

Surrey Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose

2016-17

INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose reflects the role of the Surrey Adoption Service, in compliance with the Adoption and Children's Act 2002, Adoption Agency regulations (2003, 2011) Adoption Support Regulations 2005, and National Minimum Adoption Standards.

Adoption regulations require adoption agencies to provide a clear statement of the aims and objectives of our Adoption Agency and the strategy for meeting those aims and objectives on an annual basis.

The Statement provides details of:

- The quality standards and principles which underpin the service
- An overview of services provided by the Agency, including support services
- Activity
- Management structure, numbers, qualifications and experience of the staff
- Quality assurance and external monitoring mechanisms
- Complaints
- Quality Assurance
- Arrangements for revision and circulation

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Surrey's Adoption Service aims to secure adoption in a timely manner for children unable to live within their family of origin. We also provide support to all those affected by adoption, in recognition that adoption confers life long challenges, for adoptees, adoptive and birth families.

OUR QUALITY STANDARDS

- 'The Child is the central focus of our work'. To this end the wishes, feelings and views of the child are explicit, recorded and respected in all the work we undertake.
- We work with children, young people, parents and carers to consistently promote equality of opportunity and social inclusion whilst respecting their culture and background.
- Children are safeguarded whilst allowing for risk and challenge as appropriate to the capabilities of the child. Particular attention is paid to safeguarding children with a disability

- Corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled to ensure safety, security and stability of care where possible within their family network and community. Particular attention will be given to good quality care planning and achieving permanency for a child
- We promote effective partnership working, within the community network and with partner agencies to achieve optimum outcomes for children
- Children's Service staff are supported, trained, managed and supervised to provide the best possible outcome to children and young people within the legislative framework and available resources
- The Children's Service is led and managed by managers who strive for quality and excellence, demonstrate integrity, a detailed understanding of processes and resources and provide a clear direction to constantly improve service delivery

SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES

- Adoption is one of a range of permanency arrangements.
- In matching children with prospective families, the child's welfare is paramount.
- Practice with regards to issues such as matching and contact is informed by the best available evidence.
- We promote early permanence, whether this is with a Surrey family or a family approved by another agency.
- Support is available throughout the child's growing years and beyond.
- The recruitment needs of the Agency are continually reviewed to ensure that we recruit the right adopters for our children.
- Enquiries are welcomed from a diverse range of families, reflecting the varied and individual needs of our children.
- Enquirers receive a professional, timely and respectful response
- Matching is undertaken in a holistic manner, considering the ability of the prospective adopters to promote the child's needs throughout their childhood.
- Surrey adopters represent a valued resource for our own children and children from other placing authorities

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Services provided are :

- A family finding for children in need of adoption.
- A range of post order services -for families who have adopted.
- An adoption service-for adults wishing to adopt a child from care
- A non agency adoption service –for adults wishing to adopt a named child, not in the care system
- A Counselling and support services - for adopted adults
- Support services for birth relatives- of adopted children

Family Finding:

Children in need of adoption are referred to the adoption service. This could result from a request from the birth parent(s) for the child to be adopted, or more typically because the Family Court has given agreement to place the child for adoption.

Timeliness

Our aim is to secure a placement for a child as quickly as possible, given research indicating that timeliness in achieving permanency is linked to positive outcomes for adopted children. Timeliness is actively monitored both in terms of the average time taken for a looked after child to be placed in an adoptive family, and on a case by case basis.

Holistic matching

We know that children from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds often wait longer to be placed in a family, so we adhere to current adoption guidance, enabling children to be placed within a family that can support their cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious needs, without the requirement that the family must match the child in every respect.

Siblings

Children are placed with their siblings unless there are clear indications that this would not be in their best interests, mindful that for most children this is a life long relationship which confers considerable benefit.

Whilst finding a family for a larger sibling group is challenging, family size and limited placement options should in themselves not be a reason to move quickly to a plan of separation. Where there is a belief that placement together is in the children's best interests it is important to make every effort to find a family

For some however siblings early neglect, and abuse can result in developmental trauma and have long term implications for their care. This means that careful consideration is needed looking at both the risks and benefits of placing such children together.

Where it is considered to be in the best interests of children to grow up in separate households from their siblings, contact between siblings placed separately is actively promoted.

Interagency placements

Given the need to ensure that children do not wait longer than absolutely necessary, we will look beyond Surrey where necessary-making use of placements provided by other local authority adoption teams and voluntary adoption agencies. In the event that a match is secured with adopters from a different agency by any of these methods, a fee is paid to the agency.

Family finding process

To assist searching, the child is assigned to a specialist worker from the adoption service to work alongside the child's own social worker to identify a family. The family finder meets the child and their carer and together they create a profile of the child and their placement needs. Where the child is of an age to express the wishes and feelings these are incorporated into the work.

The child's profile is also circulated to other agencies and made available at events such as regional adoption exchanges-designed to bring the children to the attention of potential adopters. In recent years children and potential adopters have also attended adoption activity days with their foster carers with the aim of encouraging 'adopter lead matching' .

Use of a national adoption register and a second commercial register (Link maker) also provide opportunities for children to be matched with adopters beyond their own local authority.

Foster carers who wish to adopt a child in their care

Where foster carers express interest in adopting a child in their care this is carefully considered as we know that research indicates that these placements based on an existing relationship often are amongst the most successful.

Post Order Support Services :

We are of the view that adoption is a life long issue. This is reflected in Adoption Support Regulations, which considers the needs of various groups of people whose lives have been affected by adoption (See appendix 2.)

Adoptive families

Following the making of an adoption order there may or may not be need for an ongoing social work service, this is always discussed and agreed with the adoptive family as part of their a support plan which is reviewed regularly pending the finalisation of the adoption order.

Many families choose to remain in contact informally with the agency following adoption through attending regular training or family events, and adopted children may attend one of a number of groups we run.

We also provide a monthly drop-in for our adopters, with the facility to book a one to one slot for confidential advice. This type of support is available to anyone caring for a child adopted from care and living in Surrey and does not require an assessment of need.

Many adopted children and their families receive targeted help following an assessment, examples include help to manage direct or indirect contact on behalf of their child with members of the child's birth family, or financial support on a one off or regular basis where this has been agreed as needed to enable them to meet the exceptional needs of the child.

Other targeted support could include support for a young person with regards accessing and managing their adoption story, or help and support to manage relationships at home or in school.

We welcomed the provision contained within The Children and Adoption Act 2014 requiring local authorities to ensure that adoptive families were aware of their entitlement to request an assessment of support needs following adoption, and we currently publicise this through our public facing website, regular newsletters sent out to over 600 adoptive families on our mailing list and also the secure adoption website-to which access is given for approved adopters and those undergoing assessment.

An Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA), currently Debra Hale who is assisted by our Referral and Information Officer, acts as a point of contact for those affected by adoption, and seeking advice about support services. The ASSA accordingly provides information, advice and signposting to relevant support services including partner agencies such as health, education and voluntary sector services.

Eligibility for support where another agency acted as the placing agency:

Adopters caring for children placed by other agencies or who move into Surrey remain the responsibility of those agencies for the first 3 years following the adoption Order.

A placing agency may however seek advice from the ASSA as regards accessing local support services on the child's behalf. Following three years from the date the order was made, responsibility for assessing support needs passes to Surrey if the family continues to live here.

Adoption Support Fund

From May 2015 a government funded Adoption Support Fund has been created to enable local authorities to seek funding for therapeutic services where a child is assessed as in need. This has enabled the service to increase access to support following the making of an adoption order.

Any child adopted from care may be eligible for ASF funding following completion of an assessment of need by their local post adoption service.

Support provided to Adopted adults:

- Birth records counselling.

- Support and advice to adoptees in relation to adoption records held in the Surrey archive, or with regard to accessing alternative registered intermediary services
- Access to independent counsellors
- Access to a monthly support group
- Signposting for Intermediary services for adopted adults

Birth relatives affected by adoption can access:

- A specialist Birth Relative Parents worker,
- Counselling via a service level agreement with an independent adoption support agency
- Assistance with maintaining contact through facilitated meetings or through the Surrey post box with their child's adoptive family, including assistance with letter writing if this is needed.

ADOPTION ACTIVITY 2015-16

Children

37 looked after children from Surrey were matched with adopters and placed in new families, and 51 adoption orders made in this period. (There is always a delay between a child being placed in an adoptive family and formally adopted because of the need for a settling in period, hence some of the adoption orders reflect placements made the previous year when more placements were made.)

27 of the above children were placed with adopters approved by Surrey and 10 with adopters approved by another adoption agency. (A further 16 children from other local authorities were placed with adopters approved by Surrey, meaning that a total of 43 children were placed with our adopters.)

4 children with disabilities, special educational needs or significant developmental delay were placed with new families considered as in need of adoption, and 2 were matched with a family within the period

2 BME (Black or minority Ethnic) children were matched and placed.

17 children were placed with siblings, and 20 as a single child.

2 child (siblings) experienced placement disruption

6 child were adopted by adopters who agreed to care initially under fostering regulations enabling the children to join what might become a permanent families earlier than normal.

Agency Adoption Service for adults wishing to adopt a child from care

The Service aims to recruit a flexible and diverse pool of adopters to meet the needs of looked after children with adoption care plans. We review our recruitment needs every 3 months, mindful that these can change

In communicating with the general public we are transparent about the needs of our children whilst encouraging enquirers to think about how adoption could enrich both their own and a child's life.

We endeavour therefore to ensure that our recruitment needs are clearly expressed in our public facing website, however generally speaking our greatest needs are for applicants willing to consider children holistically, and open to managing the complexities that adoption brings.

Typically adoption agencies such as ours are likely to prioritise applicants who would be able to address the needs of the following:

- Children over 4
- Siblings with a least one child of school age

- Children with health issues, developmental delay or uncertainty
- Children with complex emotional needs
- Children from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds

Initial enquiries

Up to 30 new enquiries are received a month via the our web page or telephone. All enquirers are responded to within 2 working days, and the enquirer offered an opportunity to attend a Learn2adopt session-held bi weekly at our offices involving a brief presentation, followed by an interview with a social worker.

The purpose of the sessions is to inform the enquirer about the needs and characteristics of adopted children. We hope that this will enable the enquirer to make informed decisions as regards the following:

- Is adoption for them?
- Is Surrey the right agency for them to seek to register interest?
- Is this the right time for them to register interest?

We also apply some general eligibility criteria

- Surrey residence: we will consider non Surrey residents in exceptional circumstances, particularly if they are wishing to consider a child from any of the priority groups highlighted on page 4.
- Applicants can be single, married, in a civil partnership or be an unmarried couple (same or opposite sex)
- There is no upper age limit, but applicant(s) must be aged 21 or over,
- They should be domiciled or habitually resident in the UK
- Have no declared specified offences against children or convictions which might indicate unsuitability to work with children or vulnerable adults. (Formal checks are made later if the Agency accepts an application.)
- The applicants should not still be undergoing fertility treatment or investigations of fertility. (We generally consider that a minimum of 6 months should have elapsed since the last treatment.)
- We consider applicants who have children living as part of their household on a case-by-case basis.
- The applicant(s) need to be able to commit to having a parent at home full time for a minimum of 6 months following placement of a child for adoption.
- Is their health and fitness level such that they could meet the physical and emotional needs of a child placed for adoption now and through their growing years (this would need to be further evidenced following formal application by a medical assessment)
- We follow current evidence based guidance from BAAF on the detrimental effects of passive smoking for children under 5 and children with respiratory problems and refer any enquirers wishing to be considered for these children to their general practitioner with a view to working to the goal of cessation for a minimum period of 12 months before they seek to register interest.
- We are currently considering the emerging evidence base as regards the impact of e cigarettes.

- Enquiries are welcomed from single applicants and those applying as a couple (irrespective of whether the relationship is one that is legally recognised or whether it involves a same sex or different sex partnership).
- The applicant(s) should be settled in their accommodation, with suitable and sufficient accommodation for a child to be placed
- They must show willingness to engage with the process and to facilitate statutory and agency checks.
- Already have good levels of childcare experience or be able and willing to extend this.

Following the Learn2adopt session enquirers receive a brief report from the meeting, for comment and amendment. They can then request to register interest in pursuing an application with us.

We are not obliged to accept a registration of interest, but if declining to take things further we will provide reasons, and this may result in further dialogue and possibly review of our decision.

Typical reasons for declining a registration might be that we do not have need of adopters for the age range or characteristics that the enquirer is most interested in and we have decided to give priority to those open to adopting children likely to wait for a family. This can vary over time but typically our priority groups are as set out above.

If we think that enquirers are unlikely to be a resource for the children currently most in need of adoption in Surrey we may suggest an approach to other adoption agencies whose needs may be different. (Since 2013 a national adoption gateway named First4adoption has existed to provide advice and sign post potential applicants to agencies accepting expressions of interest.)

In other instances we may decline to register interest where there are ongoing life events or commitments that mean we do not think this is the right time for the applicant to start the adoption journey.

Assessment

Those accepted progress to a 2 stage process. The initial stage lasting 2 months is adopter lead, and consists of the adopter furthering their knowledge about adoption, providing further information about themselves-through a series of self assessment tasks and undergoing background checks including a DBS check.

Whilst in the main a case by case approach is taken with regards to any offences, our eligibility criteria does preclude offences involving children and we have an expectation that applicants are open and forthcoming with us as regards this, and indeed all other aspects of their application.

A medical is also undertaken by the applicants' own GP and reviewed by our medical adviser.

On completion of stage one the agency reviews all the information held and determines whether or not to progress the applicant to stage 2-which is adopter lead and results in presentation of a completed assessment to the adoption panel.

Stage 2 should be completed within 4 months, and includes attendance at preparation groups.

We agree a plan at the outset of both stages, to enable applicants to know what is expected and how we will work with them.

Bringing adoption to life

Applicants attend a 4 day training course at our Woking offices delivered by members of the adoption service. The learning style is informal, involving a high degree of applicant participation, and days are themed as follows;

- The adopter journey
- The child's Journey
- The joining of the ways

- The lifelong challenges of adoption

The facilitators provide feedback on the applicant's participation which is used to inform assessment, and applicants also complete their own reflections on the experience and what they feel they have learnt.

As part of any assessment process visits are arranged to foster carers and experienced adopters in their homes to hear real life stories. We also facilitate a monthly 'meet the adopters' session for applicants.

Applicants are also invited to visit our fortnightly adoptive Parent and Toddler group, providing additional opportunity to meet adoptive families and hear about the role that peer support between families plays in adoption.

Applicants and the assessing social worker work together during stage 2, with some meetings taking place in the applicants home, others in the office. Adoption stories are used throughout to enable the applicants to consider the needs of children we place for adoption and to think about what life after adoption might entail.

The result is a comprehensive prospective adopter's report. The report is seen and commented upon by the applicants, and any amendments agreed. In practice, applicants contribute significantly to their reports.

The assessment is overseen by a manager and a manager's oversight report is also provided to the panel. Where there is need of a second opinion to lend weight to the social worker's recommendation or to provide an independent view on any issue this is arranged in order to assist the panel..

In the few cases where the agency is unable to support an application it has the option to present either a full or a brief report to the panel, detailing its enquiries and the reasons for its concerns. The applicants are always invited to attend panel and present their own views.

Adoption panel

Surrey has an adoption panel which draws on a central list of members, as required under National Minimum Standards. Panels must be quorate when they meet with a minimum of 5 members present including the Chair. Panels make recommendations as follows:

- Whether to approve applicants as prospective adopters
- To review approval where there has been a significant change of circumstances
- To consider whether a child should be placed for adoption in the event that there is a request from the child's birth parent(s) for the child to be adopted
- To consider proposed matches
- To hear cases of placement disruption and consider learning
- To hold regular reviews of agency activity, including updates on cases presented previously.

In accordance with National Minimum Standards and Statutory Adoption Guidance we have appointed an Independent Chair and Vice Chair. We also appoint a non voting Panel Adviser to provide advice and support to the Chair and Panel.

Additional voting members include:

- Medical Advisor
- County Councillor
- Independent Members
- Children's Services Representatives

The independent members include a number of adoptive parents, with lived experience of the adoption process and members who were themselves adopted as children.

All panel members undergo an application process including the taking up of references and DBS checks. In accordance with National Minimum Standards they are required to have annual appraisals and the agency must maintain files for each panel member which can be made available for inspection by Ofsted. Annual training is provided.

Legal and medical advice is made available to the panel, and the panel can make use of additional advice as required from additional disciplines such as education. The panel are assisted by a part time administrator who provides detailed minutes from each panel meeting.

The panel meets most weeks in order to ensure that there is no delay in cases being heard.

Applicants are given the choice whether to attend panel. In recent years it has been the case that all applicants have elected to attend and this has been considered very helpful by panels, enabling them to gain a fuller sense of the applicants and what they have to offer our children.

The panel has three options available: to recommend that the agency accepts the application, that it rejects the application or to defer the case for additional information. In all instances the practice of panel is to provide the applicants with verbal confirmation of the recommendations following its deliberations on the day, with the proviso that formal ratification of the recommendation is required.

The Agency Decision Maker

The agency decision maker, a senior member of Surrey Children's Services, then decides whether to ratify the panel's recommendation, taking account of all the available information including the minutes of the adoption panel meeting before taking a final decision. The decision is then confirmed in writing within 7 working days.

In the event that the Agency does not approve an application or decides not to complete a partially assessed case the applicants have the choice of seeking a further determination, by a review panel (see IRM) or Surrey's own adoption panel.

IRM

The Independent Review Mechanism was launched on 30th April 2004. It is being operated by BAAF on behalf of the Department of Education. The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a review process, conducted by a Panel, which prospective adopters can use when they have been told that their adoption Agency does not propose to approve them as suitable to adopt a child. No cases were referred to the IRM last year.

Review of approval

All approved adopters who have not had a child placed with them within 12 months of their date of approval are required to have an annual review of their approval.

This is completed internally within the adoption service, unless there has been a significant change of circumstance or the approval is of 3 years duration in which case a fuller review is required and must be presented to panel.

Following approval

The adoption worker remains in contact with the family following approval, and a matching plan is agreed to look at the help and support that is available to assist with the matching process.

If there has been no match with a Surrey child within 3 months of approval, or if the background and heritage of the family is such that we agree a match is more likely to result from placing a child from another part of the UK, the family are entered on the National Adoption Register, with their consent.

Many families also chose to register with a second register (Link maker) in order to maximise their chances of a match.

We provide 'approved and waiting' sessions alternate months for those who have not yet been matched.

Post approval training

There is a regular training programme provided, and adopters are expected to continue in their learning and development pending matching and following placement of children, in recognition of the additional challenges that adoptive parenting brings.

As such, we try to ensure that adoption remains a 'live' issue following the end of the application process. Sessions typically run most monthly and are held in the evenings as part of a rolling programme.

The subjects are selected to build on the earlier 4 day training, with sessions such as: Introductions, Attachment, Information for friends and family of adopters, Matching, Social networks and adoption, Use of the post box, Contact and Life story books.

Matching with a child

We are notified of any child in Surrey where there is consent given for adoption (this might be provided by the birth parents or more typically the court following care proceedings.) The Agency Adviser maintains a list of all families currently approved by the agency to adopt and meets with the child's social worker to identify a family best able to meet the child's needs.

As such, there is no waiting list whereby adopters are matched on the basis of time spent waiting and in practice waiting times vary considerably, influenced by the numbers and needs of children available for adoption and the range of acceptance of the waiting adopters.

The adoption worker discusses any potential match with the family, thus starting a process of information sharing, designed to help all involved to think about the merits and possible risks of the proposed match. As part of this information sharing, the prospective adopters meet the current carer, our medical adviser and any other professionals involved with the child. We also organise an opportunity to see the child-typically at a distance to check that they wish to commit to the next stage.

Only when both the family and the professional network are satisfied about the match and a support plan has been agreed, is the match then formally considered by the agency-which seeks a recommendation from the adoption panel and ratification by the agency decision maker.

Matching with a child from another local authority

Adopters are not restricted to adopting from their home authority, and with fewer children available for adoption over the past 2 years, so called 'adopter lead matches' have become increasingly common given that adopters can not be guaranteed a local match.

Accordingly, adopters can express interest in children from other local authorities that they become aware of through attendance at adoption events and registers such as the National Adoption Register and Link maker. As with local matches, the priority when managing inter agency enquires will be to ensure that the adopter under consideration is able to meet the child's needs throughout childhood

Moving into the new family

The child's social worker and foster carer carefully prepare the child to move onto their new family, using story books and a welcome book which has been made by the adoptive family.

A planning meeting agrees a plan for introductions of the child to its new family, typically over 10-14 days with a review midway to check that things are on course and that everyone remains committed to the plan.

Regular visits are required under adoption regulations following an adoption placement, weekly for the first 4 weeks of a placement, with a looked after child review held within the first 28 days of placement. Visits to the family are usually shared between the adoption worker and the child's own social worker during this period.

Working with the local authority

When placed in the new family the child is still formally a looked after child and as such prospective adopters share parental responsibility with the local authority and the birth parents. (Although the birth parent still holds parental responsibility, in practice they are only able to

exercise this to a very limited extent for example they must be consulted on a small number of issues such as the child spending a period of time overseas prior to adoption, and the making of an adoption order.)

In most areas the local authority delegates authority for day to day decision making to the prospective adopters under an agreement made prior to the child moving in. This enables the prospective adopters to act in the role of a parent pending the finalising of the adoption, typically some months later.

The child's progress within the placement is monitored by their social worker who continues to visit the child regularly. This continues until the adoption order has been made.

In some instances additional support may be provided, dependent on individual circumstances such as provision of financial support, visits from a family support worker, or therapeutic help.

Role of the Court

At such time that the family and the agency are of the shared view that the child no longer needs to remain a looked after child the family are encouraged to make an application for an adoption order. The timing of this is discussed at the child's looked after child reviews - which happens at prescribed intervals-within 28 days of placement, thereafter 3 months later and then 6 months after that.

The court cannot consider an application for an adoption order before the child has been in its new home for at least 10 weeks, and in practice the timing of each application varies. When the time is right however, applicants are assisted to submit their application, and briefed as regards the court process.

Birth parent's views as regards the adoption application are sought, and some exercise a right to seek leave to oppose the making of an adoption order, perhaps hoping that the child can be returned to their care. The court applies a 2 stage test to any such application-considering whether there has been a significant change of circumstances for the birth parent and also the welfare of the child.

Adoption applications

We approved 33 applications, including heterosexual couples, single adopters and same sex couples.

We are pleased to see an increasingly diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds reflected in our approvals, which is helpful given the needs of our children.

Non Agency Adoption:

Non agency adoption is a service to families applying to adopt a child who was not placed by an adoption agency. Applications are generally driven by the wish of somebody who already is caring for a child to formalise the relationship through adoption.

This service is mainly accessed by step parents, and relatives wishing to adopt a child of their family following placement under a private arrangement. However we also work with inter country adopters who have adopted a child overseas where the adoption is not recognised in the UK.

With children to be adopted from abroad there are additional visiting and reviewing requirements as specified under Adoptions with Foreign Elements Regulations.

All Non Agency Adoption applicants are required to give the local authority 3 months notice of their intention to make an application for an adoption order, and this provides a window for counselling and information gathering, ahead of the need to respond to a request for a report from the court.

Enquirers complete an initial questionnaire and are invited to attend an office appointment to discuss their plan to adopt, the process, and are appraised of alternative options (such as a parental responsibility order). As with agency adoption extensive checks are made, with other agencies and personal referees. Applicants undergo Disclosure and Barring Service checks, and for most a medical examination is also required.

The service then provides a comprehensive report to the Court. This must include consideration of the welfare checklist as set out in primary legislation, ie the social worker is required to consider how the making of the order will impact for the child in the present and in future years. They must also consider whether there are alternative legal arrangements which could better meet the child's needs and the impact of the order for the applicant, the birth parents, and the wider family network.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

A number of mechanisms exist to monitor the work of the Agency, and to ensure that service delivery is consistently of a high quality and takes account of national and local performance standards.

- The Adoption Panel, including elected members provides feedback to the operational teams on the quality of work submitted
- A Quarterly Adoption Forum provides a strategic interface between the Agency and the Panel.
- Twice yearly Annual Adoption Agency Reports and updates are provided to elected members, copied to the Corporate Parenting Board and also to Ofsted.
- Performance data information (in relation to key performance indicators is collected) and reported within an internal monthly 'Report Card '
- We submit quarterly data to the Adoption Leadership Board-a body set up by the Department of Education to monitor performance and drive improvement in the field of adoption. We consequently receive an annual ' Scorecard' from the Department of Health based on this data.
- We provide an annual data set to Ofsted, who also inspect the Agency three yearly.

Feedback from service users

Feedback mechanisms for service users are built in to all key stages of the adoption process and have recently been revised to improve opportunities for young people to be give feedback on the service

In addition, there is an active focus group for service users which meets quarterly and provides feedback on service delivery and development.

Service users are routinely involved in information events and meet applicants during their assessments to bring the experience of adoption to life for applicants.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

(See appendix 1) The Service is managed within the Care Services part of Countywide Services, which forms one arm of Surrey Children's Services

Ian Forbes, Care Services Manager was appointed in 2015. Ian holds a BA (Hons) in social work awarded in 1991, and a Post Graduate Management Qualification. Ian currently manages all regulated care services in Surrey including: adoption, fostering and residential services.

Suzanne Chambers,Team Manager is the operational and policy lead for Adoption and registered manager following appointment in 2010. Suzanne holds a

B.A. (Hons) Psychology: awarded by the University of Durham in 1981 and a MSc Social Policy and social work studies and Certificate of Qualification in Social Work from London University (L.S.E.) awarded in 1987 as well as a Diploma in health and social care management level 5 (2013)

4 Full Time Equivalent Assistant Team Managers (5 posts given that some are part time) complete the management team, each holds functional leads as well as providing regular supervision to staff.

Casework and group work functions are provided by 15 full-time equivalent Social workers, assisted by 3 Assistant social workers and a Referral and Information officer. The team is also supported by a dedicated team of business support staff

In addition the following are commissioned by the adoption Service:

- Independent Chair of the Adoption Panel-David Goosey
- Adult psychotherapist -1 day per week provides consultation for adopters and carers
- 3 educational psychologists-all seconded to the team for half a day per week.

All social workers are appropriately qualified for their posts and registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council. A high percentage hold post qualifying awards such as the Child care Award, or higher degrees and many have additionally undertaken specialist courses/training including Practice Teaching, Diploma in Adoption and Attachment, Counselling, Play Therapy, and Theraplay.

Most of our staff have held positions across the range of Children's Services prior to joining the team and therefore are knowledgeable as regards the roles of colleagues in the following areas:

- Key working children in child care / child protection / Court cases
- Key working Looked After Children in residential settings
- Fostering and Adoption Work.
- Child and Adult Mental Health.

A satisfactory enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS, previously known as CRB) check is required for all staff including business support workers employed within the service.

COMPLAINTS

The adoption service adheres to the Council's corporate complaints procedure. All service users as a matter of routine are given a copy of Surrey's complaints leaflet.

A children's guide appropriate for the age and needs of the children we work with is provided, either directly to the young person or their carer.

Complaints relating to children are handled under the provisions of the Children's Act S.26 (1989), further defined in the Representation Procedure (Children and Young Persons) Regulations (1991). With the introduction of the Children and Adoption Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) 2003 came an extension of the previous provisions. In addition complaints can be made to:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

REVISION AND CIRCULATION

This statement has been produced by managers of the service in consultation with staff and users of the service, in compliance with National Adoption Standards and the relevant Adoption legislation. Members of the Social Services Executive will be asked to formally approve the Statement, (the revised Statement is presented to Members annually for their approval).

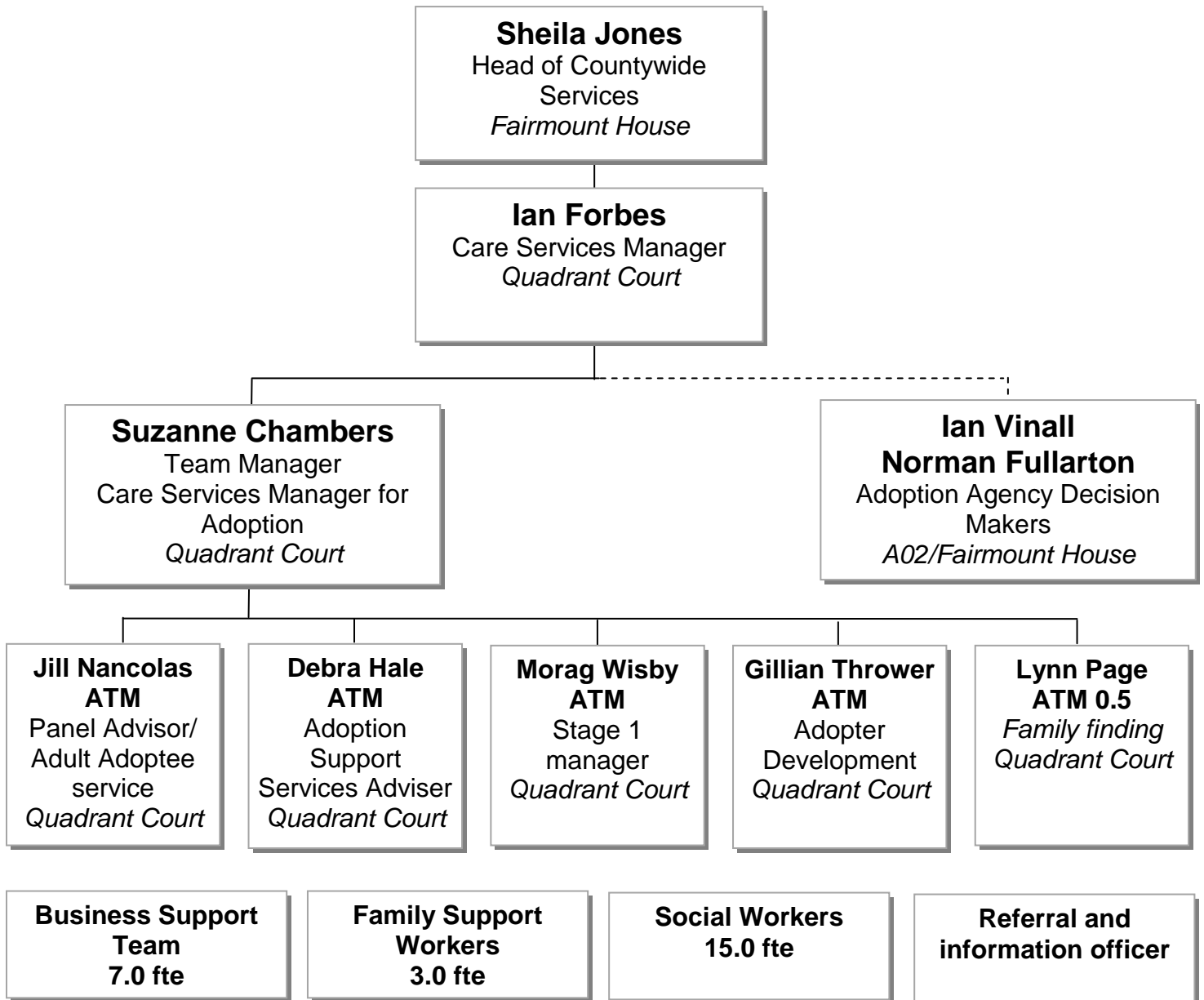
The Care Services Manager and Team Manager are responsible for ensuring that the Statement is updated or modified when necessary, but at least annually

The Statement is provided to OFSTED. Amended Statements will be provided to the Commission within twenty-eight days of approval by Members.

The Statement will be provided to:

- All staff including independent specialists engaged in the adoption process.
- All current and prospective adopters and permanency carers.
- A copy of the statement of purpose is posted on the Adoption pages of the Surrey County Council website

Management Structure



Adoption Assessment Services

Person being assessed	Services for which they are entitled to be assessed						
	Services to enable discussion of matters relating to adoption	Assistance in relation to arrangements for contact	Therapeutic services	Services to ensure the continuation of adoption relationship	Services to assist in cases of disruption	Counselling, advice and information	Financial support
Agency adoptive child	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Adoptive parent of an agency adoptive child	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Child of adoptive parents				◆	◆	◆	
Natural parents or guardians of an agency adoptive child	◆	◆				◆	
A relative (or someone with whom the Local Authority consider the child to have a beneficial relationship) of agency adoptive child		◆				◆	
Intercountry adoptive child			◆	◆	◆	◆	
Intercountry adoptive parent				◆	◆	◆	
Natural sibling of an adoptive child		◆				◆	
Non-agency adoptive children, their parents and guardians						◆	
Prospective adopters						◆	
Adopted adults, their parents, natural parents and former guardians						◆	
A relative (or someone with whom the Local Authority consider the child to have a beneficial relationship) of a non-agency adoptive child						◆	