



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR ADOPTION SERVICE April 2018 – March 2019

Introduction

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of the Adoption Service of Faith in Families, known as “Adopt Together” (hereafter called “The Agency”) as required by the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations SI 2003/367 and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (Amendment) Regulations SI 2005/ 3341.

The Statement of Purpose is updated annually by the Leadership Team and reviewed by the Board of Trustees. A copy of the Statement of Purpose is readily available to all those working with the Adoption Agency:–

- Adoptive parents
- Prospective adoptive parents
- Adopted children and young people
- Birth families
- Other interested parties, e.g. volunteers
- Local Authorities and Health and Foundation and Social Care Trusts
- General public.

Upon request arrangements can be made for the Statement of Purpose to be translated, explained or produced in a different format to suit the needs of staff, services users or volunteers. More detailed information is available in the Agency's Three Year Business Plan, which is available on request.

The Agency is a Registered Charity (No. 213692), which is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Agency undertakes to provide a comprehensive Adoption Service through the responsibility delegated to the Chief Executive by Trustees and outlined in the Articles of Association. The Agency, registered with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED), operates within the requirements of the following primary and secondary legislation and guidance:

- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated Regulations and Guidance
- Adoption and Children Act Guidance 2014
- Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations Amendment 2011
- Guidance: Adoption and Children Act 2002: First Revision 2011
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005
- The Children Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
- The Care Standards Act 2000 (and accompanying Adoption National Minimum Standards)

- The National Standards Commission (Fees and Frequency of Inspection) (Adoption Agencies) Regulations 2003 – England
- Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (Under Associated Child Protection Guidance)
- Other relevant Legislation and Regulations and Guidance issued to Local Authorities, which highlights good practice relating to services provided by both the Statutory and Voluntary Sector.
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- The Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013

THE AGENCY'S POLICY FOR CHILDREN

All children deserve the opportunity to fulfil their potential. This has been set out in the five outcomes that are key to children and young people's wellbeing:

- Staying safe
- Being healthy
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well being

For the Agency, the child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process. We are dedicated to the wellbeing of the child based upon the belief that it is within the family that a child's needs are primarily satisfied and their rights secured. This should be the principal focus with prospective adopters who wish to adopt children.

This Agency is committed to providing secure placements for children through the identification of highly motivated and skilled adoptive parents, who ensure children in their care feel loved, valued and supported. The Agency is committed to providing on-going support and training to adoptive parents through their child/ren's lifetime to ensure that their current and changing needs are continually assessed and addressed by highly trained and skilled professionals.

1. THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE AGENCY

Aims:

The aims of the Agency are reflected in the Quality Standards which underpin and inform the Agency's Adoption Policy, Procedure and Practice Guidance:-

- To provide secure and sustainable adoptive placements for children Looked After in Local Authority Care, who are likely to have experienced abuse and neglect, have varying degrees of physical or learning disabilities and may have experienced multiple placements and traumatic early experiences resulting in attachment difficulties.
- To provide counselling and support as appropriate to adopted adults, birth families, adopters, children and young people whose lives have been affected by adoption or other permanent placements.

- To provide an intermediary service to adult adoptees and their adult birth relatives, whose adoptions took place through the Agency.
- To provide counselling to Catholic birth families wishing to place infants for adoption including the provision of advice about Local Authority services.
- To provide Training and Consultancy Services on a range of adoption related topics to Local Authorities and other Adoption Agencies.
- To ensure that the physical, mental and emotional welfare of people affected by adoption who wish to use the agency's services, is safeguarded.
- To have a role in developing innovative practice and maintaining service delivery to a high standard.
- To give due consideration to other opportunities for service development and delivery including adoption related services.

Objectives:

- To recruit, prepare, train and assess adoptive parents.
- To match and place children with prospective adoptive parents, and to provide appropriate adoption support.
- To target and identify minority ethnic families to meet the needs of minority ethnic, or dual heritage children.
- To identify families from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds who demonstrate the skills and abilities necessary to meet the needs of children who may have a different ethnic and/or cultural background from their own.
- To recruit families who can meet the needs of the harder to place children, such as sibling groups, older children and children with disabilities.
- To implement a recruitment strategy which seeks to positively attract potential prospective adopters with the key skills, experiences and abilities necessary to provide permanency for children, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith, and/or socioeconomic background.
- To enhance children's and adults' sense of their identity by respecting their personal history, culture, language, religion and race and by encouraging the development of secure attachment relationships.
- To develop new and innovative services related to our core work.
- To develop professional skills and understanding and disseminate this knowledge widely.
- To influence positively public and national policy relating to the promotion of best interests of children.
- To support the work of the services of the Agency by access to professional advisers in the field of law, medicine and mental health and education.

- To support the placement of children by an efficient and effective administrative support service.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of services provided by the Agency's Adoption Service.
- To involve service users in the provision and development of services.
- To work to the Agency's Policies, Procedures and Standards in relation to safeguarding and child protection, equal opportunities, complaints, finance and administration, health and environment, safety, security and management of risk, monitoring and evaluation, staff development and training, staff management, staff recruitment, service-user involvement and volunteers.
- To counsel and support Catholic birth families who are considering the placement of children for adoption and to ensure that the service offered recognises the lifelong implications of adoption for all concerned.
- To facilitate contact between adopted adults and their adult birth relatives, in accordance with the Agency's Intermediary Services Policy and Procedures.

Equality and diversity:

- The Agency positively acknowledges that in society there is wide diversity in child rearing practice, family values and attitudes across different racial, cultural, religious and social class groups.
- We recognise children being placed for adoption must be given the opportunity to develop a positive identity and strong self-esteem. We will seek to challenge and overcome any discriminatory practices or responses based on race, religion, culture, language, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or social class.
- We will always seek to support adoptive parents and we will specifically address any particular support needs when a child is placed with adoptive parents who are of a different race, religion, sexual orientation, disability cultural or linguistic backgrounds.
- We will seek to ensure adoptive families are able to access relevant resources to develop the child's positive identity and build good self-esteem whilst understanding and retaining their own culture, religion, race and language.
- We will acknowledge the disadvantage frequently experienced by children being placed for adoption. We will encourage and support Adoptive parents to be able to empathise with and understand the implications for adoptive children of having experienced such backgrounds
- We are committed to ensuring children with disabilities should have the same opportunity to be considered for adoption. We recognise that children with disabilities will have additional needs and their adoptive families may need additional support.
- We recognise and value difference and the wide diversity of prospective adopters who may apply with us to adopt a child or children. We welcome applications from prospective adopters irrespective of race, culture, religion, social class, language, age, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

Involving the child

We are committed to ensuring that the needs, views, wishes and voice of children placed for adoption are reflected in the practices and services provided by the Agency.

2. THE REGISTERED PROVIDER:

Responsible Person is: **Lynda Fletcher**, Faith in Families, 7 Colwick Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5FR, Telephone: 0115 955 8811

The Responsible Person has a Certificate in Social Care, Certificate in Social Services (Social Work) CETSU, Leadership, Management & Safeguarding PG Level 7, PQ award Level 1 Social work and N.N.E.B (National Nursery examination Board). The Responsible Person has 44 years' experience of working in statutory and voluntary child care sectors; this includes a proven track record of leadership.

3. CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF ANY) UNDER PART 2 OF THE CARE STANDARDS ACT 2000

- Domestic Adoption Services (DA)
- Adoption Support Agency (ASA)
- The Agency is Registered with OFSTED (since 01/04/07), with the most recent Certificate of Registration being issued on 04.05.2017

Contact Details:

OFSTED Piccadilly Gate Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.org
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

4. THE ADOPTION MANAGER:

Laura Payne, Adopt Together, Faith in Families, 7 Colwick Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5FR, Telephone: 0115 955 8811

The Manager holds a MA degree in Social Work, a CQSW, BA (Hons) in Social Administration, PQ Certificate in Leadership, Management & Safeguarding. The Registered Manager has been employed in Statutory and Voluntary Child Care Services for over 30 years, with the latter 25 years within a specialist adoption setting.

5. FAITH IN FAMILIES STAFFING:

Leadership Team

Chief Executive

Certificate in Social Care, Certificate in Social Services (Social Work) CETSU, Leadership, Management & Safeguarding PG Level 7, PQ award Level 1 Social work and N.N.E.B (National Nursery examination Board) The Chief Executive has 44 years' experience of working in statutory and voluntary child care sectors; this

includes a proven track record of leadership. The last 21 years specialising in adoption.

Head of Professional Services

The Head of Professional Services holds a MA in Social Work, a CQSW, BA (Hons) in Social Administration, PQ Certificate in Leadership, Management & Safeguarding. she has been employed in Statutory and Voluntary Child Care Services for over 30 years, with the latter 25 years within a specialist adoption setting.

Head of Finance and Resources

Institute of Financial Accountants
Member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries
Diploma in Charity Accounting (ICAEW)

Support Services Team

2 Adoption Team Administrators

NVQ Level 1&2 business administration

Finance and Administration Assistant, Schools Admin Assistant

NVQ Accounting AAT Level 2
IAM Diploma Administration management
City and Guilds Level 2, spread sheets, database and IT RSA Typewriting and audio typing level 2
RSA1&2 Word Processing, BTEC national in Business Studies

Social Work Team

1 full time Adoption Manager

BA in Social Work
Theraplay level 1
Adult Attachment Interviewing

1 Full Time Adoption Support Manager

BA in Social Work
PQ 2 – Enabling others, Practice Assessors Award
DDP level 1

1 part time Senior Practitioner

MA Social Work

6 Full-time Social Workers and 3 Part-time Social Workers

BA (Hons) Social Work (5)
English MA in Social Work Diploma in Social Work (2)
Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (1)
PQ Level 1 Qualification (2)
DYADIC developmental psychotherapy level 1 (5)
Theraplay level 1 (5)
Theraplay level 2 (1)
Evidence based psychological therapies Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (children) level 1 (1)

1 Sessional Senior Social Worker

BA (Hons) Psychology
Diploma in Applied Social Studies

Diploma in Counselling
PQ Level Qualification
Essential Management skills
Theraplay Level1
DDP Level 1

1 Part-time Adoption Recruitment / Community Worker

OCR Level 3 Business Admin
BTEC Diploma Foundation Studies (art and design)
Edexcel BTEC National Diploma – multimedia

The Agency seeks to recruit social work staff who have a minimum of three years post - qualifying experience within a Children and Family setting. Exceptions are made in the case of a newly-qualified social worker with significant experience whilst un-qualified within a Children and Family setting. In the latter example, the Agency would actively support the newly qualified Social Worker by providing enhanced supervision with a skilled and experienced Manager. The Agency would also agree to them commencing a programme of development consistent with the national assessment and support of them in their first year of employment. Two staff members have completed their ASYE to date and a third is near completion. This is balanced by several more mature members of staff having many years' experience as specialist fostering and adoption social workers.

A number of the social workers have trained in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and/or Theraplay level 1, with one holding level 2 theraplay and soon to achieve practicum status. A three year training plan is underway aiming to develop specialisms for individual workers where they are ultimately trained to practicum level. In time the agency hopes to offer a range of therapeutic services available to our own families and to others, outside of the agency on a commissioned basis. In addition newer staff are provided with training in core skills and all staff kept up to date via regular practice development days or specific training to meet their needs or those of the Agency.

The Senior Leadership Team of the Agency all have significant experience and post qualification training in Management and/or Leadership. The Agency is committed to the continuous professional development of its entire staff and succession planning forms part of our recruitment strategy, where possible individual staff members have been promoted.

Personal development plans are agreed with all staff as part of their Annual Appraisal and where appropriate, individual training plans are agreed in line with identified career or agency objectives.

All Agency staff are subject to the Agency's appointment and employment procedures, training and appraisal protocols including enhanced DBS checks on a two yearly basis. Social Work staff are all required to be registered with HCPC.

Any sessional staff are subject to the same requirements as any full-time employed staff member.

All staff receive regular supervision and Agency Procedures offer clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within this process.

The Agency commissions a number of individuals and volunteers in relation to its organisation, fundraising and service delivery. These include:-

- Education Adviser
- Medical Adviser
- Legal Adviser
- Psychotherapist and Clinical Adviser

- IT Adviser
- HR Adviser
- Experienced adoptive parents as presenters in our Stage Two of the Adoption Preparation Workshops

All those who have a role in delivering the services of the Agency are subject to an enhanced DBS check and are expected to undertake child protection and safeguarding training in line with the requirements of their role and function. This includes all Volunteers and Trustees.

6. ORGANISATION AND OPERATIONAL CONTROL:

The Agency is governed by a Board of Trustees.

Two Executive Committees of the Board, Professional Issues and Finance and General Purpose have oversight of the Agency's professional services and its financial and administrative management.

The Board of Trustees delegate the day to day management of the Agency to the Chief Executive, who delegates particular responsibility through the Leadership Team. The Senior Leadership Team comprises the Chief Executive, Head of Professional Services and Head of Finance & Resources. A clear protocol exists to ensure management presence at all times in the Agency.

The Chief Executive holds overall responsibility for the efficient and effective management of the Agency and its services, taking a lead in strategic service diversification and development. In the absence of the Chief Executive, the Head of Professional Services deputises in all social work and professional matters and the Head of Finance and Resources deputises on all financial and resource matters. The Chief Executive is the Agency Decision Maker in relation to the Adoption Service. The Head of Professional Services holds lead responsibility for professional service delivery across all of the Agency's social work services and is also the Designated Safeguarding Person for the Agency. The Head of Finance & Resources is responsible for managing the finance, fundraising and administrative services of the Agency and supervision of all support service staff.

The Adoption Manager and Adoption Support Manager are responsible for the management and oversight of the day-to-day work relating to the provision of adoption services, including the supervision of all the adoption social work staff.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

The Agency strives to ensure that its services are effective and efficient, and continually monitors and evaluates its operations and administrative procedures. Systems currently in place ensure that the services provided by the Agency are effective and the quality of those services is of an appropriate and high standard.

Service-Users

The Agency is committed to seeking feedback from service-users in order to inform future service provision and to assess the efficiency and quality of its service provision. Systems are also established to seek feedback from birth relative and adopted adults who are in receipt of, or who have received, the Agency's services. Service-users are represented on the Board of Trustees, the Adoption Panel, and on the Volunteer Task Force.

Employees

In the recruitment process, if an applicant is not selected following the interview process and they request feedback, the agency will provide advice and feedback on the applicant's performance.

Exit interviews are carried out with all staff leaving the Agency, where practicable and with their agreement, and their views taken into consideration in all aspects of the Agency's services and the suitability of the HR Policy and Procedures.

Children

Every effort is made to seek the views of children placed for adoption through the Agency and their views recorded to inform future adoption service planning. Post-adoption groups of children of various age ranges have usefully informed the development of the Agency's Adoption Support Services for Children. Similarly, family events held over the summer and new year periods are opportunities for staff to creatively obtain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people which inform future events planning. The Agency's Complaints Procedure is readily accessible to all service-users, including children (through the Children's Leaflet) and is highlighted to service - users at the first point of contact with the Agency.

Enquirers about Adoption

When people request an information pack their enquiry is followed up by a member of the Social Work Team normally the same day and in all cases within a maximum of 10 working days. If individuals do not wish to proceed with their interest in adoption, the reasons for this are recorded and subsequently evaluated in order to inform the Agency's recruitment programme. After the Agency's monthly adoption information and open evenings, evaluation and feedback forms are completed by Prospective Adopters attending the evening.

Prospective Adoptive Parents

Following the acceptance of a registration of interest form, prospective adopters attend two workshops in stage 1 and three in stage 2. After each workshop adopters are asked to complete evaluation forms. Forms are also completed by the workshop leaders, these highlight any areas for further exploration for the applicants and also informs the annual review of the workshops carried out by the Adoption Team.

At the end of the assessment process, and following the Adoption Panel, prospective adopters and social workers are requested to complete a questionnaire highlighting their experience of the Panel process. Panel members complete quality assurance feedback forms on all prospective adopters' reports presented to Panel. These evaluations are scrutinised on a six monthly basis and used to inform the continuing development of the Panel process, which actively involves the Panel Chair, Vice-Chair, and Professional Adviser to Panel, Adoption Manager, and the Agency Decision-maker. Any relevant information is also linked to the performance management process.

The Panel Advisor also provides the Agency with six monthly reports including an analysis of the performance of the adoption service which informs improvements in service delivery to prospective adopters and children. This six-monthly analysis includes an oversight of the approval of adopters and ensures the panel carefully monitors the Agency's responses and actions on any issues identified in the reports.

The Agency Decision-maker receives copies of the Adoption Panel Annual Report, which informs the Professional Services Report to Trustees.

Adoptive Families

Following the placement of child/ren, adoptive parents are requested to provide feedback on the introductory process and the quality and usefulness of the support they received during this period. This information is used to inform the planning of future introductions and staff development.

A detailed questionnaire is sent to adoptive families after the granting of an Adoption Order, which seeks the adopter's views on their adoption experience with the agency. This includes questions in relation to their preparation for adoption, matching and introductions, placement, support and on-going involvement with the agency.

Following the granting of an Adoption Order, a member of the adoption support team undertakes a post-adoption support visit to engage the adoptive family in the Adoption Support Services provided by the Agency and which are fully discussed throughout the adoption assessment and preparation programme.

During the course of this interview, further opportunities for the adopters to provide feedback to the Agency on all aspects of the service they have received are given. The information gained informs the future planning and development of the Agency's Adoption and Adoption Support Services. A questionnaire is regularly sent to all adoptive parents seeking their views on the Adoption Support Services they would value receiving over the coming year, which range from informal support groups to structured workshops with external speakers and contributors. These have been provided on an Inter-Agency basis on occasion as this gives families opportunity to share both their learning and their adoption experience with adoptive families working with other Agencies, both Voluntary and Statutory.

Adoption Support (birth relatives, adopted adults, adoptive parents):

All service users who receive adoption support services from the Agency are sent a questionnaire at the conclusion of the work seeking their views about the quality of the service they have received. This information is evaluated to improve the planning and delivery of future services.

Children

The Agency has established a Children's Groups programme. "Reach" Groups are held over school holiday. Reach groups have a dual purpose of providing a fun and stimulating opportunity for children to meet together with other adopted children whilst also providing some often much needed respite to parents during the school holidays. The positive feedback from both parents and children has been outstanding. Two groups are run for different ages and have focussed on drama, dance, sport and arts and crafts, as well as trips out. Evaluation forms are completed by the children and young people themselves following each group session and by their adoptive parents. The content of the evaluation informs the planning of future groups. The Reach group facilitators will meet with the Reach group children and parents periodically to receive direct feedback from the children and to ensure their views inform developments within the Agency.

8. PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING, APPROVING AND SUPPORTING PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS:

Recruitment of Adopters:

The Agency aims to provide stable and secure adoptive families for children where a decision has been made by a Local Authority that adoption is in their best interests. The Agency's details and profile are registered with First4Adoption, the National Gateway for adoption, as well as other relevant websites such as New Families Social and the East Midlands Adoption Consortium website. These are regularly updated and the Agency monitors these as a source of enquiries.

Recruitment activity is targeted on the children Local Authorities have difficulty in placing through their own approved adoption resources. Details of these children are received by the Agency through direct contact from Local Authority staff, circulation of flyers, as well as via web based matching services such as linkmaker and Adoption Match. (Formerly the national adoptions register). Historically the agency has had strong links with local authorities in the region and this is continuing as plans for regionalisation of local authority adoption services progress. The Agency has been an active participant in the development of the RAA and it is anticipated this will continue. This is an integral part of the Agency's on-going commitment to reducing delay for children awaiting permanent placements.

Recruitment activity is on-going throughout the year and is facilitated by the Adoption Recruitment, Publicity and Fundraising Worker, as part of the Marketing and Fundraising Team. Recruitment activities include: targeted marketing campaigns encompassing online and offline advertising in broadcast and print media, press and PR activities, print distribution throughout the region, partnerships, direct mail, social media and regular recruitment events. An annual recruitment strategy is prepared each year by the Adoption Recruitment, Publicity and Fundraising Worker in consultation with the Adoption Manager and as agreed by the Head of Professional Services. The strategy is based on careful analysis of previous campaigns, statistics, emerging markets, new opportunities and communication platforms and takes into account forthcoming targets. The strategy is also informed by statistics and guidance from national bodies and local authorities.

Every month the Agency hosts an adoption open evening – First Thursday. Anyone interested in finding out more about adoption is welcome and the evening consists of presentations, short film and informal discussion with adoption social workers. There is also the opportunity to meet with existing adoptive parents.

A duty social worker is available each working day to receive enquiries from prospective adoptive parents, to provide information about the children the Agency places for adoption and to share details of the Two-Stage Adoption Preparation, Assessment and Approval process of the Agency. A comprehensive Information Pack is sent to enquirers, usually on the same day and always within 24 hours of initial contact. Follow up contact is made if there is no contact from the prospective adopter in the form of a telephone call, letter or email within two weeks.

Where enquirers wish to pursue their interest in adoption and are considering, making, or wish to make, a registration of interest with the agency they are asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire, this is then followed by an interview with the prospective adopters. The Adoption Manager will then, in consultation with the social worker, make the decision as to whether to accept a registration of interest and the prospective adopters will be informed in writing within 5 working days of the outcome, including any reasons for why a registration of interest was declined and how, if this is the decision, it relates to the eligibility criteria to adopt as identified in statutory adoption guidance. The Agency may make its services available to individuals where English is not their first language; and to individuals who have a difficulty in accessing resource material in their current format. If the Agency is not able to make its full range of services available, it will assist the enquirer in signposting to a relevant agency.

The Two-Stage Preparation, Assessment and Approval process:

Stage One

On receipt, and acceptance, of the prospective adopter's Registration of Interest form prospective adopters enter Stage One of the assessment process with the Agency. The Agency commits to undertake the Stage One Assessment within two months, unless the prospective adopter requests it proceed at a slower pace, or factors beyond our control eg

securing references and Local Authority checks and medicals cannot be completed in this time.

At the start of Stage One the Agency will agree a Stage One Plan (Agreement), which identifies an agreed plan of work with the prospective adopter and details the areas of work that the prospective adopter and the Agency will undertake during Stage One. From the enquiry stage onwards information is provided about the programme of preparation for adoption; the procedure for carrying out police checks, medicals, and details of the training to be undertaken at each stage, including information about the process for making a representation (including a complaint).

The Stage One Plan (Agreement) clearly identifies the dates of the two preparation Workshop days provided by the Agency which adopters will attend. The preparation Workshops will introduce and explore with the prospective adopters areas relevant to parenting children who require adoptive placements, including: Child Development, Attachment, Abuse and Trauma, Parenting, Healing and Hope, Loss and Grief, Contact and relevant Legal issues. These workshops are facilitated by two social workers from the Adoption Team.

Stage One will conclude with the prospective adopters completing an interview with one of the Senior Practitioners or Managers, who will review their learning and their readiness to move into Stage Two. A formal report will be written with a recommendation as to whether to invite the prospective adopter to move into Stage Two, should they wish to. Whatever the outcome of this meeting the prospective adopters will be informed in writing as well as verbally. Should the prospective adopters disagree with this decision, they can make representations through the complaints procedure or seek independent support from First4Adoption or Adoption UK.

Stage Two

Stage Two commences after prospective adopters have successfully completed Stage One with the Agency and they have notified the Agency of their wish to proceed with the assessment process. In these circumstances prospective adopters usually move straight into Stage Two. However, in some circumstances, prospective adopters may wish to take a break of up to six months between the end of Stage One and the beginning of Stage Two. This is always discussed and agreed with prospective adopters, and confirmed in writing. If it is not possible for prospective adopters to commence Stage Two within a six-month period, and should they wish to continue on their journey towards adoption, they are required, by adoption regulations and guidance, to repeat Stage One.

At the start of Stage Two the Agency completes and agrees a Stage Two Plan (Agreement) with the prospective adopters which will include all the tasks and areas of work the Agency and the prospective adopters will undertake during Stage Two. It will provide detail about the adoption social worker who will be undertaking the Stage Two assessment with them and the agreed dates for assessment visits. It will also identify the dates for the preparatory training the Agency provides for prospective adopters in the course of the Stage Two assessment process.. The Agency commits to completing the assessment process to the point of the Agency decision within four months of accepting the prospective adopter's notification of their wish to proceed. Where this is not achieved the reasons for this will be provided to the prospective adopters and retained on the case file. During stage 2 written information is provided to the prospective adopters about the role of the adoption panel and the IRM.

The Agency provides three whole day Preparation Workshops. These are designed to be informal, inclusive and informative. They provide the opportunity to discuss and explore in detail the areas relevant to becoming adoptive parents including: Changing Relationships,

Child Development, Managing Behaviour, Loss and Communicating with Children, Caring for Abused Children, Matching, Contact, Post Approval and Adoption Support. The workshops also include presentations by adoptive parents, previously approved by the Agency.

The preparation and assessment programme aims to equip prospective adopters to meet the physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural, spiritual, and social and health needs of children placed for adoption from Local Authority Care. An additional session is held at the end of a series of preparation workshops to prepare relatives, friends and supporters. Two other optional modules have recently been developed for those interested in fostering for adoption and those considering sibling placements.

BAAF Form PAR (Prospective Adopters Report) is used as the assessment format and a copy of this is provided for prospective adopters at the start of the assessment process. There are additions to the Form PAR format included in the Agency's Assessment Programme, which include contact, health and safety, statement of understanding of wider issues relating to children who have experienced abuse, and the finance statement, providing information regarding the prospective adopters' financial circumstances. This information is completed prior to the presentation of the PAR to the Agency's adoption panel and reference is made to their satisfactory completion.

Prospective adopters are provided with a Home Study Workbook which they use to record information about themselves and their family, and which contributes towards the content of the PAR assessment report. This enables and encourages prospective adopters to record information about their learning, and also include resources that may be useful to them as adoptive parents. Consideration is given to working with prospective adopters who may not be able to access written information easily, for example those with sight impairment or whose first language is not English. Additionally, relevant adjustments are made in the case of working with same sex prospective adopters, in order to ensure that the assessment process is flexible, adaptable and pertinent to the individual needs of each applicant. All training, delivery and content is underpinned by a commitment to anti discriminatory and non-oppressive parenting.

A second opinion and assessment review may be completed by the Agency where an assessment has proved complex and it is felt another view would be beneficial. The decision to provide a second opinion is usually made jointly by the Adoption Manager and Head of Professional Services, who regularly discuss all on going assessments during supervision. Assessing Social Workers will make this possibility clear to applicants at the beginning of stage two.

Once the final Assessment Report is prepared, a copy is shared with the prospective adopters and any comments they make regarding the content are fully considered before the report is finalised. The prospective adopters are asked to sign the final report.

The Agency recognises and identifies there will be circumstances in which it is appropriate to undertake a fast track assessment and approval process for certain previous adopters and foster carers. For these prospective adopters, the Agency will be able to bypass the Stage One assessment process and move immediately into Stage Two.

The Agency operates an Adoption Panel in accordance with the Adoption Agency Regulations and the Assessment Report is presented to the Adoption Panel for consideration. Prospective adopters are encouraged to attend the Panel and participate in the discussion, and are provided with written information to assist them in deciding whether they will attend and to prepare them for meeting the Panel.

The Chief Executive is the Agency Decision Maker, and all Agency Decisions are made following consideration of the Adoption Panel's Recommendations and Minutes of the Panel Meeting within seven working days of that Recommendation. Prospective adopters are notified verbally by their Assessing Social Worker or Adoption Manager within two days of the Agency Decision and in writing within five days working days of the Agency Decision. Where the Agency Decision-maker is minded not to approve an application, the prospective adopters are given the opportunity to make representations to the Agency Decision Maker or to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for an independent review of their assessment by the IRM Panel.

Support:

Following approval as being suitable to adopt, prospective adopters are actively involved in the home finding process. They will be registered on Adoption Match and encouraged to join Linkmaker. They will be invited to any relevant profiling events, exchange days or activity days. Their details will be circulated at regional homefinding meetings by the social workers leading on this aspect of the team's work.

The allocated social worker will discuss all appropriate children with the adopters. This may include children of different ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds from themselves if the prospective adopters have demonstrated during the course of their assessment that they would be able to meet these needs specifically and evidentially. If a link appears possible they will make contact with the child's social worker to commence the process of exchanging information. Full, comprehensive and up to date information about the child is requested, including health and educational assessments, legal issues and post adoption considerations including any contact issues and anticipated support needs.

The Agency's document „Expectations in Relation to Permanent Family Placement“ describes the type of information that the Agency requires to facilitate a link between children and families, why this is needed, the timescale in which it should be received, and the Agency's general expectations relating to Inter-Agency adoption placements.

Detailed advice is given to assist the Placing Local Authorities to provide comprehensive background information for each child to be placed with adoptive parents through the Agency, and information regarding the Adoption Support Services that will be provided by the Agency. The booklet also includes an Information Exchange leaflet, which headlines the information that the Agency believes to be essential to provide a firm foundation for the placement and to reduce the risk of disruption during introduction and early placement.

Prior to a visit from a local authority social worker regarding a potential match, the Adoption Manager will read all the information received in relation to the child or children. She will complete a matching template and highlight to the social worker areas for further exploration, and any concerns or risks. Detailed discussions take place with the prospective adoptive parents regarding the content of the reports during and following a meeting with the child's social worker. Advice on the content of reports on children sought from the Agency's Legal, Medical, Psychotherapist and Educational Advisor, whenever relevant, and this advice is discussed with the adopters. Any concerns or risks identified are highlighted and advice provided on the likely impact of these for the child, the adopters and their family. Meetings between the adopters and the child's foster carers, teachers and the Medical Advisor are actively encouraged.

Once a placement is agreed the social worker provides intensive support to the adopters during the introductory period and the early weeks of placement. Home visits occur on a weekly basis for the first month, followed by minimum monthly visits or more frequently if circumstances require for the following three months and in accordance with assessed and

agreed need. Copies of Case Records, reflecting these visits, are sent to the Placing Agency, and a reciprocal arrangement of their own case records requested. Support on the telephone is also provided and the adopters are invited to attend the Agency's support groups and other on-going training and social events. Additional support may be provided by the Agency's Education Adviser, by the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) team or by an experienced adoptive family with whom the adopters will have been linked during the assessment process. The Local Authority social worker retains responsibility for the child and has a duty to visit on a regular basis.

Advice and support is provided to adopters to assist them to prepare their application to adopt for the Court, and to maintain any agreed contact arrangements.

Every effort is made to avoid a placement disruption, but occasionally the needs of the child are so complex that the adopters' capacity to manage these are insufficient, even with an intensive package of support services. In such circumstances the welfare of the child remains paramount and efforts are made to avoid an unplanned ending of the placement. The adopters are provided with support focused on their needs during and following a placement disruption.

The Role of the Social Worker in Disruption

In these complex and emotionally fraught circumstances, the social worker's role in the events leading up to and including the Internal and External Disruption Meetings include the following:

- To maintain the child's best interests at the centre of the proceedings and to help and support colleagues and the adoptive family to do the same
- To avoid falling into the trap of blame and recrimination that so powerfully inhibits all parties from being able to speak about the events in which they have been involved.
- To support and enable all involved in being able to share their experience of the placement honestly and openly.
- To acknowledge there are reasons why the family may be justified in feeling the response to, the support of, or the management of their situation was less than they needed or hoped for.
- It is in no-one's interest to conceal the resource issues that determine social work time and availability or the lack of access to other services that may have helped
- To "build bridges" with colleagues to enable everyone present at a Disruption Meeting to feel they will be respectfully treated, in an atmosphere of shared responsibility for the placement and for reviewing and weighing the information available
- To assist the family move forward. The future health and wellbeing of its members, often including other children, is a responsibility. In order to move forward, the family needs to have the opportunity to re-build self-esteem, reduce guilt and to have experience to share a sense of responsibility for a better understanding of the child's needs
- To Communicate with adoptive families who are unable to attend the
- External Disruption Meeting. The family should be invited to contribute in writing. Their original motivation to care for a child should be acknowledged and, as being key players in the child's life, if only for a short period, they are entitled to be informed, at a later date, about the child's circumstances and welfare

The issues of management, supervision and support for the social workers involved is crucial at all points of the process and is clearly outlined in the Agency's Policy and Procedures on the Effective Management of Disruption.

Adoption Support Services:

The Agency offers support, advice and counselling to adopted children, adults, adoptive parents and birth relatives where the adoption took place through the Agency.

Regular support and networking sessions are offered to all adoptive families. These are managed by the Adoption Support Manager.

The Agency organises regular social events for adoptive families (or parents and children), including an annual summer picnic and New Year disco.

Regular training events and workshops are offered to adoptive parents, organised by the Agency.

A daily duty rota system is in operation during each weekday, ensuring that adoptive parents always have access to a Social Worker for support and assistance.

An initial referral and assessment procedure is in place for all adopted children, adults, adoptive parents and birth relatives who may seek advice, help and support in the future. This assessment may lead to the Agency providing a direct service to the individual or family, or may require the Agency to signpost the individual or family to the relevant and appropriate service. The Agency ensures that the service user receives written information about the service they are to receive; what the service is designed to achieve; what is involved in the particular service provision and how the service will be monitored to ensure that it is delivering the intended outcome.

An intermediary service is available to both adopted adults and birth relatives, whose adoptions took place through the Agency, to help establish contact between people separated by adoption where appropriate. A charge is made in order to assist the Agency to cover the costs incurred. Individual circumstances are always taken into account where financial restrictions may prevent a service-user from accessing a service.

An access to information/births records counselling service is offered to all adults adopted through the Agency.

The Agency's children's group service, known as "Reach", offers on-going activity and support days for adopted children in two age groups during school holidays.

Procedures for assessing the needs of adoptive families and their children:

1. The family make contact with the Agency via telephone, letter or email.
2. A referral is completed by the Social worker on Duty and this is passed immediately to the Adoption Support Manager.
3. The case is prioritised for immediate allocation if required and an adoption support assessment is completed by the allocated Social Worker, signed off by the Adoption Support Manager and shared with the family.
4. Recommendations may include short-term direct work with the child and/or family, signposting to other appropriate resources, or liaising with the placing or receiving local authority to ensure appropriate supports and services are in place.

Procedures for assessing the needs of adopted adults and their birth relatives:

Adopted adults may approach the Agency for access to their adoption information, intermediary services, registering a Veto or for general advice, information or support about their adoption.

Birth Relatives may approach the Agency for access to non-identifying information about their adopted relative, intermediary services or advice, information or support about their relative's adoption.

The process for assessment and accessing these services is largely the same for both parties:

1. Contact with the Agency via telephone, letter or email.
2. A referral is completed by the Social Worker on duty and this is passed immediately to the Adoption Support Manager.
3. Written information about the Agency's adoption support services is sent to the service user, including an application pack if appropriate (in the case of access to information and intermediary service requests only)
4. An assessment of the needs of the service user can often be made by the Adoption Support Manager based on the content of information provided in the original referral (e.g. in the case of a request for access to information or an intermediary service)
5. A decision about allocation is made in accordance with the current waiting times and reflecting the specific needs of the service user (after receipt of the completed application if appropriate).
6. The allocated Social Worker meets with the service user if appropriate and completes an assessment of need or provides the relevant service as required.

9. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:

The Agency positively encourages comments and criticisms concerning its services. The Agency has a formal Complaints Procedure, which is made available to all service-users at their first point of contact with the Agency. A simple child-focused Form is also available for children in placement and after adoption to encourage young people to share any worries or concerns they may have.

If the complainant, the staff member involved and their Manager is unable to resolve the dissatisfaction, then the formal Complaints Procedure will be implemented without delay.

The **Representations Officer** of the Agency is the Chief Executive. The Agency will appoint an **Independent Person** in relation to complaints, where appropriate.

Complaints may also be directed to: OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.org
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Where a child or young person wishes to make a complaint the Agency will seek to support them and provide them with the appropriate information to facilitate the process of their complaint.

If the matter cannot be resolved through the Agency's informal or formal Complaints Procedure, a child or young person may contact:

Coram Voice
Freephone 0808 800 5792

www.coramvoice.org.uk

or National Youth Advocacy Service
01376 310640

www.nyas.net

or Coram Children's Legal Centre
Freephone 0808 802 0008

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

or Care Leavers Association
0161 637 5040

www.careleavers.com

or The Children's Commissioner of England
020 7783 8330

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Become
0800 023 2033

www.becomecharity.org.uk

Stage 1:

A service-user can tell the people who run the service about their dissatisfaction.

Informal Complaint:

If a service-user is not happy about the service that has been offered, he/she will be able to tell the person who is working with them. That member of staff should then tell their manager or supervisor about the complaint and also explain how they have dealt with it. This helps us to make sure that the matter has been handled properly. The manager will keep a written record of the complaint, because it is necessary for the Agency to take an overview of all concerns and complaints, so that we can ensure that we offer the best possible services.

If the service-user feels that the person he/she is working with cannot help them with the matter, or if he/she is not happy with the answers they give, then he/she should contact their manager. The prospective adopters will be aware, in most cases, of appropriate individuals because of access to the organisational structure, received in their Adoption Information Pack at initial point of contact. If he/she is not sure who is their manager, he/she can ask the worker or any member of staff at the Agency's offices.

The manager can be contacted:

- by telephone
- by letter
- by email
- by asking to see them

Most problems can be resolved by discussing them with the people who manage the service. The Agency will investigate / look into the matter and, wherever possible, the outcome of the investigation will be provided within ten days. If that is not achievable because of extenuating circumstances, the Complainant will be informed immediately it becomes evident that the ten-day deadline may not be met.

Stage 2:

If the service-user is not satisfied that the problem has been solved, they can ask for a further investigation and for their complaint to be looked at again.

Formal Complaint

All formal complaints must be put in writing to the Representations Officer. In the Agency, the Representations Officer is the Chief Executive, who is suitably removed from the day-to-

day management of the social work of the Agency. The Representations Officer can be contacted:

- by letter addressed to the Representations Officer at Faith in Families
- by e-mail: enquiries@faithinfamilies.org

A service-user can ask a friend, family member, or advocate to help them think through what he/she wants to complain about and how he/she wants to share their views.

The Representations Officer will let the Complainant know within three working days that their complaint has been received.

The Representations Officer will need to make sure that the complaint is legitimate or valid, and that it should be directed to the Agency.

The Representations Officer may:

- telephone the service-user and ask for more details
- arrange to meet with the service-user to discuss their concerns
- talk to other people who are involved

In the case of the complaint concerning or involving the Chief Executive, then the Representations Officer would be the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Agency.

Investigation

When it is established that further investigation is needed and requested by the Complainant, the Representations Officer will let the Complainant know that, and will appoint an Independent Person.

The Independent Person is someone who is not responsible for the service that is being complained about and is not employed by the Agency. The Independent Person will look into all the circumstances that led to the complaint and may interview the Complainant or other members of staff, may look at all the records concerning the matter being complained about, and will then recommend what should be done.

The Independent Person will aim to complete the Investigation within twenty- eight days of the day when it was agreed that there was a legitimate or valid complaint. The findings and recommendations of the Independent Person will be given to the Agency's Representations Officer and to the Complainant. If someone else made the complaint on the Complainant's behalf, they will also be advised of the recommendations.

Sometimes Investigations take longer than twenty-eight days. If this happens, the Complainant will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Investigation, he/she should tell the Representations Officer within twenty-eight days.

Stage 3:

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response to their formal complaint, he/she can proceed to a Review Panel.

Review Panel

Under these circumstances, the complaint will then be considered by a Review Panel. The Panel usually meets within twenty-eight days of the Representations Officer receiving the Complainant's request to move to Stage 3. The Review Panel will be made up of at least three people. Two of these may be senior members of the Agency, but the Panel will be

chaired by a person who is independent of the Agency. The person will not be the same Independent Person who has already looked at the complaint.

The Complainant is welcome to come to the meeting of the Review Panel and to bring someone with them, if they wish. The Complainant will be informed of the date of the Panel, ten days before the meeting. The person the Complainant chooses to come with them may be a relative, friend, or a professional advocate. They may help the Complainant to decide what to tell the Panel, they may attend the meeting with the Complainant and, if the Complainant wishes, they may speak on their behalf. Concerns may be presented by the advocate or Complainant in a written statement to the Panel (or they may be conveyed verbally).

After the meeting the Panel members will make recommendations to the Agency and will notify the Complainant of those recommendations. The Agency may consider its original decision, taking into account the Panel's recommendations, and alongside the views of the Independent Person, who was first appointed, decide what action should be taken.

The Chief Executive of the Agency will write to the Complainant, letting them know the final decision within five working days. Any changes or action which it is decided should be taken will be implemented as soon as possible after that final decision is reached.

If the Complainant is still not satisfied he/she can contact:

OFSTED Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Other independent advice can be obtained from other organisations, such as The Citizens' Advice Bureau, which may be able to help; the complainant's local MP may also give independent advice.

10. THE NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY:

OFSTED Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

11. PREMISES

Adopt Together Faith in Families operates from offices converted from residential properties. The buildings provide an appropriate environment for staff and service users. The premises have an adequate back to base security and alarm systems. The building includes archive storage, fully locked, fire-resistant, with limited access.

Some adoption archiving is secured off-site in regulated premises that act in accordance with Adoption Agency Regulations. The Agency can have access to these records within 24 hours of making a request, or immediately if required. The building has restricted access for individuals with any particular mobility requirements.