

Statement of Purpose

November 2017

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with underpinning legislation, the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, and the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005.
- 1.2 It has also been written in accordance with Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards 2014 for Adoption Services.
- 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

Bewsey Park Community Centre,
Troutbeck Avenue,
Warrington.
WA5 0BA
- 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 his or her 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 with an adoptive family that meets their needs
- 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 families 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 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 on the basis of 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. A Service Level Agreement is in place with After Adoption to provide this.

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 Manager

- 7.1 The host Authority for the Together for Adoption is Wigan.
- 7.2 The Manager of the Together for Adoption is **Bryan Glover**.

Qualifications

BA (Hons) Psychology and Education 1986

MSC in Social Work Studies 1993

DipSW 1993

Experience

Worked as a social worker since 1991

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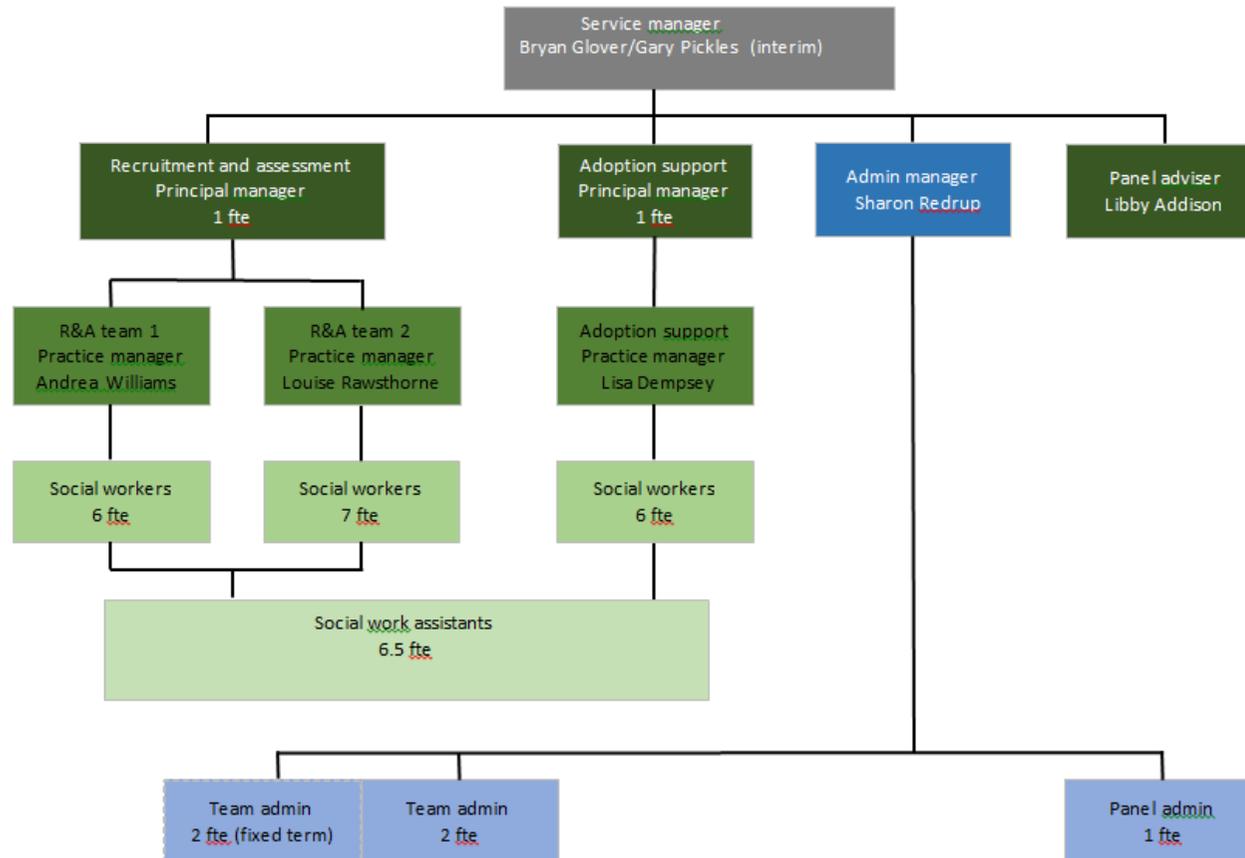
8. Structure of the Service

- 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 Manager of Together for Adoption is responsible for the day to day running of the service.
- 8.3 The Service Manager is supported by two Principal Managers, an Administration Manager and a Panel Adviser. These managers are in turn supported by three Practice Managers.
- 8.4 Together for Adoption has five named agency decision makers.

Together for Adoption Structure

TOGETHER FOR ADOPTION STRUCTURE CHART

12 May 2017



8. Staff: Names, Role Qualifications, Experience

Agency Decision Makers

Name	Role	Qualification/Experience
Jayne Ivory	Assistant Director and Agency Decision Maker - Wigan	Degree in Humanities and Social Sciences 1991 Dip SW 1991 Postgraduate Diploma in Health and Social Care Management 2005 24 years' experience in social work
Tracey Coffey	Director of Children's Services Agency Decision Maker - Halton	BA (Hons) History 1989 CQSW and Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Social Studies 1993 MBA 2012 24 years' experience in social work
Fiona Waddington	Assistant Director and Agency Decision Maker - Warrington	B.A.(Hons) Applied Social Studies 1989 CQSW 1989 Certificate of Family Placement 1992 Diploma in Management Studies 1997 27 years' experience in social work.
Emma Taylor	Director of Children's Services Agency Decision Maker – Cheshire West & Chester	BA (Hons) 1993 Dip SW 1995 MA Applied Social Studies 1995 NVQ 7 Management 2011-12 22 years' experience in Social Work
Fiona Woods	Assistant Director, St Helens	DipSW 1997
Damien Fitzsimmons	Service Manager, St Helens	BA. Hons degree in History and Politics from Liverpool University MA in Applied Social Science from Lancaster University DIPSW from Lancaster University. PQ 1&2 NVQ Level 4 in Management & Leadership

Manager

Name:	Role	Qualification/Experience
Bryan Glover	Service Manager 37 hours	BA (Hons) Psychology and Education 1986 MSC in Social Work Studies 1993 DipSW 1993 26 years' experience in social work

Principal Managers

Jill Sudborough	Principal Manager, Recruitment and assessment 37 hrs	<p>CSS social work qualification- 1991 Post qualifying award in social work, part one-2001 Diploma in Systemic Supervision- 2016</p> <p>Jill has 24 years experience working with children in residential care this included 11 years as the manager of a residential unit/outreach service for young people.</p> <p>Jill has 15 years experience in adoption work, 12 of these in a management post.</p>
Vacant	Principal Manager, Adoption Support 37 hours	

Practice Managers

<p>Louise Rawsthorne</p>	<p>Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours</p>	<p>NNEB qualified. HND in Social Care.</p> <p>Diploma in social work in 2003.</p> <p>Louise has 17 years experience including being a nursery nurse, youth worker, residential worker, family support worker, adoption panel member and childcare social worker in adoption and permanency.</p> <p>Louise has 8 years experience in adoption work 4 of these in a management post.</p> <p>Louise is also a practice educator for student social workers and has been an adoption panel advisor.</p> <p>In 2017 Louise obtained the post of a practice manager for recruitment and assessment in Together For Adoption</p>
<p>Andrea Williams</p>	<p>Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours</p>	<p>DipSW in 2006. Progression and Consolidation Programme, Post Qualifying Specialist Social Work Award, 2009 at Salford University.</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts-Professional Studies in Child Care (Specialist Award in Social Work) - Post Qualifying, at Salford University, 2013.</p> <p>Core Skills for Managers Griffin Care Limited completed 2016 Aspiring Team Manager Programme, post graduate course at Bournemouth University completed 2016 28 years working with children and families, 16 of those in a family centre,</p>

		5 years working in Disabled Childrens Team 7 years with the adoption service
Lisa Dempsey	Practice Manager – Adoption Support 18.5 hours	DipSW in 2009 Experience of working with adults with mental health needs. Member of Adoption Service in Wigan since May 2010

Panel Adviser

Libby Addison	Panel Adviser 37 hours	Dip SW 1994 Foster Carer for 12 years. Adopted 2 children. 3 years' experience on Child Care Teams. 20 years' experience of fostering and adoption work in various Local Authorities. Practice Manager for Adoption Team in Warrington since March 2010. Seconded to WWiSH in October 2011. Team Manager in WWiSH since April 2014
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Social Workers

Ann Atherton	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	HNC in child care and care management NVQ level 4 in child care and care management Certificate in adolescent studies Dip SW 2000 PQ 1&2 childcare award. Ann has 32 years experience in childcare services, including being a manager for children's homes, support worker, social worker, adoption panel member and senior practitioner for a family support team.
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<i>Ann cont'd ../</i>		Ann has been a Member of the St Helens Adoption Service since June 2009.
Christopher Reynolds	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	Dip SW 1993. Previous experience as a Probation Assistant for 3 years before qualification. 16 years' experience in Child Care Teams and NSPCC Member of Adoption Team in Warrington since September 2009.
Jaki Tweedale	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	DipSW in social work in 1997 Social Work Awards levels 1 – 6 Completed North West Social Work Practice Leadership Programme in 2013. Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services. Jaki has over 26 years experience working in various children and adults fields but predominately mental health, learning disabilities, head injury and hospital discharge. From 2004 Jaki joined the Family Placement team and became the manager for the Family and Friends Fostering Service in 2010. Jaki joined the WWiSH adoption service in 2015
Sarah McBurnie	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	BA Hons in social work 2007. Sarah has 10 years experience as a child social worker working within the adoption service. Within this time Sarah has also been an adoption panel member. Member of Adoption Team In Warrington since July 2008.

<p>Francesca Stone</p>	<p>Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>18.5 hours</p>	<p>BA Hons Social Work 2001</p> <p>Fran has over 16 years experience as a social worker working within a Court Assessment Team, family placement team, a Child Sexual Exploitation Team, Permanency Team and a child care Generic Team.</p> <p>Fran joined Wigan's adoption service in 2015.</p>
<p>Rebecca Healy</p>	<p>Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>BA (Hons) Social Work 2013</p> <p>Rebecca has 4 years experience as a social worker 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.</p> <p>Rebecca joined the St Helens adoption service in 2015.</p>
<p>Hazel Blundell</p>	<p>Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>BA (Hons) Sociology 2008 MA Social Work 2014</p> <p>Hazel has experience of working with the NSPCC Welsh Helpline to Addaction and North Wales Housing Association. Since qualifying, Hazel worked as an adoption social worker with North Wales Adoption Service. Hazel joined the St Helens adoption service in 2015</p>
<p>Jean Clark</p>	<p>Social Worker,- Adoption Adoption Support</p> <p>14.2 hours</p>	<p>CQSW 1988 Degree in Applied Social Studies 1988</p> <p>Previous experience in Community Social work.</p> <p>Member of the Adoption Service in Wigan since November 2005. Seconded to WWiSH in October 2011.</p>

Rebecca Cook	Social Worker Adoption Support 18.5 Hours	Masters in Social Work 2006 PQ Consolidation 2010 Worked within various children's social care settings since 2006 Employed within WWiSH since July 2013.
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.
Diane Webster	Social Worker. Adoption Support 29 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 October 2011.
Sarah Darley	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 18.5 hours	BA (Hons) Social Work 2008 Sarah joined Halton Borough Council in November 2015. Previous experience involves working as a child's Social Worker within a Local Authority from 2008 – 2012 undertaking all aspects of Child Protection and Care Proceedings work and out of hours. From 2012 worked as an agency worker within Local Authority Child Protection Teams in addition to being an NSPCC helpline advisor in 2014.
Helen Walters	Adoption Support Social Worker 37 hours	DipSW in Social Work at Liverpool Community College July 2003, PQ Childcare Award March 2007, July 2008 BA (Hons) in Post Qualifying Studies in Health and Social Welfare.

<p><i>Helen cont'd</i></p>		<p>Helen has been employed by Halton Borough Council since April 2004, firstly as a Social Worker based in the Young People's Team, where she worked for three years, before moving to the & Fostering Service in September 2007.</p> <p>Helen is also a qualified Practice Educator.</p>
<p>Suzanne Chadwick</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 37 hours</p>	<p>BA (Hons) Social Work September 2004, MA Social Work 2006, Child Care Award 2014. Post Qualifying studies Suzanne has experience of working within residential child care settings for vulnerable young people and those with learning disabilities prior to qualifying as a social worker. Suzanne was employed by Halton Borough Council in the Child Care Permanence Team since 2007, prior to joining the Adoption Service in November 2012. doption & Fostering Service in September 2007.</p> <p>Suzanne is also a qualified Practice Educator.</p>
<p>Corinne Tootle</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 37 hours</p>	<p>BA (Hons) Social Work July 2011. PQ1 Consolidation Module February 2014.</p> <p>Corinne joined Halton Borough Council in July 2015. Corinne has experience as a child's Social Worker undertaking all aspects of Child Protection and Care Proceedings work within two Local Authorities between 2011 – 2014. In 2014 she became employed as an Adoption Social Worker within a voluntary agency.</p>
<p>Claire Thompson</p>	<p>Adoption Support Social Worker</p>	<p>Claire Thompson 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><i>Claire cont'd ../</i></p>		<p>I entered into employment as a children and families social worker in 1999, being employed by Wigan Borough Council and Wirral Borough Council before being employed by Cheshire County Council In 2001; Cheshire County Council ultimately separated their council and I subsequently became employed by Cheshire West and Chester County Council. I was a children and families Social Worker for 18 years gaining experience in all aspects of child protection and court proceedings before I embarked into my current role in March 2017 as an Adoption social Worker.</p>
<p>Libby Hardman</p>	<p>Adoption Support Social Worker</p>	<p>Therapeutic Social Worker BA(HONS) DIPSW Certified Nurtured Heart Approach Trainer, Foundation Level Theraplay Practitioner.</p> <p>Libby has worked as a qualified social worker for 9 years. She has experience of working in a statutory safeguarding team prior to moving to Adoption Support 5 years ago. Libby has 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>
<p>Jan Page</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p>	<p>CQSW & DIPSW 1993 Liverpool University.</p> <p>CCETSW Practice Teachers Award 2001, Liverpool John Moore's University.</p>

<p><i>Jan cont'd../</i></p>		<p>BSc (Hons) Open University Social Science with Psychological Studies. 2006.</p> <p>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Counselling Skills 2001-2. Chester.</p> <p>24 years' experience in SW.</p> <p>Education until 2003</p> <p>Randstad Care Agency Social Worker for ten years 2002-2012; Adoption (LA), Fostering (LA), Inter country Adoption (Voluntary Agency), Muliti Disciplinary Team BEST (Education), Family Support.</p> <p>2012-present day Adoption Social Worker Cheshire West and Chester.</p>
<p>Kathryn Kelly</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p>	<p>NNEB undertaken at Hartford Collage, qualified in 1992. NVQ3 – Supporting Families, work based assessment at Bradshaw House Family Centre in Congleton, qualified in 1998. DipSW undertaken at Salford University qualified in 2001. PQ1 undertaken at Salford University, qualified in 2007. Bachelor of Arts – Specialist Award in Social Work, Post Qualifying undertaken at Salford University, qualified in 2012/13. Kathryn has 20 years' experience working with children and their families. Working across fostering and adoption since 2001 and has worked as an adoption practitioner since 2004 – gaining 13 years' experience in the field of adoption.</p>

<p>Mark Wright</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p>	<p>Masters in Social Work 2008.</p> <p>Member of Adoption Team In Cheshire West and Chester since April 2015. Prior to this Mark has worked with children in care and youth offending.</p> <p>Mark achieved his progression as a Social Worker in April 2015.</p>
<p>Susan McBride</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker</p>	<p>I trained and qualified as a State Registered nurse in 1975 and worked until 1996 in hospitals as a ward sister and subsequent staff nurse in acute settings. This experience had many transferrable skills to social work.</p> <p>I attained BSc in Applied Psychology in 1995 at John Moores University. I qualified as a Social Worker with a Diploma in Social Work and MA in social work studies in 1998 John Moores University</p> <p>1998 -2011 I worked in Children and family team team for Cheshire Council, subsequently Cheshire West and Chester council, working with children at risk of harm I undertook a good deal of safeguarding work. I also worked in the Children in Care team, undertaking all the relevant work related to this.</p> <p>2011 to present working in Cheshire West and Chester adoption team undertaking Prospective Adopter reports and attending adoption panel for approval and match and family finding for children subject to a plan of adoption</p>

Wenda Hancock	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker	<p>NNEB, DipSW in Social Work at Liverpool Community College July 2002, PQ Childcare Award July 2008, September 2009 BA (Hons) in Post Qualifying Studies in Health and Social Welfare.</p> <p>Wenda has extensive experience in working for 33 years Cheshire West and Chester Council Child Care teams; this has included working on the Initial Assessment team, as a social worker for 6 years. Prior to becoming a Social Worker, Wenda worked as a Family support worker in family centres and at Styal Prison Mother and Baby Unit. She joined the Adoption Team in 2008.</p>
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Adoption Support Workers

Adele Wheeler	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	<p>NVQ (level 3) working with children and young people 2002 Worked within various social care settings since 2002 Employed by WWiSH since September 2013.</p>
Pamela Balmer	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	<p>NNEB 1999 Worked with children and families in various settings since 1999 Employed by WWiSH since September 2013.</p>
Liz Sheriff	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	<p>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 Adoption Service in 2011.</p>

Sue Prince	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1985 NVQ 4 Business Management 2007. Adopter Have worked in Social Care for 32 years Manager of Family Centre & Childrens Centre for 13 years. Joined Cheshire West Adoption Service July 2009.
Susan Conboy	Adoption Support Worker 14.8 hours	BTEC National – Distinction in caring services (nursery nursing) NVQ 3- Caring for children and young people. Theraplay Level 1 I have worked for CWAC for 19 years as a family support worker and within the adoption support team since 2010. I have been managing the ASF since September 2016
Michelle Lovelock	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	<p><u>Qualifications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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><u>Experience</u> I have worked with Children and Families for 30 years I have worked in residential care and school settings, I have managed pre-school provision and worked as a 1:1 support for children with both behavioural and learning difficulties in school settings</p>

<i>Michelle cont'd ../</i>		I have worked for CWaC for the last 15 years in the following roles: 6 years FSW in early intervention 3 years Childminder network coordinator 2 years FSW fostering I joined Adoption Support Team as a FSW in July 2013
Sarah Bayley	Adoption Support Worker 18.5 hours	NNEB Qualified 1995. Worked in Social Care setting for twenty years within Children in Need; Children in Care and in the last eight years within Adoption Support. I have trained in Theraplay, including group work. I also work part time in a Residential Care Home, with teenagers and young people with disabilities.
Laura Martin	Adoption Support Worker 18.5 hours	NNEB. Nursery nurse-private day nursery for 7 years. Residential Support Worker in a Childrens 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. Theraplay level 2 trained including group Theraplay.

Administration Staff

Sharon Redrup	Administration Manager	Twenty-one years' experience in administrative work within the Local Authority Children's Services Department for Cheshire West and Chester Council/Cheshire County Council. With the latter nine years being with Adoption Services, undertaking the role of Panel Administrator, Business Support, and more recently Administration Manager.
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Kelly Moran	Administration Assistant	I have worked for WWISH in an administrative role for the past 2 years and I have recently moved with the team to Together For Adoption. Prior to that I worked in an administrative/sales role for 14 years with an outside organisation.
Tracey McDonald	Administration Assistant	9 years' experience working for the adoption team. Initially working as a panel administrator for St. Helens, before moving with the service to WWISH, in an administrative role and then onto Together for Adoption. Previous to working for the Local Authority, I had lots of experience working alongside them, as well as the police, in my role as Personal Assistant /Office Manager for Women's Aid where I worked for 10 years.
Vacant	Panel Administrator	

9. Services Provided to Children

- 9.1 The Adoption Service provides services to children requiring an adoptive placement. These children have an identified care plan of adoption, or are relinquished children.
- 9.2 The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 introduced changes with effect from 1st September 2012. From this date only children with a plan for adoption which required no application for a Placement Order (children whose mother had requested they be placed for adoption) can be considered by an 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 Early Permanence Tracking meetings and informal

discussions. This enables family finding to commence at the earliest point and the sufficiency of adopters to be monitored.

- 9.5 Profiling meetings are held 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.
- 9.7 Children and adopter profiles are uploaded to Link Maker in all cases where matches have not been identified prior to approval or a Placement Order being granted. Children and adopters are also referred to the Adoption Register for England immediately if finding an adoption placement for the child is likely to be difficult. However any child without an adoptive placement after five months of searching is referred to the National Adoption Register as advised in the guidelines. Children will also be featured at Adoption Exchange Days. Consideration is also given to profiling the child/ren in certain publications if family finding is proving to be extremely difficult.
- 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.
- 9.11 Foster to Adopt placements are also actively recruited for 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 around the needs of children waiting and those who are likely to be referred to the service.

- 10.2 Prospective adopters who make contact with the service, either by telephone or on the internet are initially given an information pack to consider. If having read this, they wish to proceed with an application; they then return an expression of interest form.
- 10.3 On receipt of this expression of interest form, a recruitment and assessing social worker will telephone the prospective adopter within **10 working days** and provide them with further information. If the prospective adopters wish to proceed, a recruitment social worker will arrange an initial visit. This visit will inform the decision making if the prospective adopter wishes to progress to Stage 1.
- 10.4 Following the receipt of a 'Registration of Interest' the shared adoption service has 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 application this is the start of **Stage 1**. The Service must at the start of this stage complete an assessment agreement with the applicant/s setting out the responsibilities of the Agency and the prospective adopter/s. This stage is **2 months** in length, and adopters are required to complete their own research and portfolio of evidence. Together for Adoption will complete Statutory Checks, Health and Safety Assessment and provide Preparation for Adoption Training for applicants at this stage.
- 10.6 At the end of **Stage 1** there will be a meeting held with the prospective adopter/s and the Shared adoption Service must decide and inform the applicant/s if they can progress to **Stage 2** or if they need to complete further work. If the decision is that the applicant/s can progress a second assessment agreement must be agreed.
- 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 for their application. Additional suitably qualified independent social workers are commissioned when necessary. **Stage 2** of the process must be completed within **4 months** in order to meet the stipulated timescales within the Statutory Guidance.
- 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. Timescales for assessments are in accordance with Regulations and National Minimum Standards.
- 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.

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.

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

The Adoption Service has a service level agreement with After Adoption Birth Ties to provide counselling for birth parents that have had a child adopted. This service provides independent information and individual support to birth parents.

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 until the making of an Adoption Order. Following this they also retain 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 disruption there are processes in place for undertaking independently chaired disruption meetings. Findings from any such disruptions are used to change practice or procedure if any failures or lessons are learned.

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 The Together for Adoption shared adoption service has a joint panel and must have 6 members to be quorate. The Adoption Panel is a body of people who consider all the relevant information presented to them in order to make a recommendation:

- To consider whether an adoptive applicant should be approved as suitable adopters.
- To consider prospective matches between children and adoptive parents.
- A child plans for adoption of children where no application for a Placement order is 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 Agency Standards 2011, the adoption panel must consist of an Independent Chair, or Vice Chair, Independent Members, and a Social Worker with relevant adoption experience. Medical advice is also required and the Medical advisor is a Panel member. 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 should attend Panel but is also not a Panel member.

12.4 Panel members must complete relevant training. There must also be Panel training at least annually.

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 must appoint an Agency Decision Maker. It was agreed by Together for Adoption that each of the Agency Decision Maker's will agree/disagree the recommendations from the Together for Adoption Panel on a rota basis.

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

13.1 Together for Adoption as an Adoption Agency will be inspected by OFSTED as part of the Single Inspection Framework 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 has been established consisting of senior representatives from each local authority and meets every month. 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, and, approves the Together for Adoption Development Plan.

- 13.3 Each Month the Service Managers from the five Local Authorities meet with the Manager of Together for Adoption and discuss operational matters and performance targets.
- 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 reports include quality assurance information provided on a 6 monthly basis by the panel chair to the agency.

14. Complaints Procedures

- 14.1 The shared adoption service has a clear complaints procedure, based on the procedure currently in use in Wigan. 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

Complaints & Quality Standards Team (Social Care),
Wigan Council,
Resources Directorate,
PO Box 100, WN1 3DS.
Phone: 01942 486179.

[Ofsted Complaints](#) or call 0300 123 1231 between 8am and 6pm
Monday to Friday.

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

- 14.3 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.

14.4 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.

- 14.5 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 and Adoption Panel members. Any changes or proposed amendments to the Statement of Purpose will be submitted to the Adoption Panel for consideration and Cabinet/Executive for approval.

16. Arrangements for distribution of Statement of Purpose

Copies of the Statement of Purpose will be given to each member of staff and each Adoption Panel member.

It will be 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 by Gary Pickles - Interim Service Manager
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