifying Award in Childcare • Diploma in Counselling • ILM Level 3 Management <p>Experience;</p> <p>Karen has been a qualified Social Worker since 1999 and she has always worked within Statutory Children’s Services.</p>

Agency Decision Makers

Name	Post	Decision to be made
Tom Hewis, Di Rees	Principal Social Worker – Children and Adults Service Manager, FaSST	A child should be placed for adoption
Mick Gibbs Ann-Marie Brierley Di Rees (backup)	Director of Children and Community Resilience Head of Safeguarding Children	Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child or continues to be suitable to adopt a child A child should be placed for adoption with particular prospective adopters 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
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Agency Decision Makers

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The methods we use are as follows;

Adoption Panel

- Regular statistical and performance reports are available to the panel and timescales for children for whom adoption is the plan are monitored.
- An annual summary report is presented to the panel with managerial comments on performance.
- Quality issues raised at panel are fed back via the Agency Advisor to the relevant social work team and follow-up is reported to subsequent panel meetings where required.
- Recommendations about policy, procedures and the quality of reports are discussed at an annual feedback meeting involving the Director of Children and Community Resilience, the Agency Advisor and the Adoption Panel Chair.
- 6 monthly reports to the Adoption Service are completed by the Adoption Panel Chair incorporating Panel Members feedback. The feedback given includes comments on the quality of reports; the meeting of standard timescales and the meeting of the requirements of the Regulations on the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005. This information is used to identify service quality issues and to inform the annual review of the Panel Chair and business meeting with the Agency Decision Maker to plan for any required improvements.

All panel members receive an induction and ongoing training which consists of;

Induction;

- Information about Statutory Regulations, policies and procedures
- Contact details of Panel Chair and Panel Advisor
- Meeting with Panel Chair and Panel Advisor to discuss roles and responsibility
- An opportunity to observe Panel

Then as a panel member they have the following;

- Receive panel papers 7 days before the Adoption Panel is held and should they wish they have the opportunity to discuss any issues with the Agency Advisor
- Opportunity to feedback to Agency Advisor any issues
- Monthly performance reports
- Any updates to policies and procedures
- Training
- All Panel Members also have an annual appraisal where their performance is considered by the Panel Chair and Agency Advisor. Members are asked to complete a self-assessment form

prior to this meeting and at the review each panel members personal training needs are discussed.

Ongoing training;

We facilitate Adoption Panel Workshops which Panel Members, Adoption Social Workers and Team Leaders are invited to. Decision makers are also invited to attend.



Service user consultation

The feedback we receive as a service is important and we use this feedback to develop our services. Seeking, listening to and responding to the feedback are key ways in which the Adoption Service works with service users.

We collect feedback and consult via the following methods;

- We have established an Adopted Young Person's Group called 'Superkidz's and the young people who attend are always eager to give their views verbally and to help us think about how best to support them / what they would like us to do.
- Collecting verbal feedback that is given to us via support groups and social events that we hold.
- All approved adoptive parents give written comments about their assessment and preparation and the quality of their prospective adopters report, which then is presented to the Adoption Panel within their prospective adopters report.
- Adoptive parents and their social workers who attend the Adoption Panel are invited to complete a questionnaire about their experience of attending the panel.
- Service users accessing PAC-UK (with After Adoption) are asked to complete a service user form by PAC-UK.
- Service users are invited to complete a questionnaire about the service they have received.
- We ascertain birth families views via the birth parent support group which is held four times a year.

- We also hold an annual consultation event 'Celebrating Adoption'. The last event was held in October 2017. This is a way for us to capture the views of those adoptive families who do not have active involvement with us. We use this feedback to develop our post adoption support.
- Adoption Feedback Forms (on Carefirst) have been developed and we are currently embedding these into adoption practice. The form asks 5 questions which includes ensuring that service users understand the plan and the work taking place.
- We ensure that we have a presence at the Council Marketplace Events and Children's Service Events and actively encourage those we work with to give feedback about our service.
- We also ensure that those who are working with us are aware of who the Adoption Services Advisor is for North Lincolnshire Council and that they are aware that they can make contact with the ASSA should they want to seek advice about an adoption support matter.
- North Lincolnshire Council also has a robust formal complaints procedure and it is available to those who may wish to complain about any aspect of the service.

Any lessons are picked up throughout the year on receipt of responses. Points for improvement are noted and shared with relevant professionals, in adoption team meetings and raised at panel training days.

Overall, the feedback we receive tells us that service users in the main are happy with the services that we provide and that they feel supported.

Supervision and Management

- Staff supervision takes place on a monthly basis as well as informally; quality checks on the work produced take place at regular points in the process including before presentation to Panel of all cases.
- Staff training and professional development has a high focus in the service and is monitored on an annual basis by the appraisal process.
- Case files are randomly audited on a monthly basis. Actions arising are followed up and lessons for improvement are shared with the social work teams.

Performance Management

- Time scales for children and prospective adopters assessments being presented to panel are monitored by the Service Manager and the Adoption Panel and also via the Adoption Cohorts Meetings.
- Progress of children who are waiting to be placed with adoptive parents is monitored regularly within the Adoption Cohorts Meetings.
- Monthly performance reports are circulated to Senior Management, Staff and Adoption Panel.
- Team days are used to track progress and development and also include feedback on quality assurance issues which have arisen.

- Annual and half-yearly adoption service reports are presented to Senior Managers and the executive side of the Council. These reports highlight the range of relevant statistics and comment on performance measures. In the year-end report there is also a narrative report on the service across the year.

8. RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Placement Sufficiency Strategy

North Lincolnshire's Placement Sufficiency Strategy sets out clearly and briefly the strategic intentions of North Lincolnshire Children's Services in fulfilling our sufficiency duty (Children Act 1989 s22G) towards children in care. The Adoption and Fostering Service use this to underpin the joint Recruitment Strategy.

The Adoption Service works within the scope of the above and we play a key role in the ambition of securing permanence at the earliest point for those children who enter care. Our role as a service is to ensure we have adoptive families available to offer placement choice and permanency to children.

There are clear goals within the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and our success will be evidenced by; Further reductions in the Looked After population as a result of;

- **Early effective intervention**
- **Increased use of Adoption and Special Guardianship**
- **Permanence in families where they are independent of the Local Authority**

Our recruitment is underpinned by the above and recruitment remains high on the agenda. We continue to identify earlier matches where we can and the recruitment strategy is based around understanding the profile of those children who are likely to require an adoptive placement and targeting recruitment. By targeting our recruitment accordingly we can look to recruit and assess adopters that we can place North Lincolnshire children with. However, we are also aware of the children that are waiting nationally and so our recruitment is also focused upon seeking adopters who can consider early permanence and harder to place children.

We use the Adoption Cohorts and Pre Birth Meetings to monitor the children where assessments are ongoing and children who have twin track and adoption plans. The information from these meetings is very helpful in us being able to predict what adoptive placements may be needed.

We have a recruitment timetable in place which includes attending local community events and advertising. We hold information events where those interested in adoption can come along and find out more. We currently have outdoor banners on display and have updated our posters and made use of the various council wide communications methods.

Our recruitment focuses on the message **'Time to foster? Time to Adopt?'** and we also encourage people to **'spread the word'** that North Lincolnshire are looking for adopters. We are looking for

people with a range of experiences and from a wide range of backgrounds, with varied personal circumstances, taking into account the differing needs of children waiting for adoption.

In our recruitment we aim to use our adopter networks as we know that **'word of mouth'** is one of the most powerful things there is when it comes to potential adopters choosing which agency they would like to work with. We welcome interest from any adoptive parents who would like to support in our recruitment.



Adoption and Fostering Ambassadors

This initiative is to encourage employees of the council to become ambassadors and to promote fostering and adoption within their workplaces. They will be required to complete an e learning package about fostering and adoption, which then culminates in a short test. They will then be issued with their badges proclaiming them as ambassadors and will be able to signpost those interested in fostering and adoption to us. This is another way in which we are using those we work with to **'spread the word'**.

9. 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 and 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 transition.
- 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.
- To consider the support needs of any adoptive placement made and in particular, the support that a child placed for adoption may require. This can include completion of adoption support assessments and support plans and the chairing of support meetings.

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, BAAF Activity Days, Adoption Link, 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, taking into account 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.

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 Council 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.

10. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

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

The framework for assessing prospective adopters is as follows;

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. 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 give contact information for other agencies 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 but where longer than 2 months is required an explanation for this will be clearly recorded within case records. 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. Workshops are held and the allocated worker will book the prospective adopters onto the workshops. 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 allocated 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. Should more than 4 months be required then an explanation for this will be clearly recorded within case records. 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 allocated worker will guide prospective adopters through this process.
- 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.

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 identified Agency Decision Maker for a final decision to be made.

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.

Inter Country Adoption

A regional inter country Adoption Service has been established. The Yorkshire Adoption Agency is now undertaking inter country adoption work on our behalf and the service includes post adoption support and reporting work where required as well as the preparation of adopters who want to adopt by way of inter country. There will be financial costs to prospective adopters who chose this route and The Yorkshire Adoption Agency will discuss this directly with those interested.

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.

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. The assessment can be fast tracked. The assessment will focus on the specific long-term needs of the child in question and will consider the following;

- 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.

11. 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, Adoption Link, publications, Activity Days and 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. We encourage our approved adopters to consider membership to Adoption UK.

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 Child Appreciation Day. 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 placing authority's (the area in which the child resides) 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 may be supported financially to meet basic safety needs at the point of placement and any costs associated with the introductions. This will be a consideration during the matching process.

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.

12. ADOPTION SUPPORT - GENERAL

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. North Lincolnshire retains responsibility for any North Lincolnshire Child for three years following the making of the Adoption Order. A child placed in North Lincolnshire from another area remains the placing authority's responsibility for three years following the making of the Adoption Order.

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.



Adoption support services are accessed via a formal assessment of need where the request will involve ongoing provision of services. Where one-off support is the likely outcome, this will be provided without a formal assessment.

Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was launched nationally on the 1st May 2015. The aim of the fund is to reduce the gap between adoptive children needing therapeutic services and receiving them (ultimately to improve outcomes for young people and families).

On the 14th January 2016 the government confirmed that the funding for the Adoption Support Fund would continue, increasing year-on-year, for the next four years.

As a result of feedback from adopters, the government also announced that, with immediate effect, the Adoption Support Fund can be used to provide therapeutic support for children from the point at which they are placed with their adoptive families. The DfE is keen that adoptive families have early access to therapeutic parenting training and attachment based therapy, both of which will help to establish relationships and create a stable family environment.

As a service we will still remain responsible for core support and assessments of need but we will be able to apply to the fund when therapeutic services are needed; subject to meeting the fund criteria.

Currently, a broad range of adoption support is provided within the framework set out within the Adoption Agency regulations. A significant amount of support to adoptive families is provided in house. However, where it is assessed to be required referrals are made to our local CAMHS or to other therapeutic providers.

We have a good working relationship with our local CAMHS. The lead Clinical Psychologist is an Adoption Panel Member and there are also monthly meetings with CAMHS to consider service provision.

Support Services

Examples of the support services that we provide in house are as follows;

- **Flamingoland** - Every year we take adoptive families to Flamingoland. The purpose of this is to promote fun, family time and it is a way in which we can keep in touch with adoptive families.
- **Annual Fun Day** - The annual fun day for foster families and adoptive families is held in September.
- **Celebrating Adoption Event** - Every year we hold an annual 'Celebrating Adoption' Event and this is always during National Adoption Week.
- **Christmas Party** - In the run up to Christmas we also hold the annual Christmas party for foster families and adoptive families.
- **Christmas Pantomime** - Every year we provide tickets for our adoptive families to attend a Christmas Pantomime. Again, this is very well received.

All of the above events are very important as they allow families to keep in touch and provide a wonderful opportunity to enjoy family time and also to keep in touch with staff. This helps us identify early on if there are any support needs and to provide services prior to issues becoming more serious.

- **Support Groups for Adopters** - We have arranged support groups that take place in an evening for adopters only.
- **Support Groups for Young People** - In August 2014 we successfully established our adopted young person's group. The young people have named the group 'Superkidz's. This group is held monthly and has a strong attendance.
- **Related by Adoption Group** - We will also be running a group for those who are related by adoption. The aim of this group will be to develop relatives understanding of the issues that adopted children and their parents face and how best they can provide support. This is in recognition that families are one of the most reliable sources of support for adopters but that extended family relationships can also be a source of stress due to a lack of understanding about a child's behaviour and strategies that adoptive parents may be using.
- **Support Group for Birth Parents** - We also hold a support group for birth parents and this is four times a year. Whilst the membership is small it is still felt that this is an important support service to offer and we will continue to promote this amongst our birth families.
- **Support to Social Workers** - The service offers workshops to social workers and they are;

Workshop 1	Early Permanence
Workshop 2	Life Story Work
Workshop 3	Overview of the Adoption Process
Workshop 4	Lifelong Implications of Adoption on all involved
Workshop 5	Life Appreciation Days
Workshop 6	Supporting Adoptive Families – Messages from Disruption Research and how to get support right from point of initial contact.

We run these workshops on request and where need has been identified.

- **Education and the Adopted Child** - We are available to offer support and guidance. Where appropriate we can offer bespoke training to schools in respect to understanding adoption and how best to support the adopted child.

We provide written information in respect to the Pupil Premium which details how this is accessed.

- **Training** - As a service we continuously review and develop the training we provide to our adoptive families based upon need and feedback received.

Our adoptive families are able to access the Local Authority Training Plans and we are continuously reviewing and revising this to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our adoptive families.

- **PAC-UK** - We commission PAC-UK (formerly After Adoption) to provide some services for us in respect to birth families and adopted adults, for example, birth records counselling, or independent counselling.
- **Bespoke Training Packages** - We welcome being approached from all those working with adopted children / young people and their families, in respect to discussing any bespoke training they would like the Adoption Service to provide. For example, we are happy to go into schools to provide training around attachment and understanding the needs of the adopted child. There may be some occasions where there has to be a charge for this training. This depends upon the costs incurred by the Adoption Service, but this is something that would be discussed alongside any conversation regarding a bespoke package of training.
- **Yorkshire and Humber Regional Hub** - As part of the Regional Hub we also have access to a range of events and training, for example; preparing for children to move in courses and second time adopters courses. As these different events are advertised we will ensure that North Lincolnshire Adopters are given the information and are encouraged to attend.
- **Post Adoption Contact** - North Lincolnshire manages the post adoption contact arrangements for every North Lincolnshire child, placed in their adoptive placement and following the making of the Adoption Order.



It is our belief that any contact arrangements (indirect or direct) must always be for the benefit of the child, not the parents or other relatives.

It may serve on or all of the following functions;

- To maintain a child's identity. Consolidating the new with the old.
- Provide reassurance for the child.
- Provide on-going source of information for the child.
- To give the child continuing permission to live with an adoptive family.
- To minimise sense of loss.
- To assist with the process of tracing.
- To give adopters a secure sense of the right to parent.

The letterbox facilitates the indirect contact between children, adoptive families and birth families throughout the adopted child's childhood. There are currently 163 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.

- **Financial Support** - Adopters can be assessed for a means tested allowance based on the needs of the children placed. This allowance is discretionary and is reviewed annually in respect of the needs of each placement and the child.

Additional 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 is received.

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.

- **ASSA** - 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 Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ
Telephone: 01724 297024
Email: adoption@northlincs.gov.uk

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

13. 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 **PAC-UK**, which includes the provision of intermediary services.

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 PAC-UK 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.

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

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.

14. 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.



15. DESCRIPTION OF PERMANENCY OPTIONS

The following list provides options when considering the most appropriate permanent care for a child. Permanence with family should be sought as the first choice for a child if it is in their best interests, only when this cannot be achieved should alternatives be sought. The list should not be seen as a ladder of options. Good assessment and planning should help determine which of the priorities is the most appropriate for the individual.

Staying at Home

Placement with Family or Friends/Connected Persons

Adoption

Early Permanence which includes consideration of Fostering for Adoption / Concurrency placement

Child Arrangement Order/Special Guardianship Order

Long Term Fostering

Residential Care

Staying at Home

The first stage in permanence planning is work with families and children in need to support them staying together.

This involves the provision of to ensure that the child's placement with his or her family does not breakdown or, where it does, that the child is restored to his/her natural family as quickly as is safely possible.

Placement with Family or Friends/Connected Persons

If the assessment concludes that a child cannot safely remain at home, every effort must be made to secure a placement with a family member or Friend/Connected Person as their carer. This will either be as part of a work plan to return the child home, or as a preferred option of permanency if a return home is not in the child's interests.

It is vitally important to establish at an early stage which relatives or friends might be available to care for the child, in order to comply with court proceedings and avoid delay for a child.

Permanence with Family or Friends/Connected Persons should be considered if:

- There are no significant risks to the child with the birth family/friends or connected person.
- There is a high likelihood of achieving permanence with birth family/friend or connected person.
- There is wider family support.
- Agencies are able to provide sufficient long-term help to support the family/friend/connected person to maintain the child's stability and wellbeing throughout their childhood.
- There is a low risk of further harm or disruption by the parents.
- It meets the wishes and feelings of the child.

Adoption

Adoption transfers Parental Responsibility for the child from the birth parents and others who have parental responsibility, including the Local Authority, permanently and solely to the adopter(s).

The child is deemed to be the child of the adopter(s) as if he or she had been born to them. The child's birth certificate is changed to an adoption certificate showing the adopter(s) to be the child's parent(s). A child who is not already a citizen of the UK acquires British citizenship if adopted in the UK by a citizen of the UK.

Research indicates adoption as a primary consideration and as a main factor to contributing to the stability of children, especially for those under four years of age who cannot be reunified with their birth or extended family.

Early Permanence including Fostering for Adoption

A child for whom adoption is thought to be a likely outcome may be placed with prospective adopters who have been given temporary approval as foster carers. This can be where the child's plan is likely to become adoption, but other options have not yet been ruled out for that child.

Approved prospective adopters can be given temporary approval as foster carers under Section 25A of the Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. This temporary foster carer approval planning process can be carried out at the same time as the adopter approval process.

The local authority should consider placing a child with dual approved foster carers whenever it is considering adoption; or where the decision has been made that the child ought to be placed for adoption, but where the agency does not yet have authority to place the child for adoption through either a placement order or parental consent.

Special Guardianship

Special Guardianship addresses the needs of a specific group of children, who need a sense of security, stability within a placement away from their parents, but without the absolute legal break, associated with adoption.

Child Arrangements Order

This is an order that dictates with whom the child concerned is to live; this person acquires Parental Responsibility via the order. The Order can also outline arrangements regarding contact with the child. It may be used to increase the degree of legal permanence in a placement with family or friends/connected persons, or a long-term foster placement where this would be in the child's best interests.

Long-term Fostering

Long-term foster care can be an option that is in the best interests of children who retain strong links with their birth family, and whose wishes and feelings indicate they do not want or need the formality of adoption. It is also used when the carers wish for continued involvement of the Local Authority, with shared parental responsibility.

Residential Care

Residential living is only likely to be considered in very few cases when the criteria for permanence is met and it is not possible, or appropriate to provide a fostering placement.

The needs of the young person may be such that they cannot be met within a family placement or it may be the wishes and feelings of the young person not to live within a family.

Final Note;

For children whom adoption is not appropriate, each case will need to be considered on its merits. The decision between the options will depend on the individual needs of the child set alongside the advantages and disadvantages of each legal route.

16. 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. If you have a complaint we encourage you to contact the service directly in the first instance. Staff there will do all they can to put things right and resolve the issue for you. If you feel the matter is still unresolved or you wish to complain formally, please report your complaint to;

The Complaints Representations Manager

North Lincolnshire Council
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ
Telephone: 01724 296426
Email: Lesley.Cooper@northlincs.gov.uk

If you remain unsatisfied with our response you may wish to contact the **Local Government Ombudsman on 0300 061 0614.**

17. ALLEGATIONS

Approved Adopters can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with North Lincolnshire's Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. All allegations are managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer.

In addition to the role of the supervising social worker, adopters can have access to an independent social worker who can offer practical and emotional support.

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

There were no allegations in respect of any approved adopters in 2017 - 2018.

18. OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS:

The Children's Commissioner for England

The Children's Commissioner for England promotes and protects children's rights in England. The Commissioner does this by listening to what children and young people say about what matters to them and making sure adults in charge take their views and interests into account. Contact details are;

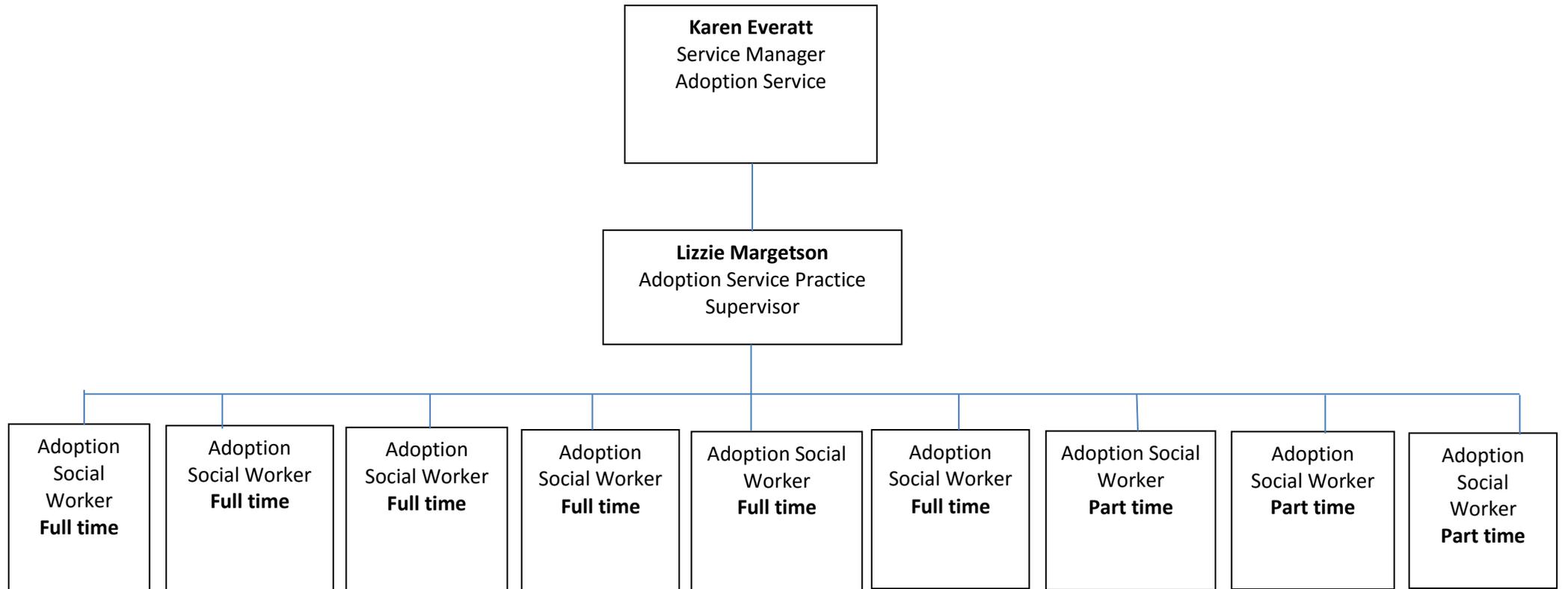
The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Telephone: 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk



Appendix 1

NORTH LINCONSHIRE ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICE

ADOPTION LEADS



North Lincolnshire Council

Young Person's Statement of Purpose for Adoption 2018 - 2019



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2. What Adopted Young People Say we should do	4
3. What the Adoption Service will do	5
4. Useful Information	7

The address of your local Adoption Service is;

North Lincolnshire Adoption and Fostering Service
Church Square House
30 – 40 High Street
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN15 6NL

Telephone: 01724 297024

If you would like some help going through this Statement of Purpose then please ring us (or ask your parents to) on **01724 297024** and we will sort this out for you. Ask to speak to the Duty Adoption Social Worker.

The person who put this together is called **Karen Everatt** and she is in charge of the Adoption Service. She is always interested to hear about what you think and to answer any questions you might have. You can contact her on **01724 297024** or by email karen.everatt@northlincs.gov.uk

1. For Starters

Every Adoption Service has to write a Statement of Purpose. This is so that everyone knows what the Adoption Service does and also the rules that it has to follow.

Some of the rules that we have to follow are in these important papers;

- **National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014**
- **Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013**

You should have a chance to see this Statement of Purpose. So, we make sure it is on the Council's webpages www.northlincs.gov.uk and we also give it to every adopted young person that we are working with.

Every year we update this so that you can see what we will be doing and what we want to achieve.

The people who check we are doing what we need to do are from **Ofsted** and their details are;

OFSTED
Piccadilly Street
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Telephone 0300 123 1231
Email; enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

In June 2017 the Adoption Services that we provide were inspected by Ofsted. Some of our adopted young people met with the Ofsted Inspector. The Ofsted Inspector listened to the feedback that they gave about the Adoption Service.

In September 2017 the Ofsted Report was published and North Lincolnshire's Adoption Services were judged as '**Outstanding**'. The young people and adopters who met with the Inspector had this to say about our adoption service;

'You can always speak to someone who will listen and help you'.

We want the Adoption Service to continue to be outstanding and to do this we will make sure that we listen to your suggestions. We want you to tell us what is working well and if you think there is something we can be doing better. The different ways you can contact us are included in this Statement of Purpose.

2. What Adopted Young People say we should do

Every month we run an adopted young person's group for young people aged nearly 7 years old and all the way up to 18 years old. The young people who come to this group have called the group '**Superkidz's**'.

Here are some of the things that they said the Adoption Service should do;

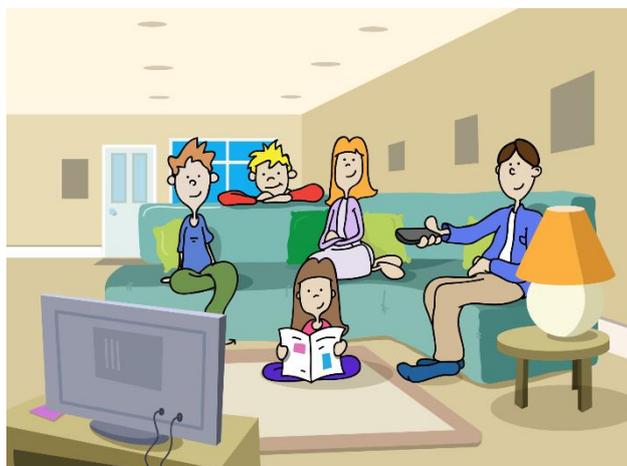
- Help with any troubles
- Give information
- Give support
- Help answer questions about birth families
- Be friendly
- Listen to young people
- Be nice to people
- Treat people fairly
- Help children find a family
- To keep arranging for adopted young people to meet



3. What the Adoption Service will do

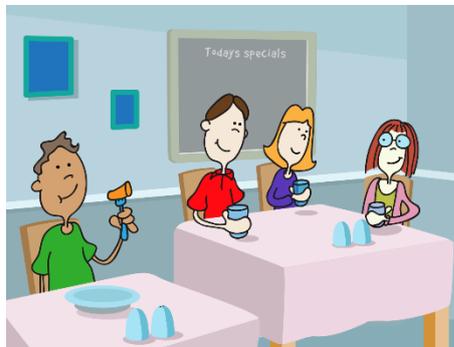
We will do all of the above and...

- You are all different and have your own opinions so we will listen to you in how best to support you and your family.
- We will ask you what you think about the Adoption Service. This helps us find out the best way we can help.
- We will ask you for any ideas about things we can do.
- What you say is always important to us.
- We will be respectful.
- We will always be available to help with troubles.
- We will give information about the support and services we provide. We will make sure that we do this by talking and also by writing things down.
- We will try and answer all your questions. Sometimes the answer may be difficult to hear and so we will always be around to support you and to help you work it out.
- It's important that you are safe and that you are given every chance to succeed and this means having a goal for your future. We will do whatever we can to help with this.



Examples of Services we will provide for you;

- We can give you a Children's Guide to Adoption.
- We can give you a guide to Adoption Support Services in North Lincolnshire.
- We also have an After 18 guide to Adoption.
- We can help with collecting memories and in collecting information for your life story book.
- We can try and help sort out things to do with contact.
- Sometimes you may need to talk to someone else, like a therapist. This can be the case when things feel very complicated and space and time is needed to work some things out. A therapist can sometimes help to do this. Or, it could be that an Adoption Social worker is the best person to help you do this. Either way, we will help you find someone you can talk to on a one to one.
- We will make sure you have the dates for the monthly group.
- We can arrange different training, for example, we can help schools understand a little more about what it is like to be adopted. Or, you might want to learn about something in particular and if you let us know then we might be able to arrange it.
- Every year we will also invite you to a;
 - ✓ Summer Fun Day
 - ✓ Christmas Party
 - ✓ Celebrating Adoption Event
 - ✓ Christmas Pantomime trip
 - ✓ Flamingoland Trip



4. Useful Information

In North Lincolnshire we have someone who can give advice about adoption support. This person is called an Adoption Support Services Advisor and she is called Di Rees. You can contact Di at di.rees@northlincs.gov.uk or write to her at the below address.

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

Or, you can speak to an Adoption Duty Worker on **01724 297024** and ask that they tell Di that you want to speak to her.



Making a Complaint

If you are really unhappy with the Adoption and Fostering Service and you have tried to tell us but you don't think that it has been sorted then you can contact the Complaints Person and she is called Lesley Cooper. Contact details are;

**The Complaints Representations Manager
North Lincolnshire Council
People Directorate
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ**

Telephone Number 01724 296426

Email Lesley.Cooper@northlincs.gov.uk

If you remain unsatisfied with our response you may wish to contact the **Local Government Ombudsman on 0300 061 0614.**

Another Useful Contact:

The Children's Commissioner for England

The Children's Commissioner for England promotes and protects children's rights in England. The Commissioner does this by listening to what children and young people say about what matters to them and making sure adults in charge take their views and interests into account. Contact details are;

**The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT**

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

