

Nottingham City Council

Fostering and Adoption Service

Adoption Statement of Purpose 2016-2017

Updated October 2016



Nottingham
City Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption and current legislation and regulations. It is intended to provide a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of Nottingham City Children and Families Adoption Agency. It explains our values and principles, the services we provide and how we provide them.

The Statement of Purpose is available online at www.Nottingham.gov.uk and is approved by elected members, reviewed and revised as appropriate and is intended to provide information to:

- Children and young people looked after (a separate Children's Guide is also available).
- Birth Family Members.
- Prospective/Approved Adoptive Parents.
- Agency staff.
- Adoption Panel Members.
- Councillors.
- Other Adoption Agencies.
- Members of the public.
- Inspectors.

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2. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Nottingham City's Adoption Service consists of an Adoption and a Post Order Team and believes in achieving lasting successful adoption placements for children. Working with our commissioned partners Core Assets it recognises the long-term needs of all those involved in adoption, by offering high quality support, consistent with National Minimum Standards for Adoption and compliance with, but not limited to, the standards, regulations requirements below;

- Children Act 1989
- United Nations Convention on the right of the Child 1989
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Standards Act 2002
- Inter- Country Adoption Standards and Associated Regulations 2003
- Adoption Support Services Regulations and Standards 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Children Act 2014
- National Minimum Adoption Standards and Associated Regulations July 2014
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) regulations 2012
- The Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption – July 2013
- Care Planning Regulations - 2010

We endorse the key principles which underpin the National Minimum Standards for Adoption:

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond and where ever possible this should be within their own family.
- The child's welfare, safety, and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children's ethnic origin, sexuality, cultural background, religion, and language will be fully recognised, positively valued, and promoted when decisions are made.
- We fully recognise and take into account the particular needs of disabled children or those with medical needs when making decisions about them.
- We will value and respect the role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth parents.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many different organisations, professions, and individuals who have to work together to meet the needs for services for those affected by adoption.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of Nottingham City's Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoption placement, are placed as a matter of priority, within a loving and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

This will be achieved by:

- Recruiting suitable adopters to meet the needs of children to be placed for adoption.
- Ensuring adopters are well prepared and understand the needs and experiences of children in care.
- Promoting equality without discriminating on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, religion, or culture.
- Working within the timescales outlined in statutory adoption guidance (or evidencing clearly why this has not been achieved).
- Assessing the needs of children with an Adoption Plan and achieving the best possible match to adoptive parent(s) who have the capacity to meet those needs.
- Ensuring children are well prepared and understand the adoption process by being sensitive and responsive to their individual developmental needs.

- Referring children who cannot be placed for adoption within our own resources, to our East Midlands Adoption Consortium, the Adoption Register within 3 months, or advertising further.
- The appointment of suitability qualified Adoption Panel Chairs who are capable of providing a robust framework for the functioning of Adoption Panel.
- Maintaining an efficient and informed Adoption Panel whose members reflect the local community and who are capable of making timely recommendations directed towards promoting the children's lifelong needs.
- Managing and providing skilled and experienced staff capable of undertaking their adoption responsibilities, ensuring access to good quality training and up-to-date information on professional and legal developments.
- Providing a comprehensive Post Order Service which supports adopters and the children throughout their lives, making use of all available consortium and Adoption Leadership Board resources.

4. THE MANAGER

The Responsible Individual for the Fostering & Adoption Service is:

Name: Steve Comb (Head of Service)

Address: 2 - 6 Isabella Street, 3rd Floor, Nottingham NG1 6AT

Responsible Individual

Steve Comb Head of Children in Care

Steve joined Nottingham City Council in January 2015, a HCPC Registered Social Worker, with over twenty years' experience in looked after children's services in four different local authorities. He has held the posts of Registered Manager, Team Manager, Service Manager, and Head of Service. Steve covers the operational areas of residential care, leaving care, fostering, adoption, family contact, and edge of care services. In previous roles Steve has also had responsibility as lead council officer for children missing from home or care, and as chair of placement panels for single and multiple agency funded commissioned placements.

Qualifications

Master Business Administration Nottingham Business School
Diploma in Social Work Leeds Metropolitan University
Diploma in Combined Social Policy, University of Leeds
Certificate in Criminology, University of Leeds
Local Government Association peer challenge trained
Social Worker Registration HCPC number SW 22475

THE SERVICE MANAGER

Sonia has held posts as a Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire with over 30 year's experience.

She was first appointed as Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption in the City in 1992 as the Registered Manager. In 2010 she was appointed as Fieldwork Service Manager for the North of the City and spent four years in that post

Sonia returned to Fostering and Adoption in 2014

In previous roles Sonia has chaired the Fostering Panel and been the lead for in the Independent Visiting and Advocacy Service

Qualifications

Diploma in Management Studies, Nottingham Trent University

M.A in Social Work and Certificate of Qualification in Social Work

Nottingham University

B.A Social Studies Hull University

Social Worker Registration HCPC SW74360

5. INTEGRATED STAFFING AND SERVICE STRUCTURE

- Agency Decision Makers – Amy Weir/Helen Blackman
- Fostering and Adoption Service Manager – 1 FTE

- AQA 2 Full Time Principal Managers
- (1 Adoption and 1 Post Order)
- 1 Panel Manager
- 5 FTE Adoption Social Workers
- 6 FTE Post Order Social Workers
- 2 FTE Record Management Officers
- 1 FTE Customer Service Officer

Business Support Manager – 1 FTE

- 12 FTE Business Support

In addition, the Adoption Service is supported by:

- 2 Adoption Placement Advisors FTE

All Adoption Social Workers hold professional qualifications in social work, are HCPC registered and Disclosure and Barring Service checked.

In addition, the Adoption Service works in partnership with;

- Children's Social Work teams
- The Children in Care Team
- Our commissioned specialist assessment service Core Assets
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Health
- Education
- Housing

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Adoption service also contributes to [Nottingham City Council Plan](#) which sets out the Council's purpose, priorities and values for 2012-15. In conjunction with [Children and Young People's Plan 2010- 2014 \(CYPP\)](#) which sets out the priorities to be addressed by The Children's Partnership Board, as agreed by the partners.

We have a range of systems in place to ensure that services provided are effective and that the quality is of a high standard.

The following processes are in place:

- Our adoption application process database (the AAJ) is used to monitor all children's adoptions from the 'best interest' review decision, which formally establishes adoption as the plan, to the date the Adoption Order is granted, giving a clear overview of our performance against National Adoption Standard timescales and National Indicators.
- Our database tracks the progress of adopters through the two stages monitoring timescales for recruiting and assessing prospective adopters. This similarly informs practice and is fed back to staff to ensure that adopters are well supported with no delays.
- All social workers/ managers receive regular supervision. The frequency depends on the needs of the supervisee, but is not less than 4 weekly. Supervision also includes

performance appraisals in line with Nottingham City Council supervision policy to ensure that the team is well trained and skilled in supporting adopters.

- Regular safeguarding file audits are undertaken and this information is analysed and used to inform policy and practice.
- User feedback from prospective adopters about the quality of service provided from their first contact with the agency through to the adoption panel is sought. Evaluation forms are completed following information meetings, preparation training, and profile evenings and at panel. Feedback is also sought Post order from other events and training and is used to inform and improve practice.
- Adoption social workers attend regular training courses for personal development and are also required to attend our annual staff development day.
- In March 2012, Adoption Scorecards were introduced nationally to address delays in the adoption system and are used to raise the performance thresholds to levels as set out in statutory guidance. Within our service, we use Scorecards to monitor and track our service targets in line with this Government Policy. We also complete the annual and quarterly monitoring for the National Adoption Leadership Board returns, monitoring performance across the country.

- The Adoption Leadership return provides information quarterly to the Department of Education in relation to children with adoption plans and the timeliness of their adoption. Also prospective adopters being assessed and the timeliness of their assessment.

Adoption and Fostering Joint Panels

- Key decisions have to be undertaken by a Panel, which operates within a statutory framework. These decisions include approving applicants to adopt after the two stage assessment and formally agreeing to matches between a given child or siblings and an adoptive family.
- Each panel generally has 6-7 members sitting. These members are drawn from a large panel membership of approved individuals.
- Panel membership consists of 20 members including 4 Chairs and 3 Vice Chairs. In addition we have 4 Medical Advisors, 4 legal advisors, 1 Panel Manager and 3 Business Support staff.
- The Joint Panels are run 3 times a month and 4 times a month if work necessitates this.
- Panel Chairs meet on a quarterly basis to provide performance information and feedback for the Head of Service and the Departmental Management Team.

- Panel members attend a panel development day every year, jointly with social work staff. In addition training events are held to support Panel members and they are encouraged and supported to attend Coram/BAAF training.
- Regular panel briefings to include practice issues are held each week prior/ post panel.
- An Adoption and Fostering Agency annual report is submitted to the Agency Decision Maker and Councillors, which includes statistical information on the work of the Adoption and Fostering Panel
- The Medical Liaison Meeting is held every three months between the Fostering and Adoption Service Manager, Panel advisors, and medical advisors to the panel. This meeting provides an opportunity to reflect on the support and experience of adopters, any themes or delays.
- Legal meetings are held 6 – 8 weekly with the Senior Solicitor, Panel Advisors and Principal Managers for Fostering and Adoption. Similarly this meeting is focused on improving the experience for children and adopters.
- All Panel Chairs and members receive annual appraisals and these are carried out by both the Panel Manager / Head of Service. The Chairs are appraised by the Head of Service and the members are appraised by the Panel Chair and Panel Manager.

7. RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT

[Our Adoption Passport](#) explains the different support services available for those wishing to adopt with Nottingham City Council and is available on the Nottingham City Councils website.

Initial interest stage

All initial enquires are dealt with promptly by the customer service officers. Information pack and dates of information evenings are sent within 5 days of enquiry.

Customer service officers will also phone applicants – this is an opportunity for applicants to ask questions about the process and confirm dates of attendance for the information evening.

Applicants are invited to attend an information evening organised by the adoption team and attended by both staff and adopters – at the information evening applicants will be given their registration of interest forms and reading lists.

Once their registration of interest form is received from applicants – a decision to accept will be made within 5 working days by the Principal Manager for Adoption. Prospective adopters will then be sent out all the necessary information required for stage one process.

Stage 1

Prospective adopters are given the opportunity to find out more information about adoption through a stage one preparation training session – These are held monthly and run by Nottingham City adoption social workers.

Our partner agency Core Assets is responsible for allocating a social worker and undertaking initial visits. Core Assets and our customer service officers provide prospective adopters with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have regarding the social work process at any time during the assessment.

Stage 1 usually takes 2 months. During this 2 month period Nottingham City Council and Core Assets, will undertake statutory checks including medicals and take up references. If a decision is made during the Stage one process that the prospective adopters is not suitable, a written explanation of this decision will be provided and the adopters made aware of the complaints process.

Stage 2

Once a decision has been made to progress to stage 2 , our partner agency Core Assets will allocate a social worker to complete a full assessment report based on training, observations and information gathered from stage 1.

Prospective adopters are also required to attend a further 3 day stage two preparation course. Second time applicants may be

eligible for a fast track process depending on when they last adopted as their assessment will build on their experience.

Reports will be submitted to Nottingham City Council for review by our Principal Manager for Adoption and any changes that need to be made will be rectified. Once all reports are signed and completed, applicants will be booked onto a panel, you will be asked to attend in order for the panel members to make a recommendation on your application.

Supporting Placements

Once approved, adopters will be allocated an adoption support worker who will liaise with our adoption placement advisors to help identify possible links. Once matched as a minimum, all adoptive families should be visited within a week of the child being placed, weekly till the first review, two/three weekly to the second review. Beyond the 2nd review visits will be shared with the children's social worker's.

Other supporting services include:

- Family and Friends training
- Annual fun days/ social events
- Regular newsletter
- Training courses
- Letterbox
- Post Order Support

8. SERVICES PROVIDED

Adoption Customer Service Officers

Our Adoption Customers Service Officers are the initial point of contact and are able to signpost the requests to other appropriate parts of the Adoption service.

Adoption Placement Advisors

We have a team of two dedicated Adoption Placement Advisors who work in conjunction with our Children in Care Team and children's social workers and who offer an essential home finding service to Nottingham City Council children, adopters and key professionals. They are actively involved in attending Adoption Activity Days and supporting our adoptive children.

Adoption Activity Days

Adoption activity days are events where approved adopters, or adopters in the assessment process who have a panel date within the next 3 months, have the opportunity to directly meet a range of children waiting to be adopted in a prepared, supported, safe and fun environment.

These themed days are full of lots of fun activities such as face painting, climbing, craft and soft play. The children's foster carers and social workers attend the event with the children to support them.

Regular Profile Evenings

These evenings take place every six weeks and give the adopters the opportunity to see the profiles of the children waiting to be matched with an adoptive family, speak to the social workers who know the children and engage with the Adoption Team and Adoption Placement Advisors.

Training for Family and Friends of Adopters

Our friends and family sessions, provide a chance for family and friends of adopters to develop an understanding of adoption and the needs of adopted children. It also enables them to identify how they can help, and provides them with an opportunity to ask any questions.

Dual Approval

For some of our children in care there is very little chance of them returning to their birth family. In such cases in order to avoid any unnecessary moves for these children, Nottingham City may make a placement with approved adopters who are also approved under the Fostering regulations as foster carers.

Non Agency Adoption

All applications for Non Agency Adoptions and Special Guardianship (where children are not looked after by Nottingham City) are completed in house by experienced social workers within the Adoption service.

Special Guardianship Support

The Adoption Service offers support to children living in the City with Special Guardianship Orders or up to 3 years post order for those living further away. A social worker assesses the needs and may offer support such as:

- Financial help which is means tested (for children who have been in the care of Nottingham City)
- Ongoing social worker support, assistance and advice
- A referral to CAHMS
- Support with contact if there are difficulties

Special Guardianship is one of a range of permanency options, where a child lives with an adult who is not their birth parent. The Special Guardian has parental responsibility for the child above that of the child's birth parents.

Post Order Support

The Adoption Service also provides a range of support services for all parties affected by adoption as required by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) in line with the drive to improve Adoption Support Services.

Adopters, their birth children, and Adopted children

We provide a range of support services for adopters, their birth children and adopted children. This service is available for all Nottingham City children for up to 3 years post order or for families with adopted children living in the City. Requests for support and advice are taken via a Duty referral line. A social worker will then assess the need for services and offer advice and guidance.

Adoption support services may include:

- Financial advice / issues
- Liaison with, and referral to other linking support services e.g. CAMHS, Education Service
- Ongoing social work counselling, advice and information
- Membership of Adoption UK and New Family Social
- Help with life story work, often undertaken directly with the adopted children
- Arrangements for link workers for the children
- A training programme for adoptive parents

- Adoption Support Fund applications including for individual therapeutic support, and therapeutic support groups.

Post Order Contact

The Service operates a letterbox exchange service, and supervises any agreed direct contact agreement. If any adopter experiences difficulties in respect to contact, these arrangements can be reviewed on request.

To support the exchange of letters, birth parents can be offered help in writing if requested. The Letterbox Scheme is now extended, on request, for young adopted adults up to 21 years or 25 years if continuation is appropriate.

Adopted Adults

A range of services are provided to adopted adults these include:

- Birth Records Counselling (Adoption and Children Act (2002), Schedule 2) for adopted adults
- Access to records
- Help and advice with tracing birth parents
- A register for vetoes for no contact

Independent Counselling Service

Social workers within the Adoption Service also offer an independent counselling service for birth families at the time the decision is made for their children to be adopted.

Inter County Adoption

Nottingham City has a service agreement with Yorkshire Adoption Agency who accept all referrals from people considering adopting a child from overseas who live in the city. All such enquiries are redirected to:

Jubilee House
Jubilee Road
Wheatley
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN1 2UE
Tel: 01302 349909

9. STORAGE, ACCESS, MAINTENANCE, AND SECURITY OF ADOPTION RECORDS

The Adoption Service adheres to the requirements of relevant Regulations and the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) in the way it manages all adoption case files.

Closed paper files are archived by a specialist document storage service. Access is carefully controlled by the dedicated records manager.

Adoption case records, where there has been an order, are kept for 100 years.

In addition to this Nottingham City Council operates restricted access to electronic records at the point of adoption placement to protect their confidentiality.

10. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Full details of our complaints procedure can be found on the Nottingham City Council website.

www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Social Care Complaints Service

Loxley House,

Station Street

Nottingham

NG2 3NG

Tel: 0115 87 65974

Fax: 0115 87 63132

Email: socialcarecomplaints@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

There is an independent children's right service which can be contacted:

www.NYAS.org.uk

NYAS

Tanners Lane

Barkingside

Ilford

Essex

IG6 1QG

Tel: 0208 550 8822

11. THE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY

The Adoption Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted whose contact details are:

Ofsted, Office for Standards in Education,
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231 (8.00am – 6.45pm Mon-Fri)

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

12. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE REVIEW AND UPDATE

This document will be reviewed and updated on or by 1st November 2017.

Signed

Maxine Bennett - **Assessment and Quality Assurance Principal Manager – Adoption**

Signed

Audrey Taylor - **Assessment and Quality Assurance Principal Manager – Post Order**

Signed

Sonia Cain – **Service Manager Fostering and Adoption (Registered Manager)**

Signed.....

Steve Comb – **Head of Service Children in Care**

Signed.....

Helen Blackman - **Director Children’s Integrated Services**

Signed.....

Alison Michalska -**Corporate Director Children & Families**

Signed.....

Councillor Mellen - **Chair of Corporate Parenting**

Fostering, Adoption and Post Order Team Structure

