

# Wolverhampton City Council



## Statement of Purpose

### Adoption Service

**Prepared in accordance with regulation  
2(1) of the Local Authority Adoption  
Services (England) Regulation 2003**

**Children and Young People  
Children's Service  
Adoption Team  
66 Mount Pleasant  
Bilston  
Wolverhampton  
WV14 7PR**

**Telephone No. 01902 553070**

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## 1. **BACKGROUND**

As part of the Adoption Minimum Standards and Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003, every adoption agency has to produce a written Statement of Purpose (Standard 1, Regulation Part 1(1) and Schedule 1). This statement accurately describes the aims, objectives and functions of the service and describes the facilities and services provided.

The Statement of Purpose is provided to anyone working for the purposes of the service, to children who may be adopted and their parents, to anyone wishing to adopt and to adopted persons and their families.

This statement is subject to formal approval and is reviewed on an annual basis. (Last reviewed and agreed in December 2005).

The Statement of Purpose is also available on Wolverhampton's website on:

[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/adoption)

## 2. **INTRODUCTION**

The Family Placement Service in Wolverhampton was established in 1990 following departmental restructure and subsequent implementation of the Children Act 1989. Prior to this adoption agency functions were undertaken by a dedicated central team.

The Family Placement Service operated as two smaller integrated sections. One section was responsible for duties associated with Adoption: including recruitment, training and assessment of adopters, support for approved adopters, general adoption support, inter-country adoption, Notified Adoptions, Section 56 counselling, post adoption contact and voluntary relinquishments. The second section was responsible for recruitment, training and support of foster carers, and family finding. In 2006 the Family Placement Team became two separate Adoption and Fostering teams. The Adoption team continues to undertake the tasks listed above but also undertakes the task of family finding and adoption support.

## 3. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY IN RELATION TO ITS ADOPTION SERVICE**

The Adoption Agency of Wolverhampton City Council aims to provide a service for all of its customers that is welcoming, user friendly and non-discriminatory.

- The Adoption Service is underpinned by the core social work values of empowerment and partnership.
- The Council has an Equal Opportunities Policy which requires staff to treat people with dignity, respect and offer an equitable service regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, sexuality, status, disability and age.

- In all decision making and actions, it is aware of the consequences and the human rights of all people involved.
- The purpose of the Adoption Team is to provide a service to all those families and individuals involved in the adoption process consistent with best practice and National Standards and Regulations.

#### **4. FACILITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ADOPTION SERVICE**

- To recruit, sufficient adoptive parents to meet the diverse needs of looked after children in Wolverhampton for whom adoption is the plan.
- To prepare, train, assess and support such adopters, to enable them to provide a family link for children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot remain within their birth family.
- To provide a service to those parents wishing to place their children for adoption (voluntary relinquishments).
- To provide advice and counselling and an independent support service to birth parents.
- To provide a service to those people wishing to adopt from overseas.
- To provide a service to those people who notify us of their intention to adopt.
- To provide a service to those people seeking birth records information in accordance with Section 56-62 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- To provide a service to birth family members in seeking adopted adults.
- To operate a post adoption contact service, providing assistance where necessary.
- Where appropriate to arrange and/or facilitate and/or supervise direct contact.
- To prepare children, birth parents/significant others and adoptive parents for indirect (post-box) or direct contact.
- To act as social worker to those children subject of voluntary relinquishments.
- To identify and agree adoptive placements.
- To recognise the life long implication of adoption and offer advice/support where necessary to those affected by adoption either 'in house' or via purchased services.
- To provide a comprehensive range of Adoption Support Services.

**5. THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF MANAGER**

Alison Hinds  
Adoption Team  
66 Mount Pleasant  
Bilston  
Wolverhampton  
WV14 7PR

**6. RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS/EXPERIENCE OF MANAGER**

Alison Hinds has the following qualifications:

B.Soc Science (Hons) in Social Administration, CQSW, M.Soc Science (Social Work), City and Guilds 730  
Further Education Teacher's Certificate

Alison has worked for Wolverhampton City Council for almost 20 years, initially in the Education Social Work Service and subsequently in Adoption and Fostering. She joined the Family Placement Team in 1994 as a social work practitioner before being appointed to Assistant Team Manager and subsequently Team Manager in the Adoption Team.

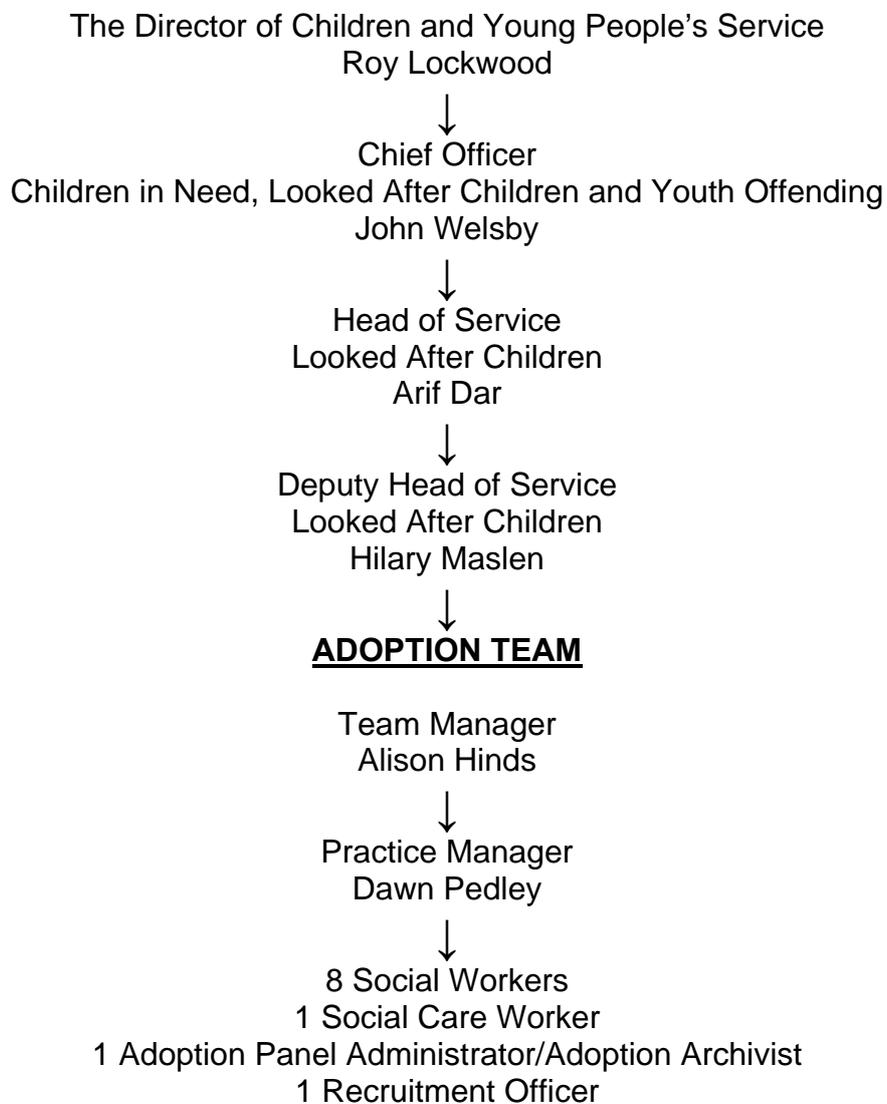
**7. NUMBER, QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF STAFF WORKING FOR THE SERVICE**

The Adoption Team has eight full-time social workers, one social care worker, one Practice Manager, one Team Manager and one Adoption/Panel administrator.

The majority of the qualified social workers have a minimum of three years post qualifying experience. All members of the Adoption Team have a good understanding of adoption work and the majority are suitably qualified under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. All qualified staff are registered with the General Social Care Council.

The staff group also have additional qualifications including N.N.E.B, Adult Teaching Qualifications, Post Qualifying Training, Family Therapy, Diploma in Applied Social Studies, Degree in Social Administration, Diploma in Family Placement work.

8. **ORGANISATION STRUCTURE**



**9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE  
IN ORDER TO ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY**

A number of mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the Service.

- Annual employment performance reviews for all staff.
- Regular formal supervision and opportunity for informal supervision for all staff.
- Staff have access to Children and Young People and Corporate Training courses, and independently run courses. In addition specialist training is commissioned.
- Feedback is sought (via questionnaires) at all stages of the adoption process

Initial enquiry  
Preparation training  
Attendance at Panel  
Family finding process  
Adoption support

Practice is changed to reflect feedback when appropriate

- Joint working opportunities provide peer evaluation
- Practice is audited against the National Minimum Standards and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 guidance.
- Monthly monitoring of standards/targets identified in the Performance Management Strategy.
- Regular monitoring of targets identified in team plan.
- Annual report to Adoption Panel about its activity and performance.
- Formal and informal complaints/compliments
- Children's performance plans are monitored through the LAC review process
- Six monthly progress monitoring reports on children for whom adoption is the plan, are received by the Adoption Panel.
- Yearly reviews of approved prospective adopters.

## **10. PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING, APPROVING AND SUPPORTING PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS**

### **RECRUITMENT**

- The main consideration for the Adoption Team will be to provide adoptive families for children to enable them to grow up in a secure and positive environment which will give them the best opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- To achieve this we aim to recruit, train, assess and approve adopters in a robust and timely manner to meet the needs of children awaiting placement.

Wolverhampton Adoption Service recruits adoptive families in a variety of ways. Examples are as follows:

Word of mouth  
Posters in public places  
Information leaflets  
Local radio  
Adverts on buses, Metro and in newspapers  
Yellow Pages  
Website  
Talks to local community groups  
Staffed stands at local events  
Internet

Wolverhampton has a dedicated administrative post to ensure that enquiries are responded to in a prompt manner. In addition Wolverhampton is part of a Black Country Consortia of four authorities funding the Adoption in the Black Country project. This project focuses on recruitment of adopters for children of five plus, those who are part of sibling groups and children of different minority ethnic groups.

People interested in adoption will receive an information pack within five working days of their enquiry and if they wish to proceed they will be offered an initial home visit within two weeks and will be invited to an information evening within two months of enquiry.

Prospective adopters are considered in terms of what they can offer children regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, race, religion or marital status.

### **PREPARATION**

On receipt of application to adopt, applicants will be invited to attend preparation training. CRB and statutory checks are undertaken during this process.

Adopters are prepared for the task of adoption via preparation training delivered by at least two qualified social workers. As part of the Black Country Consortia each Authority delivers two courses a year which gives the flexibility of access to eight

courses a year. The time scales over which courses are delivered vary slightly from Authority to Authority.

All courses include input on the following areas:

- Children's backgrounds
- Attachment issues
- Behaviour difficulties
- Post adoption contact
- Legal process
- Separation and loss
- Child development
- Adoption support

The course methods include individual exercises, small group exercises, large group exercises, facilitator input and use of tapes and DVD's. There is also an opportunity to meet with approved adopters.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Following the preparation training applicants who wish to proceed are requested to put this in writing and allocated a social worker to undertake an assessment. Applicants are encouraged to write their background/personal profile section and part of other sections with the social work role being to clarify and analyse the information they have produced. Once the Prospective Adopter's Report is completed applicants have the option to have their report for 10 days prior to Adoption Panel; and attend Panel if they wish. Panel makes a recommendation which is ratified by the agency decision maker within seven working days.

If adopters are not approved they will be given a full explanation of the reasons and advised of their right to make representation to the Independent Review Mechanism in accordance with Government guidance.

### **SUPPORT**

Once adoption applicants are approved they can expect support in the form of telephone calls and home visits. In the majority of cases the social worker who undertook the assessment will continue to offer support to the approved Adopters.

Where approved families are awaiting placement for more than three months, they can be made available to meet the needs of children within the West Midlands Consortium or nationally through the National Adoption Register.

Wolverhampton pays for approved Adopters' first year's membership to 'Adoption UK'.

Ongoing training is also available.

Once a child has been identified the couple are given the opportunity to meet the child's social worker, Foster Carers, Medical Adviser and any other people who can

provide information. This enables the prospective Adopters to make an informed choice as to whether they wish to be considered for the child/ren, and equips them for the task for caring for the child/ren.

When prospective Adopters are linked to a child a comprehensive placement plan and plan of introductions is produced, and they will receive support from their social worker throughout the introductions and until the point the Adoption Order is granted.

## **11. ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES**

- Wolverhampton provides adoption support through their own specialist Support Social Workers and it also commissions a service from the organisation, Adoption Support.
- Adoptive families, adoptive parents, adopted people and birth parents can apply to the Adoption Team for an assessment of need for adoption support.
- The Adoption Support social workers administer a letterbox exchange system and offer advice and support. Support, advice and assistance are given to all parties involved in indirect and direct contact.
- An initial assessment will be carried out and if the identified need can be met then support will be offered or the applicant will be signposted to an appropriate resource provider.
- Prospective adopters can request an assessment for financial support and an assessment will be undertaken.
- If a more complex need is apparent, a social worker will be allocated and a specialist assessment will be undertaken.
- Wolverhampton Adoption Agency commissions 'Adoption Support' to provide an independent support service to birth parents involved in adoption prior to an order being made. They are also commissioned to provide an Intermediary service to adults who have been adopted and to birth parents. If adopters or adopted people prefer to receive counselling and support from an independent agency, this is also available from 'Adoption Support'.
- Adoption Support can be contacted direct at:

Suite A  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Albany House  
Hurst Street  
Birmingham  
B5 4BD

Telephone: 0121 666 6014  
Email: [adoptionssupport@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:adoptionssupport@tiscali.co.uk)

## **12. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Complaints procedure has two stages, formal and informal.

### Informal

These complaints are usually dealt with by the Manager of the Service concerned, and as quickly as possible.

### Formal Complaints

If the complaint is serious, or if someone is not satisfied by the action taken by the manager, the complaint can be registered as a formal complaint.

An Investigation Officer, who is not directly involved in providing the service, will be appointed. The complaint will be acknowledged within seven days and we will respond to the complaint within 28 days. If we are unable to do this we will advise the complainant and agree a timetable for a full response.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they have 28 days to ask the Complaints Reviewing Officer for the Department's response to be reviewed. An Independent Review Panel will be held within 28 days of that request. The Panel will consist of three people, one of whom will be 'independent' of the Local Authority. This person will Chair the Panel. The complainant will be sent the recommendations of the Panel within 24 hours of the decision being made. Complainants also have the right to contact their Member of Parliament or Local Councillor.

Applicants to become adopters who are not accepted for approval on the recommendation of the Adoption Panel and/or the decision maker, are able to ask for their case to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Details of this process are made available to applicants during preparation and assessment.

The IRM has the following timescales:

- Applicants have 40 days from the agency decision to contact the IRM.
- The Adoption Agency will be contacted to produce relevant documents within 10 days.
- The IRM will set up a panel within 3 months of the application.

Contact details are:

IRM  
Dolphin House  
54 Coventry Road  
Birmingham  
B10 0RX

Tel. 0121 766 8086

Web: [www.irm-adoption.co.uk](http://www.irm-adoption.co.uk)

**13. NAME AND ADDRESS OF OFSTED**

Contact details:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
08456 404040

Headquarters:  
Ofsted  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Royal Exchange  
St. Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

Local Office:  
Ofsted  
Building C  
Cumberland Place  
Park Row  
Nottingham  
NG1 6HJ

Ofsted is responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services under the provision of the Care Standards Act 2000.

(Revised version May 2007)