



Yorkshire
Adoption
Agency

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE



May 2025



Creating loving families since 1946

Charity registration number: 512630
Companies House Number: 01621813



INTRODUCTION



Yorkshire
Adoption
Agency

The purpose of the Yorkshire Adoption Agency is to transform the lives of children in need of adoption through recruitment, assessment, and training of prospective adopters able to welcome a child or children into a loving family who can understand and meet their child's needs. The agency is committed to careful matching of adoptive family to the child and to lifelong support.

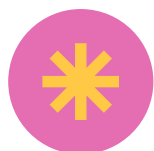
This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of the Yorkshire Adoption Agency (the 'Agency') as required by the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies Regulations.

The Statement of Purpose is updated annually by the Agency Leadership Team and reviewed and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. It will also be updated following any change in leadership or agency structure. A copy of the Statement of purpose is available to all those working with the Agency via the Agency website including:

- Adoptive parents
- Prospective Adoptive Parents
- Adopted children and young people.
- Birth families
- Volunteers
- Local Authorities, Social Care Trusts, Health and Foundation Trusts
- General Public

Yorkshire Adoption Agency is a Registered Charity (No: 512630). The agency is a Private Limited Company and registered with Companies House.

Governed by a Board of Trustees, the Agency provides a comprehensive adoption service for prospective adopters wishing to adopt both within the UK and from overseas; operational responsibility is delegated to the CEO and outlined in the Articles of Association.



The Agency is registered with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) and complies within the relevant legislative framework and guidance:

- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Adoption and Children Act guidance 2014.
- 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
- Data protection Act 1998: GDPR
- Human Rights Act 1998
- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Care Standards Act 2000
- National Standards Commissions (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 2015
- 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 Agency will accept expressions of interest for **domestic adoption** from the following areas:

- Calderdale
- Derby City
- Derbyshire
- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Kingston upon Hull and Humberside
- Kirklees
- Leicester City
- Leicestershire and Rutland
- Lincolnshire
- North East Lincolnshire
- North Lincolnshire
- North Yorkshire
- Nottingham City
- Nottinghamshire
- South Yorkshire
- West Yorkshire
- York City



The Agency provides an **inter country adoption** service to the following Local Authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region: -

- Barnsley
- Bradford
- Calderdale
- Doncaster
- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Kingston upon Hull
- Kirklees
- Leeds
- North East Lincolnshire
- North Lincolnshire
- North Yorkshire
- Rotherham
- Sheffield
- Wakefield
- York City

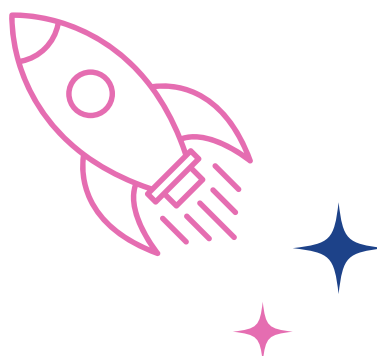


An inter country adoption service is also provided to residents living in local authorities with individual service level agreements with the Agency.

- Derby City
- Leicester City
- Leicestershire & Rutland
- Nottingham City
- Nottinghamshire

A copy of this Statement of Purpose has been provided to Ofsted and is available via the Agency website at www.yorkshireadoptionagency.org.uk

This statement is reviewed and updated annually and following any changes to the service.



THE WORK OF THE YORKSHIRE ADOPTION AGENCY



Aims and Objectives

Yorkshire Adoption Agency is committed to improving outcomes for children through the recruitment, training and matching of highly skilled adoptive families and provision of a comprehensive lifelong training and support offer.

The Agency seeks to achieve this by:

- Providing secure and stable adoptive placements for children Looked After by local authorities many of whom have experienced traumatic early lives, including abuse and neglect and multiple care givers, with consequent attachment issues.
- Recruiting, preparing, training, and assessing prospective adoptive parents and providing lifelong adoptive support.
- Increasing placement choice through targeting and identifying families from across a wide range of ethnic and cultural communities to meet the needs of black and minority ethnic and dual heritage children.
- Recruiting families able to meet the needs of harder to place children, such as sibling groups, older children, and children with complex needs.
- Enhancing children's sense of identity by respecting and valuing their personal history, ethnic and cultural background, language, and religion.
- Recruiting prospective adopters with the capacity to provide stable loving homes for children and young people irrespective of age, gender, relationship status, sexual orientation, identity, ethnicity, faith, or socioeconomic background.
- Promoting an Agency culture of continuous learning and development that supports and encourages innovative practice and enhanced professional knowledge and skills.
- Ensuring access to appropriate professional advice in the fields of law, medicine, mental health, and education.
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and quality of service provision through regular feedback from service users.
- Involving service users and their families in the development and delivery of service provision.
- Providing emotional and practical support to children and families post-adoption.
- Compliance with Agency policies, procedures and standards in respect of: safeguarding and child protection, equal opportunities, complaints, finance and administration, health and environment, safety, security, risk management, monitoring and evaluation (Quality Assurance), staff development and training, staff recruitment and management, service user involvement and volunteers.



Equality and Diversity

The Agency positively values the UK as a multi-cultural society with diverse family constructs, values, and attitudes.

We are committed to ensuring that children placed for adoption are provided with the opportunity to develop a positive sense of personal history and self-esteem. We will challenge oppressive or discriminatory practice based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religious or cultural backgrounds or disability.

We will encourage and support adoptive parents in accessing relevant resources to ensure that we mitigate as far as possible against the disadvantages some adoptive children may experience in overcoming the impact of negative early life experiences on their emotional and behavioural development.

2. THE REGISTERED PROVIDER

The Responsible Person is Mr Raymond Powell, Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Registered Manager is Ms Sue May, CEO. Mr Powell and Ms May may be contacted via the Agency's offices at: Loversall Court, Clayfields, Tickhill Road, Balby, Doncaster DN4 8QG
Tel: 01302 638337
E-mail: info@yorkshireadoptionagency.org.uk



The Responsible Person: Raymond Powell is the Chair of the Board of Trustees and was previously the Vice Chair for Yorkshire Adoption Agency. Ray is a retired Police Officer having held a number of senior roles within the wider Police Service, providing advice and guidance on Equality, Diversity and Human Rights at a Ministerial level within central Government. Ray has extensive experience of working within Local Government with regards to the development of safeguarding policies and practices for both adults and children. Ray is an experienced adoption panel member and was previously the Vice Chair of The Trustee board of Yorkshire Adoption Agency.

The Registered Manager: Sue May qualified as a social worker in 1982 at Sheffield City Polytechnic, receiving a BA (Hons) in applied social studies and a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). In 2006, Sue obtained a Post Graduate Certificate in Social Services Management from Birmingham University. She is registered with Social Work England. Sue has over 40 years' experience in children's social work and held senior management positions with responsibility for adoption services for over 18 years. Latterly, Sue was a Head of Service for a London Regional Adoption Agency and panel chair for the Yorkshire Adoption Agency. She joined the service as CEO and Registered Manager in October 2023.



3. THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Leonie Hegedus: Assistant Director, qualified as a Social Worker in 2011 at Sheffield Hallam University, obtaining a BA (Hons) in Social Work Studies. Leonie is registered with Social Work England. She has eight years' experience within the field of Child Protection, Care Proceedings, Children in Care and Adoption as a Child's Social Worker. After initially being employed as an Adoption Social Worker at Yorkshire Adoption Agency, she has now been with the team since October 2018 and a Team Manager since December 2019.

Gina Parker: Team Manager holds a B.A. (Honours) degree in Social Work and the CMI Diploma in Leadership and Management. Gina qualified in 2007 and is registered with Social Work England.

Sarah Clarke; Team Manager qualified in 2013 with an MA in Social Work from Manchester Metropolitan University. Previously Sarah worked in a Local Authority adoption team and has experience of work in both Fostering and Children and Families teams. She is registered with Social Work England.

Suzanne Firth: Business Manager qualified as a Social Worker in October 2018 from The University of Sheffield, obtaining an MA in Social Work. Since this time, Suzanne has worked within the Child and Families Services as a Social Worker within a Local Authority. Suzanne has been employed by Yorkshire Adoption Agency since November 2019 and is registered with Social Work England. She became the Business Manager in July 2023.



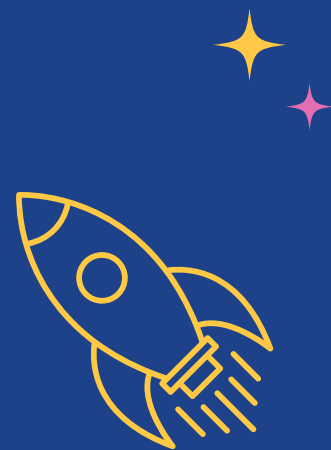
4. AGENCY STAFF

Business Support Services

- 1 x Senior Business Administrator.
- 1x Business Administrator

Social Work Team

- 3 x full time Advanced Social Work Practitioners
- 3 x full time Social Workers
- 4 x part time Social Workers
- 1 x Adoption Support Coordinator
- 1 x Marketing and IT Officer



The Agency seeks to appoint social workers with a minimum of three years post-qualifying experience within Children and families' services setting. If this is not possible, the agency ensures all social workers with less than three years post-qualifying experience, or no experience of adoption are mentored and supported. All social workers are registered with Social Work England and registrations are monitored annually.

Owned and developed by the Agency, the Quality Assurance Framework sets out the performance management and quality assurance expectations of all Agency staff and is intended to help Trustees identify how effective the service is at recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving, and supporting adoptive families. The elements and principles of the framework are applied throughout all levels of the organisation and learning from both qualitative and quantitative information is used to drive improvement in practice, policy, and procedures.

The Agency Leadership Team all have significant experience and post qualification training in Management and/ or Leadership. The Agency is committed to the continuous professional development of all staff and succession planning is part of the recruitment strategy.

All staff are subject to annual appraisal to assist in identifying individual training plans that reflect identified areas of professional interest as well as the proprieties of the Agency.

All social work, volunteer and sessional staff appointments are subject to the Agency's appointment and employment procedures including enhanced DBS checks on a three yearly basis. Social work staff are required to be registered with Social Work England.

All staff receive regular supervision; roles and responsibilities for workers and managers within this process are outlined in individual staff supervision contracts.

An annual training plan supports individual staff members to further develop and enhance their professional skills. The Agency promotes a culture of continuous learning supported through regular staff development days and externally commissioned training events.



All staff involved with service delivery undertake child protection and safeguarding training in line with their role and function. All staff are encouraged to attend training to develop their therapeutic skill base such as Theraplay, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy or life story work.

The Agency commissions a number of individuals and volunteers in relation to service delivery including:

- Medical Adviser
- Legal Adviser
- IT consultant
- HR Adviser
- Adoption Panel Chairs
- Independent members of the Adoption Panel Central List
- Experienced adoptive parents as presenters in Adoption Preparation presentations and workshops

5. ORGANISATION AND OPERATIONAL CONTROL

The Agency is governed by the Board of Trustees; the Board meets on a quarterly basis.

The Executive subcommittee of the Board meets as required to support agency development and to respond to any urgent matters. A finance committee meets quarterly and oversees the finances of the agency and a communications committee meets bi monthly to support all aspects of agency communication.

The Board of Trustees delegates responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Agency to the CEO, who delegates responsibility through the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team comprises: CEO, Assistant Director, Business Manager and two Social Work Team Managers.

The CEO has overall responsibility for the effective and efficient management of Agency business including business diversification and development and is the Agency Decision Maker in relation to prospective adopters. The Assistant Director takes operational responsibility for overall delivery of an effective and good quality adoption service. The Business Manager is responsible for all financial and resource matters. The Social Work Team managers are responsible for the delivery of professional social work services across the range of Agency service provision and the day-to-day management and supervision of staff.



6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION



The Agency is committed to providing an effective and efficient service and monitors and evaluates operational and administrative objectives against well embedded processes including quality assurance audits, tracker activity and business planning to ensure that services provided by the Agency meet the required standards.

Service Users:

The Agency seeks to ensure that the service user experience informs Agency direction and development. Feedback from service users is sought at every stage of involvement with the Agency. Service users are represented at every level of the organisation including the Board of Trustees.

Staff:

The recruitment and selection of staff is robust. Where applicants are not successful and they request feedback on their performance, this is provided by a member of the appointment panel.

Where practicable, exit interviews are conducted with all staff leaving the employment of the Agency and their views taken into consideration.

Children:

The voice of the child is central to the strategic direction and operational development of the Agency. Adoption support groups inform the development of support services and family events planned throughout the year provide opportunities for staff to listen to the views of children and young people about their experience of the Agency and to inform future planning.

The Agency's Comments and Complaints Procedure is accessible to service users of all ages.

Enquiries:

All members of the public enquiring about adoption within Agency opening hours receive a response the same day; enquiries received outside normal working hours are responded to the following working day. All enquirers are sent the Agency's Information Pack which includes a video link about the Agency and its adoption processes. They are also invited to our Joint Adopter and social worker led ChatAdopt sessions. Following receipt of the information pack, enquirers are contacted within three working days for their decision and any additional feedback they wish to share. Individual decisions, including reasons not to proceed with the Agency, are recorded and evaluated to inform Agency future recruitment planning.

Prospective Adopters:

Once the Agency has accepted a Registration of Interest from a prospective adopter, they are invited to attend a series of mandatory, essential, and additional training modules in stages 1 and 2, following which they are invited to complete feedback forms to inform the annual review of Agency training provision. Staff leading the training modules are also required to provide feedback regarding any observations of attendees to assist in the identification of any areas for further exploration and / or directed training relevant to the individual applicants.



At the conclusion of the assessment process, prospective adopters are invited to attend the Agency Adoption Panel where their suitability to adopt is to be considered. Following the Panel meeting, social workers and prospective adopters are asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their experiences to inform the review and future development of Panel processes. Panel Chairs are required to provide feedback, informed by member's observations, on all Prospective Adopters Reports presented as part of their quality assurance function.

The Chairs of the Adoption Panels, the panel advisors and the ADM meet quarterly. The panel chairs provide an Annual Report to the Agency in respect of overall Panel performance. Analysis of Panel feedback re: service delivery assists the Agency in identifying and addressing any issues regarding practice and performance. The Adoption Panel Annual Report is included in the reports provided to the Board of Trustees.

Panels receive quarterly updates from the Agency regarding the progress of approved adopters in family finding and placements made.

Any approved adopters who do not have a child in placement are reviewed annually. Reviews are presented to panel every 2 years.

Adoptive Families:

Following the placement of children, adoptive families are visited to ensure they are well supported. As part of placement support visits, social workers collect the wishes and feelings of the children and the adopters. At each Looked After Child's review, feedback is gathered again to inform care planning for the placing Local Authority and the Agency's support plan.

Following the making of the Adoption Order, further feedback is sought regarding the adopter's views of their overall experience with the Agency including:

- Preparation and assessment
- Matching and introduction
- Placement support plan and post-approval training programmes
- Post placement /adoption support

Adoption Support Services:

Families in receipt of adoption support services complete a questionnaire at the conclusion of the intervention; this informs future service development.

Children:

The Agency offers at least four seasonal family activity-based sessions throughout the year. These events provide an opportunity for children to enjoy age appropriate and stimulating experiences with their peers whilst providing parents with a chance to meet. Feedback is sought from both children and parents at the end of each activity and assists in the planning for future activities.

In addition the service provides an activity based offer for older children on a termly basis.



7. RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION, ASSESSMENT, APPROVAL AND SUPPORT

Recruitment:

The primary purpose of the Agency is the provision of secure stable and loving adoptive families for children Looked After by local authorities where the care plan is one of adoption.

The Agency's details and profile are registered with First4Adoption, the Regional Voluntary Adoption Alliance, the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies, New Family Social and the One Adoption Regional Adoption Agency group.

Recruitment activity is on-going throughout the year and is targeted at prospective applicants from all backgrounds. The Agency is particularly interested in attracting prospective adopters for children most likely to need our service, specifically: older children, sibling groups and children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. A specialist community in-reach worker engages with local Black African and Afro-Caribbean communities and individuals to support adoption.

Recruitment activities are supported by a marketing plan. It includes targeted marketing campaigns encompassing social media postings, direct mail and regular focused recruitment initiatives.

A duty worker is available each working day to respond to initial enquiries and provide information about the Agency. Potential applicants are sent a comprehensive Information pack and are invited to *ChatAdopt* within 24 hours.

Where potential applicants wish to pursue adoption through the Agency, a face to face social work conversation allows applicants the opportunity to consider whether adoption is right for them. They may then register their interest in adoption with the agency. Potential applicants are notified of the Agency's decision as to whether to accept a Registration of Interest from them within 5 working days. Where an application is declined, the applicant will be informed of the reasons and how this relates to the eligibility criteria to adopt as prescribed by statutory guidance. If the Agency is unable to make its full range of services available, it will signpost applicants to a relevant agency.



Preparation, Training and Assessment:

Stage One:

Following receipt and acceptance of the applicant's Registration of Interest document, prospective adopters commence Stage 1 of the assessment process. The Agency commits to complete Stage 1 of the assessment process within two months, unless the prospective adopter requests an extension to the timescale or factors beyond the Agency's control for example a delay in securing Local Authority checks or medicals, means Stage 1 cannot be completed in time.

At the start of Stage 1, the Agency and prospective adopters will complete the Stage 1 Plan which outlines the expectations and obligations of both the prospective adopters and the Agency; this includes the procedure for undertaking statutory checks, medicals, training programme and the process for making representations to the Agency.

Training:

The Stage 1 plan clearly identifies the dates of the training programmes prospective adopters are required to attend, together with directed reading. In addition to mandatory training modules, prospective adopters are encouraged to attend subject specific modules regarding the profiles of children they may wish to consider adopting, for example: sibling groups, older children, children with additional needs and babies placed through Early Permanence Planning.

The training programme is facilitated by two experienced adoption social workers from the Agency.

All training is supported by relevant research and additional reading for prospective adopters to retain and consider at their leisure.

Prospective Adopters are also provided with a learning log. This enables and encourage prospective adopters to record information about and reflect on their learning.

Stage 1 concludes with the social worker and team manager undertaking a review with the prospective adopters of their learning and their suitability to proceed to Stage 2; prospective adopters will then be invited to progress to Stage 2. Generally, on successful completion of Stage 1, prospective adopters move immediately to Stage 2. However, in some circumstances, prospective adopters may choose to suspend the assessment process for up to 6 months; such an arrangement will be confirmed in writing by the Agency. However, should the suspension exceed 6 months in duration, prospective adopters are required to repeat Stage 1.

Stage Two:

Stage 2 commences on the successful completion of Stage 1 and receipt of confirmation that the prospective adopters wish to proceed. At the start of Stage 2 the Agency completes and agrees a Stage 2 Plan with the prospective adopters; this will detail the dates and arrangements for each assessment session and the required mandatory and optional training to be undertaken in the period of the assessment. The Agency commits to completing the assessment within four months of receiving the prospective adopters' notification of their wish to proceed. Where this is not achieved an explanation will be provided by the Agency and documented on the prospective adopter's case file. During Stage 2 prospective adopters will also receive information about the role of the Adoption Panel and the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).



Training:

The Agency provides an in-house training package to all prospective adopters, which includes:

- REAL (Resilient, Empathic, Accepting & Loving) Therapeutic Parenting 3 Day Course
- 6 Mandatory Modules
- 4 Essential Modules
- 7 Additional Modules
- 2 Family & Friends Modules

Training and preparation at this stage aims to be informal, inclusive and encourage prospective adopters to consider in greater detail the joys and challenges ahead.

All training courses are supported by relevant research and additional reading for prospective adopters to retain and consider at their leisure.

The courses also include presentations by experienced adoptive parents. The Birth Parent and extended family view is captured in video presentations.

The preparation and assessment programme aims to equip prospective adopters to meet the needs of children placed for adoption from the care of local authorities. In addition, the families and friends of prospective adopters are invited to attend modules aimed at enabling them to understand and support prospective adopters as they become parents.

All assessments are recorded using the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (CORAM /BAAF) document known as the PAR (Prospective Adopters Report). In addition, information regarding prospective adopters' financial circumstances, housing, including health and safety considerations and pets' assessment is required.

Prospective adopters are encouraged and supported to create a 'Family Book' introducing themselves, their family, friends, and home; this can be used with their child(ren) at the commencement of introductions.

In some circumstances, a second opinion may be required by the Agency where assessments are viewed as particularly complex and a second review beneficial. The decision to request a second opinion is taken by the manager responsible for the professional supervision of the assessing social worker.

Once the PAR is available in draft, this is shared with the prospective adopters, and any comments they wish to make included prior to the report being finalised; once the content is agreed, prospective adopters are invited to sign the completed PAR for endorsement by the team manager.

In some circumstances, generally where previous adopters are returning to the Agency for a second or subsequent time, the assessment process can be abridged and completed within 4 months.

Approval to Adopt:

Adoption Agency regulations require that all adoption agencies operate an Adoption Panel. Chaired by a skilled and experienced independent person, the central functions of the Adoption Panel include:

- To consider the cases of all prospective adopters referred to it by the Agency and make recommendations to the Agency Decision maker as to whether, or not, the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child.
- To provide advice as to the number of children the prospective adopter may be suitable to adopt, their age range, gender, likely needs and background.

- Provide a quality assurance function providing objectivity and challenge to practice which is felt not to be in the interests of children or to fall short of the regulations or National Minimum Standards.

Prospective adopters are supported and encouraged to attend the Panel to which their PAR will be presented and considered; an information leaflet is available to prospective adopters to help prepare them for the Panel meeting. Prospective adopters are accompanied by their social worker to the Panel meeting.

Following Panel discussions, the Chair of Panel and Panel Adviser will meet with prospective adopters briefly to inform them of the recommendation they will make to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Agency Decision Maker's are the CEO and Assistant Director. Decisions are made following consideration of the Panel meeting minutes and recommendations. The Agency Decision Maker will advise prospective adopters of their decision within 5 working days following receipt of the agreed minutes of the Panel meeting.

Where the Agency Decision Maker is minded not to approve an application, the prospective adopters will be given the opportunity to make representation directly to the Agency Decision Maker or apply to the IRM for an independent review of their assessment.



Post approval - matching and support:

Following approval, prospective adopters are actively involved in the identification of children they consider may be an appropriate match. All prospective adopters are registered with and supported to access Linkmaker. Prospective adopters are also supported to attend profiling events, exchange days and activity events and their details are circulated to over 80 local authorities with children awaiting permanence through adoption.

The prospective adopter's social worker will discuss all appropriate potential matches with them and where a link appears to have potential, will contact the child's social worker to arrange for an exchange of information.

The responsible local authority is required to provide an up to date and comprehensive profile of the child including information in relation to health, education, legal issues, and post adoption arrangements including contact and any anticipated post placement support needs. Information regarding the Agency's post adoption support service is provided to placing authorities.

Prior to a child's social worker visiting a prospective adopter regarding a potential match, the Agency will read all information pertaining to a child and undertake a mapping exercise to identify strengths and any areas for further exploration of the proposed match; the Agency believes this is essential to ensure the viability of the placement and reduce the risk of disruption during introductions or early placement.

Detailed discussions will then take place with the prospective adopters who will have had the opportunity to read all the information shared with the Agency regarding a child and the outcome of the mapping exercise. Any concerns identified are discussed and specialist advice sought where required. Prospective adopters are encouraged and supported to meet the child's foster carers, teachers, and Medical Adviser.

Yorkshire Adoption Agency is committed to supporting the modern adoption agenda, with a positive and flexible approach to maintaining links with those people most important to their child. This may include family members, birth parents, grandparents and siblings as well as foster carers and other people of significance. We positively support at least one meeting with birth parents where possible. We recognise that the child's needs and birth family situation will change over time and encourage ongoing review of their contact with people of significance.

Once a placement has been agreed and endorsed by the placing authority's Matching Panel, introductions can commence. A detailed plan of introductions is agreed by all parties. As the introduction period is recognised as a potentially stressful time, intensive support is provided to prospective adopters via the Agency Placement Support Plan.

Once a child is placed, the Agency continues to offer support; home visits take place on a minimum fortnightly basis for the first month, reducing to monthly for the following three months or more frequently if required dependent on the level of need. The Agency produces a Placement Support Plan which sits alongside and complements the support plan produced by the placing local authority who remain responsible for the child until the making of an Adoption Order. Advice and support is available from the Agency to assist prospective adopters in preparing their application to adopt for the Court and to maintain any agreed contact arrangements.



Yorkshire Adoption Agency offers a lifelong package of support which includes: adopters support groups, peer support from experienced adopters, post adoption training and social events. Access to these services is optional, however, all families, irrespective of the length of time since placement, are able to request an annual 'health check' to ensure any issues of concern are identified as early as possible and to ensure help of offered in a timely and proportionate manner. This service is promoted through our Newsletter.

8. PLACEMENT DISRUPTION

Very occasionally, the needs of a child are so complex that adopter's capacity to meet these are insufficient even where intensive support has been provided. In such circumstances, the welfare of the child remains paramount, and every effort is made to ensure that placement endings are planned; adopters are provided with focussed support to meet their needs both during and following a placement disruption.

The Role of the Agency in Disruption:

In what is unavoidably an emotionally sensitive time, the role of the Agency includes:

- To maintain a clear focus on the needs of the child and assist and support colleagues and the family to remain child focussed.
- To avoid apportioning blame and encourage and promote open discussion between all parties to understand the events leading to the disruption.
- To support and enable all parties to share their experiences openly and honestly.
- To acknowledge and learn from the family's perspective, any shortfalls in practice they feel contributed to the disruption.
- Review the support available to the family including access, timeliness and efficacy.
- To 'build bridges' with those attending Disruption Meeting so everyone feels listened to, their views respected and share responsibility for reviewing information and learning lessons.
- To support the family in moving forward, rebuild self-esteem, reduce guilt and gain a better understanding of events.
- To support the family in contributing to the placing local authority's Disruption Meeting either directly or in writing.
- Ensure families role in the child's life, irrespective of duration, is acknowledged and where appropriate, they are kept informed of the child's welfare.
- The management, supervision and support to Agency staff involved in placement disruptions is outlined in the Agency's Supervision Contract and staff welfare arrangements.



9. ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

Adoption is a lifelong commitment, and the Agency is committed to remaining responsive and supportive throughout that journey offering the 'right help at the right time'.

The Agency offers a comprehensive, service of placement and post-adoption support and advice service to our families. This support is lifelong and includes:

- Access to funded support groups such as through We are Family or New Family Social
- Family events to facilitate the development of natural support networks
- Group training and support
- Individual support packages
- Advocacy to access other support such as through the ASGSF or CAMHS services



We support adoptive families to access funding through the Adoption Support Fund, signposting them to their Regional Adoption Agency for assessment and advocating on their behalf.

We aspire to develop our capacity to offer a range of ASGSF funded interventions in-house.

Placement Support

At the point of a link being agreed between a prospective adopter and a child/ren, the allocated social worker will complete a mapping exercise based on Signs of Safety (SOS) with an Advanced Practitioner or Team Manager, to identify as early as possible the strengths and areas of need. This becomes the Agency's Placement Support Plan, which is reviewed at each, Looked After Child's Review in their adoptive placement.

During introductions, the adopter/s will be contacted daily by their allocated social worker. This is to ensure that any issues are swiftly identified at the start. At a minimum the adopter/s will be texted every day with an informal direct meeting at the midway point. The level of agency contact will be flexible and based on continuous assessment of support needs.

At the point of the child/ren being placed into their adoption placement, the allocated social worker will visit the home within 72 hours. Following this, the family are visited within a week. Then fortnightly visiting will take place up to the first Looked after Children Review. After this review (unless requested otherwise by the IRO) monthly placement support visits will be completed up until the granting of an Adoption Order. As part of placement support visits, adopter/s are supported with a range of themes where the voice of the child, is collected, represented, and listened to.

Post-Adoption Support

Once an Adoption Order is granted for the children, the Agency remains involved for a year with the family, offering at least three-monthly support telephone calls and visits if needed. At one-year, post-Adoption Order, a home visit is offered before the family file is closed. If further support is required at that stage, a referral will be taken for post-adoption support.

The strength-based assessment informs the Intervention Support Plan which identifies the support required, how this need will be met, what is involved in the delivery of the support package and how the service will be reviewed and monitored to ensure the delivery of measurable outcomes.

As an Agency, we recognise how important it is to enable adoptive families to meet one another. This allows adoptive families to share experiences and create memories with others who have a deeper understanding, as to what it means to be an adoptive parent. Our family events are held four times a year. Other meeting points such as coffee mornings and special interest groups are offered following adopter requests.

10. REPRESENTATION: COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS



The Agency encourages comments suggestions and complaints about the services it provides. The Agency has a formal Complaints Procedure which is available to all service users from their initial contact with the Agency. Children and young people in placement and post adoption are encouraged to share any worries or concerns they may have using the Children's guide.

Stage 1: Informal Complaint

The Agency is committed to resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity in a way that respects and values the individual's feedback.

If a service user is unhappy with the service that has been offered, they should speak directly with the individual social worker working with them. The social worker should inform their manager about the informal complaint and what action they have taken to address the concern. Team Managers will record in writing all informal complaints received so that any lessons to be learnt can contribute to future professional and / or service development.

If the service user does not feel that the person they are working with is best placed to resolve their concern or he /she is not happy with the response, they should contact the relevant manager to make by phone or e-mail; If he /she is uncertain as to who to contact, they can contact the Agency's offices by phone: 01302 638337 or e-mail at info@yorkshireadoptionagency.org.uk

Most matters can be resolved through discussion with Agency managers who will investigate the problem and respond to the complainant within 10 days. If this deadline cannot be met, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reasons for the delay.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If the service user is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they can escalate their complaint to the CEO who is sufficiently removed from the day-to-day operational management of the social work service. All formal complaints to the CEO must be put in writing by letter to the Agency's office or by e-mail at info@yorkshireadoptionagency.org.uk and marked for the attention of the CEO.

The CEO will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 3 days.



The CEO may:

- Telephone the service user to request further details and clarify the complaint.
- Arrange to meet with the service user to discuss their concerns.
- Interview the staff member(s) involved.
- Read all relevant information pertaining to the complaint.



In the case of the complaint concerning the CEO, this will be directed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The CEO may appoint an independent person to investigate the complaint where appropriate. The Independent Person is not an employee of the Agency and will investigate the matter, including, where appropriate, undertaking interviews with the complainant, relevant staff and managers and reviewing Agency records concerning the matter. The Independent Person will complete their enquiries within 28 days and make recommendations regarding issues of practice, policy or procedure to the Agency; all recommendations which will be shared with the complainant.

Where the Independent Person is unable to complete their enquiries within timescale, the complainant will be informed and an alternative submission date agreed.

If the complainant is not content with the outcome of Stage 2, they should notify the Independent Person within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome and recommendations.

Stage 3: Review Panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 they can escalate their complaint to a Review Panel.

The panel will meet within 28 days of the complainants' request to progress to Stage 3. The Review panel will comprise 3 members of the Agency's Board of Trustees.

The complainant will be invited to attend the Review Panel and may choose to be accompanied by a supporter. The complainant will be informed of the date of the Review Panel 10 days prior to the meeting. Alternatively, complainants may wish to make representation in writing.

Following the meeting, Panel members will make recommendations to the Agency and will notify the complainant of their findings.

The Agency will review the original decisions in the context of any recommendations by the Independent person and / or Review Panel and determine what action should be taken.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees will inform the complainant of the outcome and any changes or actions to be implemented by the Agency within 5 working days of the Review Panel meeting.

Complaints may also be directed to the Registration Authority:

OFSTED

Piccadilly Gate,

Store Street,

Manchester,

M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Emails: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

