



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

May 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with underpinning legislation.

- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014
- Care Planning Regulations 2010
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Local Authority Regulations 2005
- Adoption Agencies & Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- Adoption Agencies (Panel & Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- Care Planning, placement and Case and fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Standards Act 2000

1.3 Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens, Councils collaborated to establish the Together for Adoption shared adoption service in 2017. Together for Adoption is hosted by Wigan Council and has two dedicated social work teams that provide the recruitment, assessment and approval of adopter's service and an adoption support service to the communities of the five local authorities.

1.4 Together for Adoption is based at

1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

1.5 Together for Adoption is part of the wider Children's Social Care Service in all five local authorities and reflects each Council's commitment to 'Best Practice' in the provision of an Adoption Agency.

Wigan, Warrington, St Helens, Cheshire West and Chester and Halton Councils believe that children should experience permanence and security throughout their childhood and that it is best for a child to live within their birth family, if it is safe to do so.

Where this is not possible, all five Councils aim to provide, in conjunction with Together for Adoption, permanent alternative families who will promote the child's well-being and development by providing the highest possible standards of care to meet their individual assessed needs.

2. Vision for the Service

In *Children's social care reform: a vision for change (2016)* the government outlined its overarching vision for transforming the quality of children's social care services by 2020. In respect of adoption, the government's vision is for an adoption system where:

- Decisions about placements are always made in children's best interests.
- Service delivery has at its heart innovation and practice excellence.
- Social Workers are highly skilled professionals who make high quality, evidence-based decisions and do not tolerate damaging delay for children in their care.
- Matches are made without unnecessary delay.
- Every adoptive family has access to an ongoing package of appropriate support with a right to a high quality, specialist assessment of need.
- The voice of adopters and their children is at the heart of national and local policy decision making and delivery of services.

The vision of Together for Adoption is to;

Provide all children who need an adoptive placement with a family that is the best possible match, and provides the highest standards of care, safety, protection and an enduring loving relationship.

- Ensure that those affected by adoption receive the information, support and advice that they need to understand their adoption journey.
- Ensure that RAA families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption.

3. Aims

- 3.1 The main aim of Together for Adoption is to provide a child focused and efficient service: which will be demonstrated by increased numbers of adopters being recruited, through timely

assessment and the provision of training and support, which prepares adopters well and enables children to achieve permanence in loving and nurturing families.

- 3.2 To provide an effective, flexible shared adoption agency where the needs of individual children can be met within the legal security of adoption as appropriate.
- 3.3 To ensure that adoption is considered as an option for all children requiring permanent alternative care away from their birth family.
- 3.4 To provide a proactive and professional family finding service which seeks to match individual children with prospective adoptive families that have been assessed as able to meet their needs.
- 3.5 To ensure that the recruitment, preparation, training and support given to prospective adopters is a comprehensive service and meets their needs so that they can be successful adopters.
- 3.6 To provide a responsive and comprehensive adoption support service to children, their birth families and adoptive families living in Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens who as a result of adoption require advice, counselling, practical or emotional support. In addition, to provide adoption support services to children and their adoptive families placed by Together for Adoption outside of the boundary of all five Local Authorities.
- 3.7 To provide a signposting service for any person requesting an Adoption Intermediary Service. This is not provided by Together for Adoption.
- 3.8 To signpost prospective adopters who are interested in Inter-Country Adoption to the relevant Adoption Agency.
- 3.9 To provide a counselling service for adopted adults who wish to access their files or trace their birth family. To support adults who access their files, to provide them with a copy of all the relevant information about their birth family and also the reasons why they were adopted.
- 3.10 To provide the Adoption Panel Advisor role and Adoption Support Service Advisor role to ensure that the quality of the shared service is supported and developed across the five boroughs.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 To ensure that the needs, wishes, welfare and safety of the child are at the centre of the adoption process.
- 4.2 To recruit and maintain sufficient numbers of prospective and approved adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children of Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens who need adoptive placements. This recruitment should whenever possible reflect the ethnicity, culture, religion and language needs of the children.
- 4.3 To provide an efficient and effective service for prospective adopters. This service to include, information, preparation, assessment and ongoing support.
- 4.4 To offer a service to birth parents who wish to relinquish children for adoption.
- 4.5 To develop and deliver a range of adoption support services to adopters, adopted children and their birth families in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance.
- 4.6 To provide a signposting service for adopted adults searching for their birth family and for birth family members who are searching for an adopted adult.
- 4.7 To provide organisation and management of the post adoption letter box contact scheme.
- 4.8 To ensure that staff working in the shared adoption service have the necessary qualifications, knowledge, skills and training to deliver an effective service.
- 4.15 To provide information and advice to those seeking to adopt from overseas. This service is being provided by a service level agreement with the Inter Country Adoption Centre.

5. Principles and Values

- 5.1 The work of Together for Adoption is underpinned by the following values and beliefs.

(a) Children

- Every child is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, which should meet all their needs in terms of stability, safety and security, that promotes their physical, social and emotional development and that offers a supportive lifelong relationship.
- Where a child's needs cannot be met within their birth family, adoption may offer the best alternative to meet their needs.
- In all planning for children, the child's welfare is paramount, and their wishes and feelings should always be sought and taken into account in decision making, in accordance to their age and understanding.
- Children are entitled to be treated with respect; diversity and difference should be valued and enjoyed. A child's sense of identity and self-respect needs to be actively promoted, particularly awareness of issues of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender and ability.
- Children should only be separated from their siblings where clear evidence supports doing so based on the child's assessed needs.
- Every child is entitled to information about his/her birth family in order to promote his/her sense of identity.
- Contact (direct or indirect) should be encouraged if compatible with the child's needs.

(b) Adopters

- The role of the adoptive parent in offering a permanent family to a child will be valued and respected.
- All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process. No applicant will be discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, culture, disability, sexuality, gender, age, financial status or marital status.
- All applicants are entitled to know what issues will be taken into account in their assessment, including age, health, relationships and family history.

- Applicants will be regarded as partners in the assessment process and will be kept fully informed of their progress, and of any concerns identified in the assessment.

(c) Birth Families

- Wherever possible, Together for Adoption will work in partnership with birth families to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented for children.
- Birth families will be treated fairly, openly and with respect, and their relationship with their child will be acknowledged.
- Birth families will be kept fully informed of the adoption process, the legal implications and their rights.
- Birth families will be given such information about their child's adoptive parents as is compatible with the child's and the adoptive family's safety and security.
- Birth families will have access to independent counselling and advice if required. This service is commissioned from an independent Voluntary Adoption Agency.

6. Diversity

- 6.1 Each Council has a Corporate Diversity and Equalities Strategy and Together for Adoption will work towards achieving their stated objectives. These can be accessed via each Council's internet sites.
- 6.2 Together for Adoption has a key role to play through the provision of placements that are able to meet a diverse range of individual needs.
- 6.3 Together for Adoption will ensure it provides services in a way which appropriately meets the needs of all individuals, and that its structure policies and procedures do not discriminate against disadvantaged groups.

7. Service Lead

- 7.1 The host Authority for Together for Adoption is Wigan.
- 7.2 The Manager of Together for Adoption is **Cathy Sowden**.

Qualifications – **Cathy** is a qualified social worker and is registered with Social Work England. She holds a Diploma in Social Work, obtained in 1994 and a BA (Hons) in Social Work and Community Studies obtained in 1995. Cathy has 29 years post qualifying experience in children's social work and has specialised in fostering and adoption since 1998 including two periods of working in specialist Concurrent Planning Services. Cathy is an experienced manager, having managed teams across fostering and adoption since 1999. She also holds a Masters in Child Care and Family Services (2002), the Advanced Award in Social Work (2003) and a level 5 National Vocational Qualification in Leadership and Management for Health and Social Care in Children and Young People's Services obtained in 2014.

Contact Details: Cathy.Sowden@wigan.gov.uk

Address:

1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

Telephone:

01942 487272

8. Structure of the Service

- 8.1 Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens have collaborated to establish Together for Adoption. This shared adoption service is hosted by Wigan and has two dedicated social work teams – Recruitment and Assessment and Adoption Support - that provide a range of adoption services to the communities of five local authorities.
- 8.2 The Service Lead of Together for Adoption is responsible for the day to day running of the service.
- 8.3 The Service Lead is supported by two Principal Managers, an Administration Manager and a Panel Adviser. These managers are in turn supported by four Practice Managers

Together for Adoption has six named agency decision makers, (ADM's.) One ADM is the Service Lead in Together for Adoption, who makes all the decisions regarding Adopter Approvals. There are decision makers in each Local Authority who make decisions regarding cases referred to the Adoption Panel including whether a child should be placed for adoption when relinquished by a parent and the matches for children from their respective Local Authority.

Together for Adoption – Approvals – Cathy Sowden

Service Lead
1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

Cheshire West and Chester – Gemma Gerrish

Interim Director of Children's Social Care,
HQ, 1st Floor
58 Nicholas Street
Chester
CH1 2NP

Halton – Katherine Appleton

Operational Director, Early Help and Children's Social Care
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QF

St Helens – Paula Swindlehurst

Assistant Director
Atlas House
Corporation Street
St Helens
WA9 1LD

St Helens – Fiona Woods

Head of Fostering, Adoption and Provider Services
Atlas House
Corporation Street
St Helens
WA9 1LD

Warrington - Amanda Perraton

Director of Children's Social Care
Families and Wellbeing
Warrington Borough Council
1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

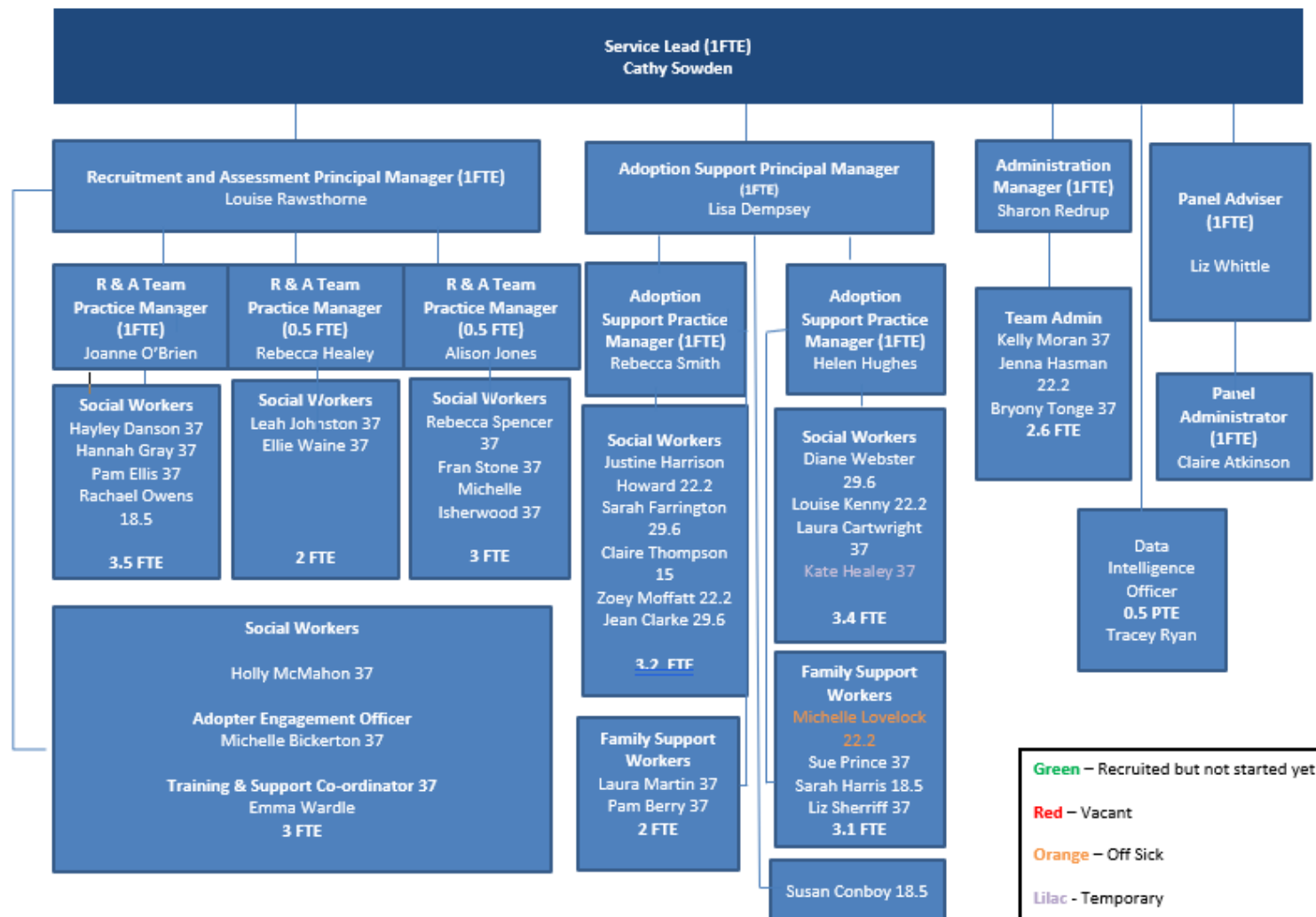
Wigan – Sandie Hayes

Practice Director
Wigan Council
Life Centre South (South Site)
College Avenue
Wigan
WN1 1NJ

Wigan – Ann Clarkson

Director - Prevention, Early Help & Sufficiency
Wigan Council
College Avenue
Wigan
WN1 1NJ

Together for Adoption Staffing Structure



8. Staff: Names, Role Qualifications, Experience

Agency Decision Makers

Name	Role	Qualification/Experience
Sandie Hayes	Practice Director, Wigan	DIPSW 2001 Leadership and Management - 2017 21 years experience in social work
Ann Clarkson	Director, Early Help and Sufficiency, Wigan	BA (Hons) 1986 CQSW and MSc Social Work 1989. MSc and ILM 7 Public Leadership and Management 2022. 32 years' experience in social work.
Katherine Appleton	Operational Director, Early Help and Children's Social Care, Halton	DiPSW – 2000 PQ1 & 2 2003 24 years in frontline child protection and Children in Care. Has managed services since 2012 and moved into the position of Director of Childrens Social Care in January 2024.
Amanda Perraton	Director of Children's Services, Warrington	BA (Hons) 1995 DIPSW 1995. MA social Work 1999.NVQ Management 2004. National Accreditation Scheme, Practice Leader 2019. 20 years' experience in social work.
Gemma Gerrish	Director of Children's Services, Cheshire West and Chester	Director of Childrens Services Cheshire West and Chester Council NNEB - 990 NQICL - 2005 Post Graduate Certificate in Strategic Leadership- 2011 Senior Leader / Director in Children's Services for 8 Years and previously front line practitioner and manager of front line services in Early help and family support services for local government for 18 years
Paula Swindlehurst	Assistant Director, St Helens	2009 MA Process Consultancy Manchester University. 2000 Post Qualifying Child Care Award Salford University. 1997 BA (hons) Social Work Studies Salford

Name	Role	Qualification/Experience
		University. 1995 Diploma in Social Work Salford University Professional Development. 2011 Leading Children's Social Care (Pilot Programme) Manchester University
Fiona Woods	Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption, St Helens	DipSW Diploma in Personnel Management Qualified as a social worker in 1996, has worked in children's services since qualifying and moved into fostering and adoption services in March 2019

Agency Decision Maker on Approvals

Name:	Role	Qualification/Experience
Cathy Sowden	Service Manager 37 hours	<p>Qualified social worker and is registered with Social Work England. Diploma in Social Work, obtained in 1994.</p> <p>BA (Hons) in Social Work and Community Studies obtained in 1995. 29 years post qualifying experience in children's social work</p> <p>Specialised in fostering and adoption since 1998 including two periods of working in specialist Concurrent Planning Services.</p> <p>Experienced manager, having managed teams across fostering and adoption since 1999.</p> <p>Holds a Masters in Child Care and Family Services (2002), as well as the Advanced Award in Social Work (2003) and a level 5 National</p> <p>Vocational Qualification in Leadership and Management for Health and Social Care in Children and Young People's Services obtained in 2014.</p>

Principal Managers

Louise Rawsthorne	Principal Manager, Recruitment and Assessment 37 hrs	<p>NNEB qualified. Part time Youth Work qualification HND in Social Care. Diploma in social work in 2003. Post qualifying award in childcare.</p> <p>Louise has worked with children, young people, adults and families since 1995 her experience includes being a Nursery Nurse, Youth Worker, Residential Worker, Family Support Worker, Education Social Worker, Adoption Panel member, Childcare Social Worker in Adoption and Permanency and a Recruitment and Assessment social worker.</p> <p>Louise has specialised in adoption since 2009 and took up a management post in 2014 within WWISH, entering into Together for Adoption in 2017 as a Practice Manager and becoming the Principal Manager for the Recruitment and Assessment Service in 2021. Louise has been an Adoption Panel Advisor within a shared adoption service.</p> <p>Louise is a Practice Educator for student Social Workers and a ASYE assessor.</p>
Lisa Dempsey	Principal Manager Adoption Support 37 hours	<p>BA Social Work 2009 NEBS Supervisory Management 1998 GNVQ Advanced Health and Social Care 1997 Prior to qualifying Lisa held a number of roles within NHS and DWP services. Lisa qualified in social work in 2009 and gained social work experience working in adult services as a care co-ordinator in a community mental health team, and then as a recruitment and assessment social worker in Wigan Adoption service since May 2010. Lisa continued with the service</p>

<i>Lisa cont'd</i>		when it became WWISH in 2011 and TFA in 2017. Lisa took up a management post as Adoption Support Practice Manager in WWISH in 2017, and became Adoption Support Principal Manager in TFA in 2020. Lisa has undertaken both adoption and fostering panel member roles, as well as adoption panel advisor within the Regional Adoption Agency. Lisa also holds DDP Level 1.
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Practice Managers

Rebecca Healey	Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment 18.5 hours	BA (Hons) Social Work 2013. Rebecca has experience as a Social Worker since 2013, specialising in the field of adoption, working with birth parents, adoptive parents and adopted children. Rebecca has a range of experience in adoption, delivering training to adoptive families and is Theraplay Level 1 and 2 trained. Rebecca joined WWISH adoption shared service in 2015 as an assessing Social Worker, going into Together for Adoption (regional adoption agency) in the same role in 2017. Rebecca became a Recruitment and Assessment Practice Manager in 2020.
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Joanne O'Brien	Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	<p>NNEB Qualified in 1992 at Preston College. In 2006 Dip SW from Preston University.</p> <p>Since 1994, Joanne has been employed within Children's Social Care field for a Local Authority. Working at various Day Nurseries and Family Centres, and as a Senior Nursery Nurse and Assistant Manager at a Family Centre</p> <p>Joanne has worked within Adoption Services since 2006; and subsequently Adoption & Fostering from 2014.</p> <p>Joanne joined Together for Adoption in February 2019 as a Social Worker within the Recruitment and Assessment Service. Joanne became a Practice Manager within the service in September 2022.</p>
Alison Jones	Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment 18.5 hours	<p>BA Honours in Social Work 2010 at Lancaster University</p> <p>Alison has been working in Children's services since qualifying as a social worker in 2010. She worked for 4 years in child protection services before moving to the Adoption service in 2014.</p> <p>Alison joined Together for Adoption in February 2024 as a Practice Manager, having previously been an Adoption Team manager in other local authorities.</p>

Helen Hughes	Practice Manager – Adoption Support 37hours	<p>July 2003, DipSW in Social Work at Liverpool Community College, Level 4 PQ Childcare Award March 2007, July 2008 BA (Hons) in Post Qualifying Studies in Health and Social Welfare.</p> <p>Qualified practice educator.</p> <p>Helen was employed by NCH as a Residential Social Worker for 10 years working with children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.</p> <p>In April 2004, Helen was employed by Halton Borough Council. Firstly, as a Social Worker based in the Young People's Team, where she worked for three years, before moving to the Adoption Service in September 2007.</p> <p>In December 2018, Helen accepted the position as 0.5 Adoption Support Practice Manager.</p>
Rebecca Smith	Practice Manager – Adoption Support 37 hours	<p>Master's in social work 2006 PQ Consolidation 2010</p> <p>Worked within various children's social care settings since 2006 Employed within WWiSH then Together for Adoption, since July 2013.</p>

Panel Adviser

Liz Whittle	Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	<p>In, 1999, Liz gained a BA (HONS) in Applied Social Sciences and in 2001 Liz gained a MA Criminology Rights and Justice.</p> <p>In 2007, Liz became a qualified Social Worker through obtaining a MA in Social Work</p> <p>Liz became a Practice Educator for Social Work students in 2014.</p> <p>Liz has worked within children and young people's services since 2001 working as a Youth and Community worker and Social Worker on a Child Protection Team, before specialising in adoption and fostering in 2014.</p> <p>In 2014 Liz was a Senior Practitioner within a Recruitment and Assessment Team within Lancashire. In 2020 the local authority moved into a Regional Adoption Agency and Liz took the lead on mailbox, foster carers wishing to adopt child in their care, Post approval training and assessments within the Recruitment Service. In November 2022, Liz joined Together for Adoption as an Interim Practice Manager within the Recruitment and Assessment Service covering maternity leave. She is now the panel advisor for the agency, talking up post in May 2024.</p>
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Social Workers – Recruitment and Assessment

Pam Ellis	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	<p>Pam gained a MA in social work 2009.</p> <p>Between 2009 – 2017 Pam worked as a child protection Social Worker and from 2017 – 2020 she became an adoption childcare Social Worker. In 2020, Pam joined Together for Adoption as a Recruitment and Assessment Social Worker.</p> <p>Previous to being, a qualified Social Worker, Pam worked on the child protection and court team as a family support officer.</p>
Hayley Danson	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	<p>Hayley qualified as a Social Worker in April 2019 with a postgraduate diploma in Social Work.</p> <p>Hayley was a Social Worker on the Child Protection Team, Salford April 2019 – 10th April 2022.</p> <p>Hayley joined Together for Adoption in April 2022 as a Social Worker on the assessment and recruitment team.</p>
Francesca Stone	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	<p>Fran holds a BA Hons in Social Work 2001.</p> <p>Fran has worked as a Social Worker since 2001 working within a Court Assessment Team, family placement team, a Child Sexual Exploitation Team, Permanency Team and a childcare Generic Team.</p> <p>Fran joined WWISH's shared adoption service in 2015 as a recruitment and assessment worker and this role transferred into Together for Adoption in 2017. Fran also currently sits as a panel member for an external adoption agency.</p>
Michelle Isherwood	Recruitment &	Michelle qualified as a Social Worker in June 2019 with a BA honours in social work.

	<p>Assessment Social Worker</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>Michelle was a supervising Social Worker with Perpetual fostering from July 2019 to November 2020.</p> <p>Michelle came into Together for Adoption in 2020, as a Social Worker within the Assessment and Recruitment Service.</p>
Rebecca Spencer	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>In 2006, Rebecca gained MA in Social Work from Lancaster University. Rebecca also has a BA (hons) in History from Manchester University</p> <p>Rebecca has worked as a Social Worker on a youth offending team for 7 years and within a looked after children's team for 8 years and has carried out independent foster carers assessments and sat as a panel member on an adoption panel.</p> <p>Rebecca came into Together for Adoption as a Recruitment and Assessment worker in 2021.</p>
Holly McMahon	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>Holly qualified as a Social Worker in June 2020 with a first-class degree from Lancaster University.</p> <p>Holly has worked as a child protection Social Worker from 2020 to 2022</p> <p>Holly joined Together for Adoption as a Social Worker on the Recruitment and Assessment team in August 2022.</p>
<p>Hannah Gray</p> <p><i>Hannah Cont'd</i></p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>Hannah has a MA in Childhood Studies graduating in 2014 before gaining an MA in Social Work in 2016.</p> <p>Hannah has worked within the voluntary sector supporting young people with their mental health.</p> <p>As a Social Worker Hannah has worked in a Child Protection team in</p>

		<p>Warrington for 2 years before moving to Together for Adoption in December 2018 to join the Recruitment and Assessment Service.</p> <p>Hannah sits as a panel member on an adoption panel for an external adoption agency.</p> <p>Hannah is currently carrying out her training to become a practice educator.</p> <p>Hannah is thera-play level one trained.</p>
Ellie Waine	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p> <p>37 hrs</p>	<p>Ellie joined Together for Adoption as a student as a final placement in 2021. Ellie qualified as a Social Worker in June 2022 with a first-class honour's degree from the University of Salford.</p> <p>Ellie has worked as Social Worker on the Recruitment and Assessment Team at Together for Adoption since July 2022.</p> <p>In 2022-2023 Ellie completed her ASYE course and received exemplary feedback.</p>
Leah Johnston	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>Leah gained a BA Early childhood & Education study in 2010 and a MA in Social work in 2013.</p> <p>Leah has worked as a qualified Social Worker in Adoption and Fostering since 2013, working in various local authorities. Leah joined Together for Adoption in 2021 as a Recruitment and Assessment Social Worker.</p> <p>Leah is currently carrying out her practice educator training and sits as a panel member on an external adoption panel.</p>
Rachel Owen	Recruitment	Rachel achieved a BA in Criminology and Social Work Studies in 2010 and a MA

	and Assessment Worker 18.5 hours	in Social Work in 2013. Rachel has worked in children's locality teams and fostering, since 2013. Rachel joined TFA in May 2024 as a Recruitment and Assessing Social Worker.
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Adopter Engagement and Training

Michelle Bickerton	Recruitment and Engagement Officer 37 hrs	Michelle has a NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care. Michelle has worked as a Nursery Nurse for 16 years and has experience as a Deputy Manager within a private Nursery. In 2022, Michelle worked for Warrington's local authority fostering team, focusing on engagement and the recruitment of foster carers. In February 2023, Michelle joined the Recruitment and Assessment Service as an Adoption Engagement Officer, focusing on the recruitment and engagement of adopters and the support provided by the service.
Emma McArdle	Training and Support Officer 37 hrs	Emma has a BA Hons in History, followed by a PGCE in Secondary History and a PG Dip – Social work. Emma has worked as a history teacher in Lancashire and Cheshire. Upon becoming a qualified Social Worker Emma worked as a Child Protection social worker within St Helens. Emma then took up a position as a safeguarding lead within a school in Lancashire. In 2023, Emma joined Together for Adoption within the Recruitment and Assessment Service as the Training and Support Co-ordinator, focusing on the training and support packaged provided by the service.

Social Workers - Adoption Support

Jean Clark	Social Worker- Adoption Adoption Support 14.2 hours	CQSW 1988 Degree in Applied Social Studies 1988 Previous experience in Community Social work. Member of the Adoption Service in Wigan since November 2005. Has been employed with in WWiSH and then Together for Adoption since 2011.
Justine Harrison Howard	Social Worker Adoption Support 18.5 Hours	BSC health, PGCE post compulsory teacher training, MA Social work. Worked in the health sector with children and families, particularly in the areas of Mental health in both CAMHS and public health team since 2003, before qualifying as a Health and social care teacher in FE alongside her role. Completed MA Social work after working in health sector in 2014. Employed within WWiSH and Together for Adoption since 2015.
Diane Webster	Social Worker. Adoption Support 29.6 hours	NNEB 1989, Dip SW in 2001. P.Q. 1, Twenty years' experience in Child Care prior to qualification. Member of Adoption Service in Wigan since 2002. Seconded into WWiSH then Together for Adoption since October 2011.

Sarah Farrington	Adoption Support Social Worker 29.6 hours	Sarah gained her Social Work degree at the University of Central Lancashire in May 2020, Social worker on the Children's Specialist assessment team, June 2020 -2022 Adult social worker (generic team) 2022-2023 Together for Adoption since April 2023.
Claire Thompson	Adoption Support Social Worker 15 hours	<p>Claire qualified as a Social Worker in 1999 following obtaining a BA Honours Social Work Degree and Social Work Diploma at Humberside and Lincolnshire University.</p> <p>Began her social work career as a children and family's Social Worker in 1999. Firstly, with Wigan, followed by Wirral Borough Council before being employed by Cheshire County Council In 2001, transferring to Cheshire West and Chester when the Council separated.</p> <p>Embarked on current role in March 2017 as an Adoption Social Worker, transferring to Together for Adoption in Sept 17.</p> <p>Therapeutic Social Worker BA(HONs) DIPSW. Certified Nurtured Heart Approach Trainer, Foundation Level Theraplay Practitioner.</p> <p>Qualified Social Worker for 9 years. Experience of working in a statutory safeguarding team prior to moving to Adoption Support 5 years ago.</p> <p>Experience of working with children from a variety of different backgrounds in both formal and informal settings. Her main area of practise is around attachment, supporting families with histories of relational trauma. Libby is currently taking part in a professional development program to clinically assess the needs of children and young people.</p>

Zoey Moffatt	Adoption Support Social Worker 22.2 hours	BSc Social Science 2005. MA social Work 2009. Worked as a social worker on the Looked After Children's Team in Bolton for 10 years. Been employed by Together for Adoption as a Social Worker on the Adoption Support team since January 2021.
Louise Kenny	Adoption Support Social Worker 22.2 hours	Louise qualified as a Social worker in November 2014 with an MA in Social Work. Following this Louise worked in the Looked after Children's Team at St Helens Council, until 2017 when Louise moved to work in an assessment team also at St Helens. Prior to gaining her social work qualification. Louise was a family support worker for 9 years. Louise is also a trained Triple P parenting practitioner.
Laura Cartwright	Adoption Support Family Support Worker 37 hours	Laura qualified with a Masters in Social Work in 2014. Laura worked as a social worker on a Court and Locality team at Manchester City Council from 2015 – 2019. Laura then worked as an assessing social worker in the recruitment of foster carers at Manchester City Council from 2019 – 2020. Laura began her role at Together for Adoption in post adoption support in January 2021. Laura also did a Bsc Hons degree in Psychology and Counselling Skills prior to the MA in social work.
Kate Healey	Adoption Social Worker	Qualified as a social worker in June 2010 with a BA Hons in Social Work. Duty and Assessment Social worker with Rochdale council from June 2010 until August 2015. Adoption recruitment Social Worker with Rochdale Council and then Adoption Now from July 2016 until Feb 2019 SGO/Step parent adoption Social worker from Feb 2019 until October 2019 Together for Adoption social worker in post adoption from October 2019 until present

Family Support Workers

Pamela Berry	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1999. Worked with children and families in various settings since 1999 Employed by WWiSH and subsequently Together for Adoption since September 2013.
Liz Sheriff	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1999. Since qualifying as a nursery nurse, Liz has worked in Education (special school; nursery and primary school), Health (Community nursery nurse), and Social Care (Early intervention and prevention / Fostering team). She has worked in Adoption since 2007 and joined WWiSH and subsequently Together for Adoption Service in 2011.
Sue Prince	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1985. NVQ 4 Business Management 2007. An adopter. Sue has worked in Social Care for 32 years. Manager of Family Centre and Children's Centre for 13 years. Joined Cheshire West Adoption Service July 2009. Sue has worked in Social Care for 32 years. Manager of Family Centre and Children's Centre for 13 years. Joined Cheshire West Adoption Service July 2009. Sue moved into the Regional Adoption Agency in her existing role as letterbox co-ordinator in 2017.

Susan Conboy	Adoption Support Worker 18.5 hours	<p>BTEC National – Distinction in caring services (nursery nursing) NVQ 3- Caring for children and young people. Theraplay Level 1.</p> <p>Susan has worked for Cheshire West and Chester for 19 years as a family support worker and within the adoption support team since 2010.</p>
Michelle Lovelock	Adoption Support Worker 22.2 hours	<p>Preliminary certificate in social care 1989. NVQ3 Early Years and Education 1998. D32 & 33 IV vocational training 2002. Foundation certificate in teacher training and development 2002. BA Hons Early Childhood Studies 2009. Early Years Professional Status 2010. Theraplay level 1 & 2 trained including group Theraplay. 2015/16.</p> <p>Michelle has worked with Children and Families for 30 years, in residential care and school settings, has managed pre-school provision and worked as a 1:1 support for children</p> <p>Whilst working for Cheshire West and Chester for the last 15 years Michelle has had the following roles:</p> <p>6 years Family support worker (FSW) in early intervention 3 years Childminder network coordinator 2 years FSW fostering Joining the Adoption Support Team as a FSW in July 2013.</p>
Laura Martin	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	<p>Laura was a Nursery nurse for 7 years. Residential Support Worker in a Children's home for 2.5 years. Family support Worker for Children in Need Team for a year and then Adoption Support worker Cheshire West for around 7 years. Laura moved into the Regional Adoption Agency in her existing role as family support worker in 2017. Laura has recently been accepted onto the Social Work Apprenticeship programme and started the course in January 2024.</p>

Sarah Harris	Adoption Social Worker 18.5 hrs	BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work and Theology 2008. Msc Social Work 2012. Worked as a social worker in the Adoption Team in Hertfordshire for 6 years. Previously worked in youth offending and fostering teams, as well as being a foster carer. Employed by Together for Adoption as a Support Worker in the Adoption Support team since June 2022.
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Administration Staff

Sharon Redrup	Administration Manager 37 hours	Sharon has worked in administration within the Local Authority Children's Services Department for Cheshire West and Chester Council/Cheshire County Council since 1996. And has been based with the Adoption Team since 2008, undertaking the role of Panel Administrator, Business Support, and more recently Administration Manager at Together for Adoption (since 2017).
Kelly Moran	Business Support 37 hrs	Kelly has worked for the adoption service since 2016. Prior to working for the adoption service Kelly worked in an admin/sales role for 14 years with an outside organisation.
Jenna Hasman	Business Support 22.2 hrs	BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (2006). 10 year working in Business support within the travel industry. A further 3 years working in the NHS providing admin support for the Trafford health visiting team.
Bryony Tonge	Business Support 37 hrs	Microsoft Office Advanced NVQ Level 2 Business Admin BTEC ND in Business – DDD* GCSEs x 10 (A's in Maths, Additional Maths, Science)
Claire Atkinson	Panel Administrator 37 hrs	Claire has worked for Together for Adoption since November 2021. She has worked in adoption for 8 years, with 3 years as an administrator for a voluntary

		adoption agency and 5 years as a social work assistant with the same organisation. She also has personal experience of adoption within her family.
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Data Analyst

Tracey Ryan	Data Analyst	10 years' experience as a Personal Assistant /Office Manager for Women's Aid, followed by 10 years' experience working for the adoption team. Initially working as a Panel Administrator for St. Helens, before moving with the service in 2011, to WWISH, in an administrative role and then onto Together for Adoption in the same role, until appointed to the Data Analyst role.
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9. Services Provided to Children

- 9.1 The Regional Adoption Agency provides services to children requiring an adoptive placement. These children have an identified care plan of adoption or are relinquished children.
- 9.2 Children with a plan for adoption which requires no application for a Placement Order (children whose mother has requested they be placed for adoption) can be considered by the Adoption Panel in respect of the agency decision that they should be placed for adoption.
- 9.3 In all other cases when an adoption plan is considered, there is an alternative process in place concluding with the decision of the Agency Decision Maker as to whether the plan should be adoption or not and this decision being presented to court.
- 9.4 The Adoption Child Care worker in each Local Authority attend early planning meetings for children whose plan may be adoption and in this way are informed of the children that may eventually have a plan for adoption. Information about these children is then shared with Together for Adoption via monthly Tracking Meetings. This enables family finding to commence at the earliest point and the sufficiency of adopters to be monitored.
- 9.5 Profiling meetings are held by the local authority for children when the plan for adoption is clear. All involved professionals and carers are invited to this meeting to share all known information about each child in order to gain a full picture of their needs.
- 9.6 The search for an adoptive family for a child pursues all avenues available to ensure that any delay is minimised. This includes inter-agency searches where a child's needs indicate it may be needed.
- 9.7 Children's profiles are uploaded to Link Maker where a link or match has not been identified prior to a Placement Order being granted and a child is considered likely to wait longer for a family. Consideration is also given to Activity days if family finding is or is felt likely to be challenging. Adopters are encouraged to consider children within the TFA network initially after approval before going on to Linkmaker to search for an external match.
- 9.8 When a prospective adoptive family is identified, the relevant paperwork is prepared, and the case is presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation. The Agency Decision Maker then approves the match if s/he agrees with the recommendation.

- 9.9 Once the match is agreed by the Agency Decision Maker a series of introductions take place, if these are successful the child is then placed with the adoptive family.
- 9.10 The child's Social Worker supports the placement together with the adoptive family's Social Worker until the Adoption Order is granted.
- 9.10.1 Fostering for Adoption placements are also actively recruited to ensure, where appropriate, a child can be placed with their potential adopters at the earliest opportunity to minimise the amount of moves they experience and establish security as soon as possible.

10 Recruitment, Preparation, Assessment, Support and Approval of Adoptive Parents.

- 10.1 Together for Adoption has an annual recruitment strategy and runs regular recruitment campaigns to capture the interest of prospective adopters. A variety of media is used during the campaigns which are focused on the needs of children waiting and those who are likely to be referred to the service.
- 10.2 Prospective adopters who contact the service, either by telephone or website will be contacted by a recruitment and assessment duty social worker for an initial conversation about adoption. If the prospective adopter wishes to proceed at that stage, then an expression of interest form will be completed, and a more detailed conversation will take place on that same day. The prospective adopter will then be offered the opportunity to attend an information session to support them to make an informed decision about moving forward. Following the information session, the prospective adopter can express a wish for an initial home visit to be arranged. If during the initial conversation it is established that the prospective adopter only requires basic information, then they will be directed to the website for further information and where they are able to make an expression of interest should they wish to do so.
- 10.3 If an expression of interest form has been completed via the website, a recruitment and assessing duty social worker will telephone the prospective adopter within **10 working days** and provide them with further information. Alternatively, the prospective adopter can complete an expression of interest during a phone call with the duty worker, if they prefer to contact the officer directly rather than the website. If the prospective adopter wishes to proceed, they will be invited to an information session and an initial visit can be arranged following this. This visit will inform the agencies advice and if the prospective adopter wishes to progress to Stage 1.

- 10.4 Following the receipt of a 'Registration of Interest' the adoption agency is required to acknowledge receipt of the form and decide if they will accept or decline the application within **5 working days**.
- 10.5 If Together for Adoption accepts the Registration of Interest this is the start of **Stage 1**. The Service must at the start of this stage complete a stage 1 plan with the applicant/s setting out the responsibilities of the Agency and the prospective adopter/s. This stage is **61 days** in length, and adopters are required to complete their own research and portfolio of evidence. Together for Adoption will complete Statutory Checks, references, Health and Safety Assessment and provide Preparation for Adoption Training for applicants at this stage.
- 10.6 At the end of **Stage 1** the assessing social worker will meet with their line manager and this may include the prospective adopter/s. The adoption agency must decide and inform the applicant/s if they are in the position to progress to **Stage 2** or if they need to complete further work. If the decision is that the applicant/s can progress the application form for stage two will be sent out to the prospective adopters.
- 10.7 Following this, adopters are allocated a social worker from the Recruitment and Assessment Team who will work with them to complete the assessment. The service must aim to complete **Stage 2** of the process within **121 days** to meet the stipulated timescales within the Statutory Guidance. Timescales for assessments are in accordance with regulations and National Minimum Standards
- 10.8 Once completed the assessment and related documents are presented to the Together for Adoption Panel for their recommendation. The applicants are fully involved in their assessment which is an open process. Applicants are invited and encouraged to attend the panel.
- 10.9 If applicants are not approved and wish to appeal this decision, they will be given information about the **Independent Review Mechanism**. This is a review body, operated by the Coram Children's Legal Centre on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Independent Review Mechanism can advise the Adoption Agency to reconsider the decision but does not have the authority to overturn the decision made originally by the Adoption Agency.

11. Post Placement and Post Adoption Support

Together for Adoption provides the full range of Services as required under Adoption Support Regulations 2005.

11.1 Financial Support

Assessments for financial support are carried out by the child's relevant adoption child care team, not Together for Adoption, and where financial support is awarded, this is reviewed annually by the local authority.

11.2 Assistance with Contact

The Adoption Service maintains the indirect contact – Letterbox - service on behalf of all adopted children in all five local authorities. The Support Workers will also assist birth families to write their letters if this service is required. Any arrangements for direct contact are managed by the local authority for the child.

11.3 Post Approval Training and Workshops

Parenting courses and workshops are provided post approval for adoptive families on a variety of topics for example, attachment issues, talking to your child about adoption, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and the issues that may arise due to this.

11.4 Counselling for Birth Parents

Together for Adoption commissions an independent Adoption Agency to provide counselling for birth parents, and birth family members that have had a child adopted on behalf of the partnership. This service provides independent information and individual support to birth families.

11.5 Post placement and Post Adoption Support to adoptive families

Both children placed for adoption and the prospective adopters retain the support of a Social Worker from the local authority and from the recruitment and assessment team until the making of an Adoption Order. Following the making of an order, they can access the services of the adoption support team staff where required. These staff will undertake both practical support, advice about behaviour or relationships, and will work with other professionals and the carers to provide the necessary support to the adoptive family.

Where there is pre-adoption order disruption there are processes in place for undertaking independently chaired disruption meetings. Learning from any such disruptions is shared across the partnership and used to change practice or procedure where warranted.

11.6 **Counselling, Advice and Information**

This is provided via the post adoption workers within the team. They offer advice and support in respect of Intermediary Services for Birth Relatives, access to records and adoption counselling where appropriate.

11.7 **Assessing the Needs for Adoption Support Services – Post Adoption**

An adoptive family can ask for an assessment of need for adoption support services at any time whilst the child is under 18 years of age and up to 25 years of age where the young person has a disability. If this is within three years of the order, the placing authority will be responsible for arranging the assessment but may ask another authority to do this on its behalf.

After three years, the request for an assessment should be made to the adoption service in whose area the family is living. Within the Warrington, Wigan, St Helens, Cheshire West and Chester, and Halton areas this Adoption Service will be Together for Adoption. However, the placing authority retains responsibility for any ongoing financial commitment at the time of the child's adoption.

Where a request is received by Together for Adoption for an assessment of Adoption Support Needs, the adoption worker will undertake a comprehensive assessment of need.

The assessment will include the following elements:

- The needs of the person being assessed and how they might be met.
- The needs of the adoptive family and how they might be met.
- The needs, including developmental needs, of an adopted child and how they might be met.
- The parenting capacity of the adoptive parent.
- Wider family and environmental factors.
- The circumstances that led to the child being placed for adoption
- Any previous assessment of needs for adoption support services.

Once the assessment has been completed, the following steps will be taken:

- If the proposal is to provide services, the Adoption Service will provide an adoption support plan in writing. The Adoption Support plan will include:
 1. The services to be provided
 2. What it is expected the service will achieve
 3. How the success of the service will be measured and evaluated
 4. The timescales for providing the service; when and for how long.
 5. When and how the plan will be reviewed.
 6. The named person that will monitor the provision of the services according to the plan and undertake reviews.

It should be noted that, whilst an adoption agency has a duty to assess the need for adoption support services if requested, there is no statutory obligation to provide these services even if identified as appropriate. However Together for Adoption recognises the uniqueness of the adoption relationship and the lifetime commitment involved and accepts its general responsibility to do everything possible to support adoptive families to ensure successful outcomes.

Where a support plan is agreed consideration will be given to making an application to the Adoption Support Fund.

The services provided as detailed above meet the requirements of the 'Adoption Passport' introduced as part of the Government changes to Adoption Services. Adoptive families can access the Adoption Passport support guide for adopters via the First4Adoption website.

12. Adoption Panel

- 12.1 Together for Adoption has a single Panel and must have 5 members to be quorate. Together for Adoption maintains a central list of around 30 suitable people, who have appropriate qualifications or relevant experience. The Adoption Panel is a body of people who consider all the relevant information presented to them to make a recommendation.
- To consider whether an adoptive applicant should be approved as suitable to adopt.

- To consider proposed matches between children and particular prospective adopter/s.
- To consider a relinquished child's plan for adoption where no application for a Placement order has been made.

The Together for Adoption Panel is scheduled to meet four times a month.

12.2 The key functions of the Adoption Panel are to:

- Ensure all relevant information has been provided and is of sufficient quality.
- Ensure that the agency have followed the guidance and regulations in terms of children whose plan is adoption.
- Consider all the information about each case.
- Provide the Agency with a recommendation in each case.
- Offer Advice to the agency on each case.

12.3 In order to conform to the Adoption Agencies and Independent review of Determinations Regulations 2011 the Adoption Panel must consist of an Independent Chair, or Vice Chair, a Social Worker with relevant adoption experience, as defined in Regulation 3, and three other members.

Medical advisers to the Adoption Panel, from the five LA's are included on the central list. Although their presence is not a requirement for quoracy, their attendance is helpful, and every attempt is made to have a medical adviser attend each meeting.

Legal advice is required when considering if a child's plan should be adoption; however legal advisors are not required to attend Panel, but if they do they are not Panel members. When Panel is considering approvals or matches Panel may obtain legal advice where it considers necessary.

The Agency Advisor attends Panel meetings but is not a voting Panel member.

12.4 Panel members complete relevant training on a range of topics on an ongoing basis. Panel member training is provided on an annual basis.

12.5 Panel members have an annual appraisal, conducted by the Panel Chair and Agency Advisor. The Panel Chair has an annual appraisal conducted by the Agency Decision Maker, and all Panel Members contribute to this appraisal.

- 12.6 Each Local Authority has appointed an Agency Decision Maker. It was agreed by Together for Adoption that each of the Agency Decision Maker's will agree/disagree the recommendations regarding the suitability of adoption applicants on a rota basis. Agency decision makers complete the decisions about the children from their own local authority.

13. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the services provided.

- 13.1 The service provided by Together for Adoption as an Adoption Agency will be considered by OFSTED when they are inspecting the individual Local Authorities and is subject to the requirements and recommendations made by that body.
- 13.2 Together for Adoption is hosted by Wigan as the lead local authority. A Management Board is established consisting of senior representatives from each local authority and meets quarter. The Management Board has overall accountability and monitors and controls the activities of the service, setting performance objectives and targets. The Management Board provides scrutiny, challenge and strategic direction to the RAA.
- 13.3 Each quarter the Advisory Group and the Quality Assurance Group, comprised of a range of professionals for the five Local Authorities and users of the RAAs services meet with the staff from the RAA to discuss operational matters and performance targets. These meetings then feed into the management board.
- 13.4 Six monthly reports are provided to the Lead Member for Children's' Services and the Director of Children's' Services in each of the five local authorities. It is the responsibility of the Board member for each respective authority to ensure that these are presented, discussed and noted: NMS Standard 25 (2014). These is also panel activity and quality assurance information provided on a six-monthly basis by the Panel Chairs to the partnership.

14. Complaints Procedures

- 14.1 The complaints procedure is that currently in use in Wigan as the host authority. This procedure deals with complaints received from service users from the five local authorities. Records of these complaints will be kept in accordance with Regulation 17 (AAR 2003) and NMS Standard 26 (2014).

14.2 On receipt of a complaint, the matter is, where possible, dealt with informally by the Team Manager responsible. In the event that the complaint is of sufficient concern that informal resolution is inappropriate, or cannot be resolved informally, then it will be referred to the Wigan team who manage complaints;

- [Complete our online complaints, compliments and comments form](#)
- Alternatively, you can write to us at Children and Families Social Care Complaints team, PO Box 100 WN1 3DS or call us on 01942 489 808.

The Complaints Team will ensure the formal complaint is allocated for investigation and liaise with the complainant directly.

Where the complaint cannot be resolved following investigation at stage 1, the complainant has the option of requesting a stage 2 investigation, followed by a stage 3 Review Panel and ultimately a referral to the Ombudsman's Office.

It may also be appropriate to contact [Ofsted Complaints](#) Ofsted are base at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD or you can call 0300 123 1231 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

14.3 **Safeguarding**

Wigan has a Safeguarding Unit and Safeguarding Board and the procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse or neglect for children placed for adoption. These procedures will be followed by social workers within Together for Adoption. If a child has been placed with prospective adopters, a prompt referral will be made to the Local Authority where the child is placed, in order for the allegation to be investigated under that Authority's procedure. Full co-operation will be given by the shared adoption service to the Authority investigating the allegation with regard to information about the child.

14.4 If an allegation is made against a professional working with a child, the Local Authority that employs the professional will take responsibility for undertaking the investigation. It is unlikely that a Child Protection Conference will be needed as children to be placed for adoption are 'Looked After Children', but in this unlikely event advice would be sought from the Wigan Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as to which Local Authority should convene the Conference.

Wigan's Local Authority Designated Officer will offer assistance and advice to Together for Adoption staff. The Wigan Safeguarding Unit operates a Duty Advice line and advice will be made available to staff, when requested, of the shared adoption service.

15. Arrangements for approval and review of Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed by Together for Adoption on an annual basis in consultation with staff members Local Authority Partners, and Adoption Panel members. Any significant changes or proposed amendments to the Statement of Purpose will be submitted for consideration to the Together for Adoption Partnership Board and the Adoption Panel.

Changes, and factual updates to the statement of Purpose which do not impact on the provision of services, Together for Adoption's policy's or procedures can be made by the Service Lead of Together for Adoption.

16. Arrangements for distribution of Statement of Purpose

Copies of the Statement of Purpose will be given to each member of staff, Local Authority Strategic Lead from the five Local Authority Partners and each Adoption Panel member.

The Statement of Purpose will be available on Together for adoptions Website, and made available, upon request, to:

- Any person working for the purposes of the adoption service
- Any adopter or prospective adopter of the Adoption Service
- Any child placed with an adopter, by the Adoption Service
- The parent of any such child

*Updated
May 2024*