

ADOPT BERKSHIRE

Statement of Purpose 2017



Working Together...
...Creating Families

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INTRODUCTION

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council joined their Adoption services on 1st December 2014 to provide a dedicated service for adoption across the four local authorities. This shared adoption service is **Adopt Berkshire**

The main priorities of **Adopt Berkshire** are:

- to provide high quality adoption services for children who require placement for adoption;
- to provide a service where by applicants who are seeking to adopt within the U.K. can be prepared, assessed and approved for the adoption task and where appropriate achieve the placement of an appropriately matched child(ren).

Adopt Berkshire is hosted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, but the main office base is in Wokingham.

This Statement of Purpose is divided into three parts:

Part One sets out:

- the broad aims and objectives of the service;
- the management structure;
- the services provided;
- the outcomes expected for children and young people and the standards of care expected;
- how adoptive families are recruited, trained, assessed, approved and supported.

Part Two gives more changeable information about the numbers, qualifications and experience of staff and their roles.

Part Three consists of details of outsourced Services:

- The Cornerstone Partnership – Statement of Purpose;
- The Inter Country Adoption Centre – Mission Statement;
- details of the policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing **Adopt Berkshire** and its service delivery;
- details of the contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (which is a separate but related service).

Please Note: The four **Adopt Berkshire** contributing local authorities are currently in the process of jointly negotiating to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency, which is likely to also include: Reading Borough Council, Swindon Borough Council and Oxfordshire County Council. It is currently anticipated that the new Regional Adoption Agency will 'go live' in Quarter 3 of 2017/18 and **Adopt Berkshire** will cease to exist at that point. The new Regional Adoption Agency will also provide the contributing authorities' Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Services, which are at the current time hosted in-house by each of the **Adopt Berkshire** contributing authorities.

PART ONE

1. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of **Adopt Berkshire** accord with a number of local and national aims and objectives. These include:

- The National Minimum Standards for adoption (2011)
- The Adoption Act 2002 and Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 and supporting statutory guidance and regulations
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and accompanying statutory guidance
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011)

The service actively contributes to ensuring that each of the contributing authorities perform well in terms of placing children for adoption within national timescales, by both recruiting adopters seeking to adopt an unrelated child(ren), and by assessing relatives and friends and existing foster carers who have applied to be considered as potential adopters for a specific named child(ren).

The key functions of **Adopt Berkshire** are to:

1. Support the contributing authorities to at an early stage identify those Looked After Children who would benefit from adoption and to achieve the placement of these children with appropriate prospective adoptive families within timescales appropriate to the needs of each child.

The service works in line with DfE standards and within national timescales except where this is not in the identified interests of the individual child concerned. The service seeks to keep to a minimum any delay in achieving placement for each child; given this the option of Fostering for Adoption is considered for every child referred.

2. Recruit, prepare and assess prospective adoptive applicants who are seeking to adopt unrelated children and who are likely to be able to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally and nationally.

All applicants are expected to be able to accept the placement of a child(ren) with complex backgrounds and a child(ren) for whom there is not complete background and/or health information. Priority is given to potential applicants who are able to consider the placement of a child(ren) with a higher level of additional needs and those able to consider Fostering for Adoption.

3. Undertake the preparation and assessment of relatives and friends and existing foster carers who have applied to be considered as potential adopters for a specific named child(ren).
4. Support approved and waiting adopters in achieving the placement of appropriately matched children.
5. Provide a high standard of post placement support to the children placed for adoption by the contributing authorities and to their prospective adopters during the pre-adoption period and to ensure that robust adoption support packages are, where necessary, in place in order to maximise the long-term success of each child's placement.

6. Provide appropriate support to the prospective adopters recruited by the service following the placement of children and to work effectively with placing authorities in order to maximise the long-term success of each child's placement.
7. Process all notified adoptions occurring in the four local authority areas.
8. Fulfil the contributing authorities' duties under the Adoption (Inter Country Aspects) Act 1999, to provide, or arrange to provide, an Inter Country Adoption Service.

The four contributing authorities all, by arrangement with The Inter-country Adoption Centre, delegate to that agency the work of providing counselling and services to applicants wishing to adopt from abroad. However once a child is placed with prospective or legal adoptive parents who reside within any of the four authorities **Adopt Berkshire** undertakes any required supervision of or support to these placements.

9. Maintain effective systems for recording, managing and keeping safe, information about children placed for adoption and adopters and information received from people affected by adoption.
10. Maintain appropriate data in order to enable the four contributing authorities to monitor their provision of adoption services and compile any associated statistical and/or data returns.

2. The Organisation and Management of Adopt Berkshire

Adopt Berkshire came into being on the 1st December 2014. It is a dedicated Adoption Service working on behalf of The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council. The Service extends the joint arrangements previously invested in the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (BAAS) – see [Part Three](#).

The Service Lead's contact details are:

Hilary Loades
 Adopt Berkshire
 First Floor
 Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre
 Hurricane Way
 Woodley
 Reading
 RG5 4UX

 Hilary.loades@rbwm.gov.uk
 0118 9746260

The Team Manager's contact details are:

Claire Corcoran
 Adopt Berkshire
 First Floor
 Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre
 Hurricane Way
 Woodley
 Reading
 RG5 4UX

 Claire.corcoran@rbwm.gov.uk
 0118 9746260

The structure of the Service is shown in the following structure chart:

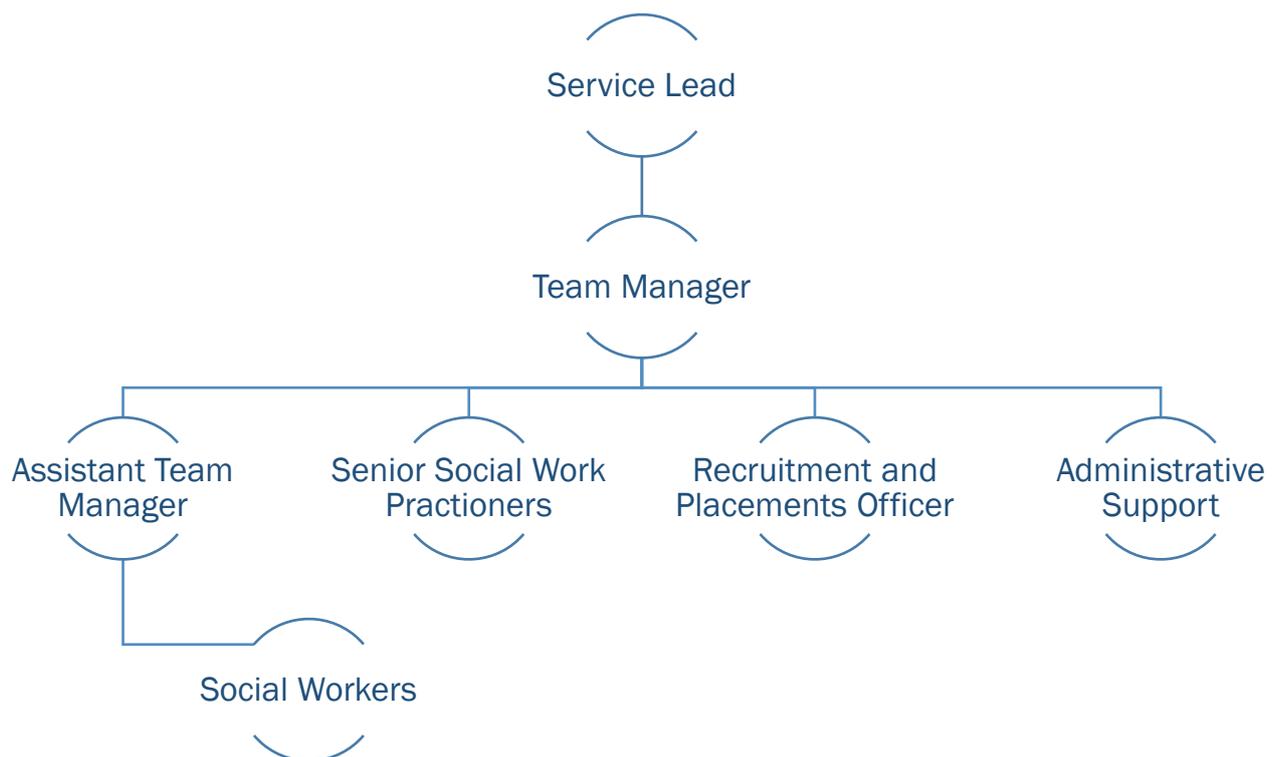
The total staffing of the service consists of:

- The Service Lead (who also holds lead responsibility for the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service)
- The Team Manager
- An Assistant Team Manager [At the current time this post is appointed to on a half-time basis]
- Eight full time equivalent Social Workers [At the current time these posts have not all been filled]
- One Recruitment and Placements Officer
- Two Team Support Officers (Administration) [At the current time one of these posts is not filled]

The qualifications and experience of staff employed in **Adopt Berkshire** are detailed in Part Two.

Adopt Berkshire is supported by the Cornerstone Partnership¹, in achieving the service aims in a number of key areas, including; the recruitment and preparation of adopters, the provision of mentor support and the provision of post-approval training.

Details of the Cornerstone Partnership are given in Part Three.



¹ Cornerstone is a social enterprise and limited company, sponsored by the Department for Education, whose mission is to help adoption agencies (local authority and voluntary) to recruit and support parents for children waiting to be adopted.

3. Links to Other Agencies

The service works closely with the Children's Services staff employed within the four contributing local authorities.

The four contributing authorities are each part of the Berkshire Local Authority Adoption Agencies' Consortium and the service therefore works in close co-operation with the other two Berkshire Unitary Authority Adoption Agencies – Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council.

The Service Lead for **Adopt Berkshire** also holds responsibility for the separate management of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (BAAS) and the staff employed within **Adopt Berkshire** work closely with those employed within the Advisory Service to ensure that while the two services have different responsibilities the contributing authorities experience the provision of a seamless adoption service. The contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service are attached for reference – see Part Three.

As detailed in section 2 (above) and in Part Three (below) **Adopt Berkshire** works with Cornerstone Partnership in specific areas.

The service works in co-operation with the voluntary adoption agencies that operate within the geographical area covered by the service.

The service works in co-operation with other placing authorities whose children are placed for adoption with prospective adopters approved by the service.

The service works in co-operation with other local authority and voluntary adoption agencies with which placements of individual children are negotiated / achieved.

The service works in co-operation with the Berkshire Joint Legal Team.

Where specific advice or expertise is required in relation to a particular case, this is sought in the first instance from the Berkshire Joint Legal Team and/or CoramBAAF. A referral may be made to a specialist Adoption/Adoption Support Agency depending on the circumstances of the case.

The service will when required, use appropriately qualified and experienced agency workers (qualified social workers) who can be contracted to complete specific pieces of work as required, including the completion of homestudy assessments.

If there is a need for a specific piece of work relating to the recruitment of applicants or the placement of a child to be carried out by staff independent of the service, the service will seek to make arrangements for this to be undertaken, without undue delay, by one of the two other Berkshire Local Authority Adoption Agencies or by an Independent Adoption Agency - PACT (Reading).

4. Systems in place to monitor and evaluate the activities of the service and to ensure quality of performance

4.1. Children for Placement

The Service is committed to seeking feed-back from children being placed for adoption; however since the formation of Adopt Berkshire the majority of children placed by the contributing authorities have been aged under three years when they joined their adoptive families. Where children are of an age and understanding to express a view there is an expectation that the children's allocated social workers will seek the children's views in line with the Berkshire Shared Adoption Procedures and related guidance.

The Independent Reviewing Officers for the children referred for placement and the four contributing authorities' Permanence Monitoring Meetings monitor the children waiting for permanent homes and the progress of Family Finding for them.

The Team Manager (**Adopt Berkshire**) and Service Lead meet regularly with the Children and Families Team and Service Managers within each of the contribution authorities, in order to monitor the permanence planning and family finding processes for all children for whom adoption is likely to become the Care Plan.

The contributing authorities each have procedures in place for reviewing any breakdowns in placements, and hold disruption meetings to which the child's previous Family Finder will be invited and will attend.

4.2. Adopters

Adopt Berkshire promotes working in partnership with prospective and approved adopters, listening to their views and using them to inform practice.

Feedback is sought from prospective and legal adopters at each key point in the adoption process by way of a questionnaire:

- while attending Adoption Preparation Groups;
- following the completion of the preparation and assessment process (Stage One and Stage Two);
- following matching;
- following placement;
- following legal adoption being achieved.

This gives the opportunity for them to express their views on the quality and appropriateness of the services that they have received at each stage of the adoption process.

Note – In addition the BAAS also seeks feedback from all prospective adopters about their experience of attending Adoption Panel, both at the time that their application to be approved to adopt is considered and at the time that the Panel considers any proposed 'match'.

Post approval reviews are also undertaken with all approved and waiting adopters in line with regulations. Reviews take place:

- not more than one year following approval and afterwards at intervals of not more than one year, until a child(ren) are placed with the prospective adopter/s or the period of time for which approval was originally given expires, or they formally withdraw from the adoption process.
- whenever the service considers it necessary;

Reviews are chaired by the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager and always involve a meeting with the prospective adopter/s. The views of the prospective adopter/s are always elicited and taken into account. If the prospective adopter/s wish to continue to be approved to adopt, a review report is compiled which is shared with them and they have the opportunity to comment on its contents.

Where applicants decide not to proceed after completing Stage One of the adoption process, the reasons for this are ascertained and recorded. Similarly where applicants decide to withdraw during Stage Two of the adoption process the reasons for this are discussed with them and recorded and consideration given to points of learning.

Where approved adopters decide to withdraw from the adoption process prior to achieving a placement, the reasons for this are ascertained and recorded and consideration given to points of learning.

4.3. Staff

All staff employed within **Adopt Berkshire** receive regular professional supervision including the:

- Service Lead

- Team Manager
- Assistant Team Manager
- Social Work practitioners
- Recruitment and Placements Officer
- Administrative and support staff.

This routinely includes:

- reviewing casework tasks,
- monitoring targets and timescales,
- reflecting on practice and outcomes.

Annual appraisals are held with all staff, conducted in line with the host authority's usual HR procedures. Additionally a six month review will take place with all staff half-yearly which will feed into the annual appraisal process.

Social work practitioners are required to keep up to date with changes in legislation, regulations, policies, procedures, and best practice guidance that are relevant to the specialism. Training needs are identified and kept under review through the supervision and appraisal process.

All social work staff are expected to keep a record of their Continuing Professional Development activities in line with the requirements for Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registration.

4.4. Management Oversight

The ongoing work of the Adopt Berkshire Service is monitored by a Management Board which consists of: the Heads of Service in the four contributing authorities, the Service Lead and an experienced adoptive parent.

All aspects of service provision are monitored by either the Service Lead or the Team Manager to ensure that effective management oversight is maintained in respect of monitoring:

- the quality of service provision to all Service Users;
- the time taken to achieve appropriate matches for the children referred for placement;
- the timescales achieved for potential adopters completing the Stage One preparation process;
- the timescales achieved for prospective adopters completing the Stage Two assessment process;
- when statutory checks for approved and waiting adopters need to be repeated;
- when prospective adopters' reviews need to be completed.

Statistical information is gathered to inform the development of the service and to facilitate the completion of Service Returns.

The Heads of Service and Lead Members in the contributing authorities receive half yearly reports detailing:

- the overall functioning of the service,
- any compliance issues,
- any areas for development,

- any complaints received.

4.5. Finances

The Service Lead receives regular reports on the **Adopt Berkshire** budgets including staffing costs.

Regular budget reviews take place with an accountant in the host authority (RBWM).

Interagency costs are monitored in terms of income received and payments made for placements (payments being charged and paid in line with CoramBAAF recommended rates).

The individual placing authorities retain responsibility for the setting up and management of all adoption allowances and the set up costs associated with any particular placement.

4.6. Evaluating and responding to feedback

Where a shortfall in services is identified or an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the services provided is received this is referred to/checked out by the Team Manager or Service Lead in the first instance (including where necessary liaison with external agencies/organisations) and where it is reasonable for the service to do so, action will be taken to address the issue.

Where the expression of dissatisfaction constitutes a 'complaint' the matter will be managed through the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Complaints' Procedure – see section 8 below.

Information is maintained on feedback from Service Users and is used to inform future service development.

Information about feedback received from Service Users is detailed in six monthly reports to the Heads of Service in the contributing authorities.

5. Providing Children with a new start in life which will support them in overcoming the negative effects of any early trauma that they may have experienced and to flourish

The contributing local authorities all support the basic principles that:

- Every child is entitled to grow up as part of a loving families, which can meet his/her needs during childhood, and beyond.
- It is best for children whenever possible to be brought up by their own birth families.
- Children whose birth families cannot provide them with a safe, secure, stable and permanent home are entitled to have adoption considered for them as one of a range of permanency options.
- The child's welfare, safety and needs must be at the centre of the adoption process.
- Children's views should be listened to, recorded and given due consideration when decisions are made about their placement needs.

Adopt Berkshire works to improve the lives of looked after children by:

- Helping children to be healthy;
- Helping children to be safe;
- Helping children to experience a secure home environment and to develop independence skills;
- Helping children to have a positive experience of school, learning and leisure;
- Helping children to grow and develop into adults who are confident and able to participate in society.

These outcomes and principles are also outlined in each of the contributing authorities' Pledge to Looked After Children.

The four contributing authorities have shared adoption procedures. The procedures that relate to Children for Placement are kept under review by the Service Lead, **Adopt Berkshire**. These procedures are followed for all children who have an adoption plan.

5.1. Helping children to be healthy

Each child with a Care Plan of adoption has a full adoption medical and a health plan and child health report written by the Adoption Agency's Medical Adviser.

Preparation Groups enable prospective adopters to consider a range of issues around the health, medical and developmental needs of Children in Care and the particular issues that they may need to manage in caring for an adopted child in terms of both his/her physical and emotional health and development.

Prospective adopters are encouraged and enabled to meet with the appropriate Agency Medical Adviser before a child is placed, to further their understanding of his/her health, medical and/or developmental needs and the potential implications of the birth parent/s' medical histories.

Prospective adopters are given information about the health of any child to whom they are matched, and it is made clear to them before the child is placed, what responsibility has been delegated to them in respect of making health related decisions.

Social workers and prospective adopters speak to children about their health needs and support and encourage them to live a healthy life style.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to agree to any child placed with them for adoption continuing to be subject to regular Child in Care medicals up to the point of legal adoption, in order to ensure that any emerging issues are identified and any previously existing health, medical or developmental issues continue to be appropriately addressed.

Each child's Adoption Support Plan addresses the issue of the child's presenting and likely future therapeutic needs and how the placing Authority will seek to support both the child and his/her prospective adopter/s in addressing these (including the level of funding that will be made available).

5.2. Helping children to be safe

Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of Children in Care and other children affected by adoption is the service's paramount concern and underpins all work undertaken by staff employed within the service.

The preparation of prospective adopters includes learning about the implications of neglect and abuse and the challenges of parenting children with additional needs, including attachment difficulties.

The preparation of prospective adopters also includes consideration of a parent's responsibility for keeping his/her child/ren safe, including the safe use of the internet and the dangers associated with children accessing social networking sites.

A Health and Safety Check is completed on all prospective adopters' homes at the time of the assessment of their suitability to adopt and this is reviewed following a proposed 'match' being identified. The prospective adopters are then required to address any issues identified prior to the proposed placement being effected.

Prospective adopters are provided with as full information as possible about any child to be placed by the service and time is spent trying to ensure that they fully understand the potential implications of the child's personal history, the birth family background and the child's presenting behaviours and needs,

and that they are able to form a reasonably realistic understanding of the task that they are taking on in terms of the child's likely future care and parenting needs.

All prospective adopters with whom a child is to be placed are provided with written information about what they should do and who they should contact in the event of an emergency including any concern around child protection.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to give due consideration to issues of risk in the areas where they have delegated authority and to encourage children to take appropriate risks whilst also keeping themselves safe, e.g. after the initial settling in period they decide if the child who is placed in their care can stay overnight at a friend or relative's house.

Each child's Family Finder generally attends the child's first post-placement review and s/he supports the child's social worker to ensure that appropriate links are made with relevant professionals in the receiving authority for the child, i.e. health, education, social care and, where identified in the Adoption Support Plan, therapeutic services.

5.3. Helping children to experience a secure home environment and to develop independence skills

All assessments of prospective adopters consider the applicant/s' financial situation and ensure that the applicants are in a position to meet the costs associated with bringing up a child. Where financial support will be required this need is explored and recorded and will be brought to the attention of any potential placing authority so as to ensure that this is addressed in the Adoption Support Plan and if a child is placed he/she will experience a stable financial situation.

Prospective adopters' preparation and assessment also considers the stability and likely long-term security of family relationships and the appropriateness of applicant/s' support networks; all prospective adopters are encouraged to develop links with other adoptive families and to think how they might strengthen their support network to best equip them to manage the additional parenting demands often inherent in adoptive parenting. Prospective adopters are encouraged to be open to seeking support from appropriate health, education and/or social care professionals at an early stage should any issues arise for themselves or their adopted child/ren either post-placement or after the legal adoption of their child/ren.

An Adoption Support Plan is drawn up for each child who is to be placed for adoption by the contributing authorities, prior to prospective adopters being identified, and the Plan is reviewed once a family is identified as the 'family of choice' for the child. Where the child has additional care or parenting needs that are likely to place a financial strain on the prospective adopter/s, this will be addressed within the Plan. Placing authorities are encouraged to consider providing one off or ongoing financial support as necessary to support such placements in order to ensure that the prospective adopter/s are in a position to meet the financial demands of caring for the child and to provide him/her with a financially secure upbringing. Any support agreed will be detailed in the Support Plan.

Prospective adopters are expected to understand the likely benefits to all children of developing age/ability appropriate practical and independence skills at all stages of their development and the importance of parents appropriately preparing their children to achieve independent living in adult life (accepting that children with additional needs may need to continue to receive higher than average levels of parental support as adults).

5.4. Helping children to have a positive experience of school, learning and leisure

The matching process takes into account the child's personality, interests, skills and abilities and also any special needs that the child has or may have. Every effort is made to identify prospective adopters for each child who are likely to be able to support the child in his/her interests and activities and to support him/her to maximise his/her potential in all areas, thus enabling him/her to achieve to the best of his/her abilities and to enjoy his/her achievements.

Prospective adopters are expected to attend all formal meetings associated with their child's education including; Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, PEP review meetings and parents' meetings at their child's nursery or school, and to become actively involved in their child's education.

Support is provided to the social workers who are responsible for the children placed through the service, to ensure that the Adoption Support Plan for each child placed addresses how the child might be supported to develop age appropriate interests and to achieve to the best of his/her abilities. Where financial support is required to enable the prospective adopter/s to provide appropriate opportunities for the child this is also addressed.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to research their local area to find out what facilities exist for children (and their families) and to become familiar with them prior to a child being placed. Once any child placed is appropriately settled they are expected to support their child to engage in leisure activities that are appropriate to the child's age, development and personality and that will help the child to develop confidence and individual interests.

5.5. Helping children to grow and develop into adults who are confident and able to participate in society

The matching process takes into account the wishes, feelings and personality and needs of each individual child and how each child might be best supported.

It is considered to generally be in the best interests of adopted children for a level of contact to be established and maintained between the child's significant birth family members and his/her adoptive parent/s. The service supports children's social workers in considering the most appropriate future contact plan for each child and works with each child's social worker and the Letterbox Administrator (BAAS) and/or the Contact Service (BAAS) to ensure that appropriate arrangements are set up in a timely manner.

All four of the contributing authorities are committed to ensuring that every child who is placed for adoption is provided with a good quality Life Book and Later Life Letter and that these are provided by the date of the Celebration Hearing following the child's legal adoption. **Adopt Berkshire** provides support and guidance to children's social workers regarding the content and format of Life Books and Later Life Letters and will seek to ensure that they are provided within the target timescales.

The adoption planning process ensures that all children who have an adoption plan and are of sufficient age and ability to understand their situation, receive appropriate information about and support around the matching and placement process, including being provided with written materials if appropriate.

Each child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when a placement is being pursued for him/her. The placement planning process seeks to ensure that each child is supported by his/her carer/s and social worker and, where appropriate, an advocate, during the introductory period.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to take into account the child's ethnicity, religion, language and culture and to consider how they will positively promote the child's heritage in their upbringing of the child so that the child is facilitated to develop a positive view of him/herself which appropriately incorporates his/her birth family origins and his/her adoptive identity. Where the child's culture and/or religion of birth is not reflected in his/her adoptive placement, the Adoption Support Plan will identify what additional support will be provided by the placing authority to enable the child to gain or maintain an appropriate link with his/her heritage.

When children have identified additional needs in terms of emotional and / or behavioural difficulties these are identified through the matching process and the potential adopter/s provided with full information. The Adoption Support Plan then details the additional support that will be provided to support the prospective adopter/s in caring for the child and in meeting his/her parenting needs. This may include the provision or funding of on-going psychological or therapeutic support by the placing authority.

Prospective and legal adopters, are able to access a programme of post-approval training available via the Cornerstone Partnership and the BAAS.

Where there is an active Adoption Support Plan in place, **Adopt Berkshire** will when requested facilitate a meeting between the child's prospective adopter/s and the Adoption Support Worker in the Placing Authority (who will continue to hold responsibility for the provision of Adoption Support Services in the first three years post-order) prior to the legal adoption of the child, in order to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibility for managing the Support Plan.

6. The recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval and support of prospective adopters

Adopt Berkshire has a written Recruitment Plan aimed at enabling the Service to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the placement needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally; please see **Adopt Berkshire – Policy and Plan on the Recruitment of Prospective Adopters**.

Adopt Berkshire seeks to maintain an inclusive approach to the recruitment of prospective adopters whilst at the same time recognising the need to to an extent concentrate recruitment efforts and financial resources on recruiting prospective adopters who are likely to be able to meet the care and parenting needs of children with complex needs.

The four contributing authorities have shared adoption procedures. The procedures that relate to working with prospective and approved adopters are kept under review by the Service Lead, **Adopt Berkshire**. These procedures are followed for all work around the preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters and the support of approved adopters through the linking, placement and post-placement / pre-adoption processes.

Adopt Berkshire works in partnership with Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council to run a programme of regular Information Sessions about adoption which are open to any Berkshire resident and to interested parties living further afield.

Adopt Berkshire also works in partnership with Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council to run a programme of regular Preparation Groups for potential adopters completing Stage One and Stage Two of the adoption preparation and assessment process.

All prospective and approved adopters who are engaged with **Adopt Berkshire** have an allocated social worker who has responsibility for supporting them through each stage of the adoption process.

7. The processing of Notified Adoptions

Adopt Berkshire has written procedures around the processing and management of Notified Adoption. These procedures are followed for all work with prospective adopters who apply to adopt children who have not been placed for adoption by a local authority within the UK. These will include:

- children who are to be adopted by relatives or family friends,

and in some instances,

- children who are to be adopted by their foster-carers,
- children who have been placed with their prospective adopters via inter-country adoption arrangements

Where a child/ren are to be or have been placed for adoption through an inter-country adoption arrangement the Service becomes involved as soon as it is made aware that approved adopters are in the process of being matched to a child/ren or that a child/ren have entered the UK under an inter-country adoption arrangement; this is in order to ensure that all necessary safeguarding measures are in place.

Where a child is the subject of an adoption application by his/her foster-carer/s the case will be allocated immediately as the child concerned will be a child in local authority care.

Where a child is not a Child in Care and is to be adopted by a relatives or family friend cases will be allocated for completion of the necessary enquiries and related Court report/s as soon as staffing allows. It is usual for such cases to be allocated within a three to six month timeframe.

8. The complaints procedure

All local authorities are required to have a Complaints Procedures under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and, where children are involved, under the Children Act 1989. The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Complaints Service manages and monitors any complaints received about any aspects of the work of **Adopt Berkshire** on behalf of the four contributing authorities.

Copies of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Complaints Process can be obtained from the Authority's Customer Care and Complaints Officer.

The Customer Care and Complaints Officer's contact details are:

Corporate Complaints Officer
Maidenhead Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL61RF

Tel: 01628 683857

complaints@rbwm.gov.uk

In appropriate circumstances, complainants may wish to draw matters to the attention of OFSTED:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

PART TWO

1. The Numbers, qualifications & experience of staff

The following is a schedule of all staff employed in **Adopt Berkshire** with their dates of service and qualifications:

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Hilary Loades	Service Lead - Adoption	Full time [Secondment from Team Manager post]	Joined Adopt Berkshire as Team Manager in December 2014 having previously held the post of Adoption Team Manager in Wokingham Borough Council since 1992. Seconded to the post of Service Lead – Adoption, since 3 rd May 2016.	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work awarded in 1984. Post Graduate Certificate in Health and Social Care Management awarded in 2006.
Claire Corcoran	Team Manager	Full time [Independent Worker – covering Hilary’s Secondment Period]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in June 2016 as the locum Team Manager having previously held the post of Interim Practice Manager (Adoption and Permanency) in Slough Borough Council and prior to this held a Team Manager post with PACT Adoption Agency (Reading).	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work awarded in 1992. Post - Qualifying award in Child Care level 1 gained in 2006.
Susan Robertson	Senior Social Work Practitioner	Full time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Social Worker Adoption & Permanence in Wokingham Borough Council since 2012.	Certificate of Social Service (CETSW) awarded in 1989. Post - Qualifying Award in Childcare level 1 and 2 gained in 2006.

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Nikki Douglas	Senior Social Work Practitioner (Currently on Maternity Leave – June 2016 – June 2017)	Full time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Senior Social Work Practitioner in Bracknell Forest Borough Council since 2013, specialising in adoption.	MA in Social Work with a Diploma in Social Work awarded in 2001. Post - Qualifying Award in Childcare gained in 2006.
Joanne Madden	Senior Social Work Practitioner	28 hours per week	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Senior Social Work Practitioner in the Family Placement Team at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead since 2010, and prior to this been employed as a social worker in the same team since 1997.	Diploma in Social Work awarded in 1996. Post - Qualifying award in Child Care level 1 gained in 2005. Specialist Child Care award consolidation model awarded in 2010.
Marisa Tredoux	Senior Social Work Practitioner	21 hours per week [Hours temporarily increased to 29h.p.w. since January 2017 as backfill for a SSW colleague who is currently seconded to the ATM role]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Senior Social Work Practitioner in Bracknell Forest Borough Council since February 2014, specialising in adoption. Prior to this worked in the Adoption Team in LB Ealing as a Senior Social Worker from March 2006.	BA in Social Work awarded in 1998, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. MA in Social Work gained in 2005 through Tavistock and Portman Trust – accredited by University of East London.

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Karen Wood	Assistant Team Manager	15 hours per week [Secondment from SSW Practitioner post]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Assistant Team Manager Family Placement with Bracknell Forest Borough Council since 2011, specialising in adoption. Seconded to the post of Assistant Team Manager, since 1 st January 2017.	Diploma in Social Work awarded in 2003. Post Qualifying Award (Masters Level) gained in 2005.
Deon Ryan	Social Worker	Full time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Social worker in the Family Placement Team at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.	BSc in Social Work awarded in 2009. Post - Qualifying Consolidation Module gained in 2015.
Shirley Papat	Social Worker	Full Time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in February 2016 having previously held the post of Supervising Social Worker in the Placements Team in Wokingham Borough Council. Previously employed as a Senior Social Work Practitioner by PACT Adoption Agency (Reading) and prior to this as a Social Worker in the Reading Borough Council Adoption Team.	BA (Hons) in Social Work awarded in 2009. Post Qualification Graduate Certificate in Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice awarded in 2014.

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Sophie Jones	Social Worker	Full time [12 month Maternity cover to June 2017]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in July 2016 having previously worked as a Social Worker in the Reading Adoption Team and as a Child in Need / Child Protection Social Worker for Buckinghamshire County Council.	BA (Hons) in Social Work awarded in 2014.
Jo Stobart	Recruitment & Placements Officer	Full Time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in May 2015, having previously worked in the British Armed Forces.	
Maria Brown	Administrative Assistants	Part-time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in July 2016, initially on a short-term contract. Appointed on a permanent contract in December 2016.	

Hilary Loades,
 Service Lead – Adoption
 April 2017

PART THREE

1. Cornerstone Partnership – Statement of Purpose



Who are we and what do we do?

Cornerstone is a social enterprise and Ltd company, sponsored by the Department for Education, whose mission is to help adoption agencies (local authority and voluntary) to recruit and support parents for children waiting to be adopted.

Our aims are:

1. to help reduce the time that children wait for adoption
2. to give adoptive parents the practical support and tools they need and doing so contribute to the quality of life for adoptive families.

Cornerstone was founded and is run by 2 adoptive mums – Helen Keenan and Clare Soares – who between them have 4 adoptive children and therefore have first-hand experience of the challenges and joys of adopting... from the first enquiry to an child being placed (and beyond) Cornerstone is here to listen, support and encourage adopters based on real life experience.

Cornerstone's Services to Adoption Agencies

1. the recruitment of adopters relevant to the profiles of children waiting in a local area - in particular hard to place children including older & BAME children, sibling groups and children with disabilities;
2. peer mentoring for each adopter as they move through the process of being assessed and matched and;
3. providing approved adopters with therapeutic parenting training (3 day course + home study) and ongoing knowledge development (via monthly webinars & tutorials) giving practical parenting strategies, skills and information needed to tackle some of the challenges that come with adoptive parenting.

2. Inter-country Adoption Centre – Mission Statement

AT IAC we believe that:

- Every child has a right to family life, to be loved, kept safe and well and have access to education and opportunity
- For the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, that a child should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding
- Adoption is a service for children who cannot live with their birth family
- If a child cannot be cared for by a permanent family in their country of birth or habitual residence, then adoption should be an option

As an adoption agency we aim to:

- Recruit prospective adopters who can meet the needs of waiting children both in the UK and overseas
- Work positively with prospective adopters to identify potential and opportunity
- Ensure that the preparation and training, the home study assessment, approval and matching process are explained and proceed in a timely fashion and within accepted timescales whenever this is within our power to do so
- Treat adoptees, prospective adopter and adopters with openness, fairness and respect
- Provide prospective adopters, adopters and adoptees with information, counselling and support, as and when needed, throughout the adoption process and beyond
- Provide an efficient, effective, fair and transparent service to all

We ask that prospective adopters and adopters:

- Understand that adoption brings both joys and challenges
- Accepts each child for who they are
- Be willing to work in partnership with the agency in the interests of children
- Be willing to learn and ask for help
- Commit to helping each child to feel loved, secure, to understand their adoption story and to feel proud of their heritage.

The IAC's Statement of Purpose can be accessed at: www.icacentre.org.uk

3. The policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing Adopt Berkshire and its service delivery.

Adopt Berkshire works in accordance with:

- All current legislation, Regulations and Best Practice guidance applicable to Local Authority Adoption Agencies;
- The Berkshire Local Authorities' Shared Adoption Procedures and Guidance;
- The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's:
 - HR procedures,
 - Child Protection procedures,
 - Complaint's procedure.

4. The contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service.

The Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service is a joint arrangement that was set up in 1998 and is funded by the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities; The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (the host Authority), Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council.

The original Contract of Quality Standards set out for the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service was as follows:

- Recruit and train Adoption Panel members
- Manage and service the two Berkshire Panels (including attendance by adoption applicants)
- Provide professional and administrative support for the two Adoption Panels
- Manage the Berkshire Information Exchange Service between adoptive families and birth families
- Provide specialist training on adoption issues for staff in the six Unitary Authorities
- Provide specialist advice and assistance on complex adoption matters to staff in the six Unitary Authorities
- Provide specialist counselling for adults seeking access to birth records [This role is now undertaken by the Post Adoption Workers employed in the contributing local authorities]
- Administer the closed children's records and adoption records
- Provide a social work service to the closed children's records and adoption records

These original areas of responsibility have been maintained and many have been further developed particularly in the light of The Adoption & Children Act 2002.

In addition the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service now:

- Provides information and advice appertaining to all areas of adoption including legislation, guidance and Best Practice
- Manages the 'Berkshire Adoption Exchange' – an annual event that brings together social workers from across the region in an effort to achieve the matching of child(ren) with approved adopters
- Facilitates 'Life Appreciation' meetings for children being placed by the Berkshire Unitary Authorities
- Chairs Disruption Meetings for children placed by the six unitary authorities whose placements disrupt
- Co-ordinates the Berkshire Post Adoption Forum – a six-weekly meeting that bring together Adoption Support workers employed within the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities in order to co-ordinate development of some pan-Berkshire Adoption Support Services to which all teams have access (e.g. Birth Mothers' Support Group and Birth Records Workshops) and to promote Best Practice
- Supervises direct contact arrangements that are set up for children placed with adoptive families (Post Order)
- Organises an Annual Adopters' Conference

- Hosts the Birth Parent Project (which aims - to offer both an integrated independent approach alongside consistent support and information to significant birth family members when adoption has been formally identified as the plan for a child)

Hilary Loades
Service Lead – Adoption
April 2017