

Statement of Purpose

2024-25



Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Principles
3. Our vision
4. Our aims and objectives
5. Equality and Diversity
6. Organisational structure
7. Accessing Adoption West Services
8. Governance arrangements
9. Management structure
10. Agency Decision Maker
11. Our social work team
12. Birth Links
13. Safeguarding
14. Recruitment of Adopters
15. Assessment, approval and family finding
16. Adoption support services
17. The Adoption Panel
18. Annual reviews
19. Commissioning
20. Complaints
21. Monitoring and evaluating outcomes
22. Ofsted Inspection & Coram membership
23. Appendices

1. Introduction

Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) commissioned to deliver adoption services, by 6 local authorities – Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES), Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. It is a company limited by guarantee and is registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency. Service delivery is defined by a contract that sets out specific performance measures and the reporting requirements of the RAA. The local authorities make up the controlling committee of company members with ultimate responsibility for organisational performance and appointment / dismissal of directors.

Adoption West head office address:

Adoption West
Floor 2, Old County Hall,
Bythesea Rd,
Trowbridge,
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Email: info@adoptionwest.co.uk

Website: www.adoptionwest.co.uk

The Responsible Individual is Hannah Woodhouse Director of Children's Services, Bristol City Council

City hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR Phone [0117 922 2000](tel:01179222000)

Email: hannah.woodhouse@bristol.gov.uk

The Registered Manager is Alison Lewis, Adoption West Service Director.

Floor 2, Old County Hall, Bythesea Rd, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 8JN Phone:03303 550333

Email: alison.lewis@adoptionwest.co.uk

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with the requirements set out in the law and regulations. These include:

- Children Act 1989
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 (A & C Act)
- Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (AAR)
- Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005
- Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) regulations 2012
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2014 (NMS)
- The Care Planning, placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) 2013
- Care Planning, Placement and Case review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Adoption and Children Act Register (Search and Inspection) Regulations 2017

The Statement of Purpose is intended as a useful source of information for children, young people, adopters, prospective adopters, birth family, staff and other professionals. The statement provides information about Adoption West and the services we provide, including the aims and objectives.

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is published on the Adoption West website and is made available upon request to:

- Ofsted
- Users of the service
- Any person working for the Adoption Agency
- Any child in receipt of a service from the Adoption Agency
- Any parent or guardian of any child receipt of a service from the Adoption Agency

Children and young people are also provided with age-appropriate guides. This Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually by the Adoption West Board.

2. Principles

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family who can meet their needs throughout their childhood and beyond.
- Where possible this should be within their birth family, however when this is not possible finding an adopted family should be given serious consideration for each child.
- The child's welfare should be the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be taken into consideration at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- The child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, gender identity and sexuality will be fully recognised, positively valued and promoted when decisions are made.
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made.
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family will be valued and respected.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many organisations, professionals and individuals who have to work together to deliver to meet the needs of the services.
- Birth parents and birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and offered a support service.

3. Our vision

Adoption West's overall vision and purpose 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 adoptive families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption.

4. Our aims and objectives

The agency is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 by:

- ensuring the provision of a high-quality adoption service which guarantees the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for children or young people who are looked after and who need adoptive placements.
- ensuring that all those whose lives have been affected by adoption are helped to identify and receive appropriate services.
- working in partnership with adoptive families & other agencies ensuring the service is based on statutory requirements & good practice within the principles of value for money for the agency.

Objectives:

- To recruit, prepare, assess and support a sufficient number of prospective and approved adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children in the region with a plan for adoption. This recruitment whenever possible should reflect the ethnicity, culture, religion and language needs of the children.
- To provide information to applicants interested in becoming adopters about the process and children requiring adoption.
- To ensure that adopters receive appropriate preparation, training, support and advice to enable them to offer the best possible standards of parenting, safety and protection for children or young people in their care.
- To minimise delay in family finding, always considering the needs of the children.
- To ensure the earliest possible matching for children there will be a strong practice focus on early permanence.
- To develop a range of adoption support services to adopters, adopted children and their birth families in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance. This includes practical, financial and therapeutic services, in partnership with local authorities and other relevant agencies in keeping with the Adoption Minimum Standards.
- To ensure that Adoption West employs staff with appropriate and sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to deliver a high standard of adoption services.

- To ensure strong partnerships with local authority agencies to ensure childcare planning processes provide the opportunity for adoption to be considered for every child who needs it.
- 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.
- To ensure that non-agency partner adopters are provided with an appropriate service in line with the Court's expectations.
- To ensure that adopted adults are given the appropriate support and information to progress their search.
- To provide an independent counselling service to birth parents, adopters and adopted adults and children.
- To ensure 'best value' in the services provided by ensuring that cost effective services are provided and commissioned which maximise available resources.
- To administer the Agency's Adoption Panel so that it is organised efficiently and is effective.
- To ensure arrangements for contact with the birth family are carefully considered and meet the child's individual needs.
- To meet and comply with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services
- To ensure that accurate and up to date records and management information is kept in relation to individual children, adoptive parents and services and to maintain confidentiality and security of adoption records.
- To ensure that service users are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development.

5. Equality and Diversity

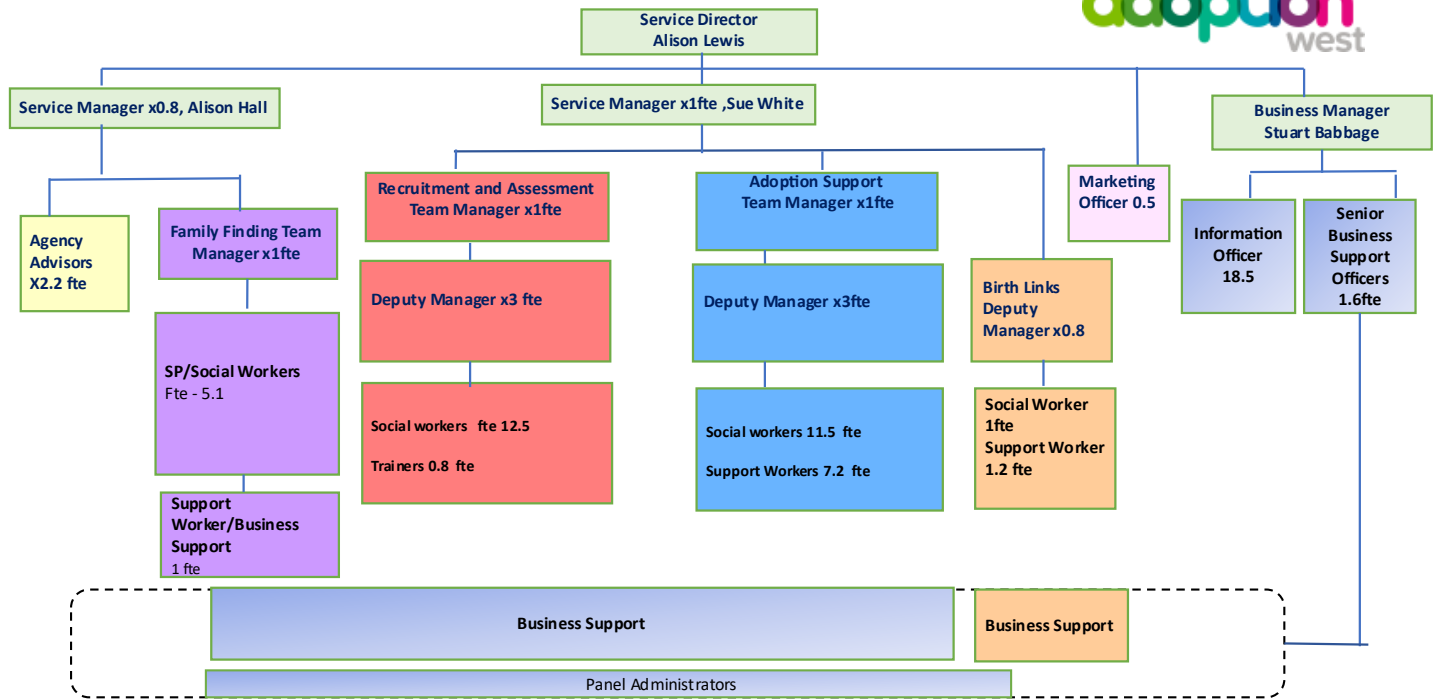
The Service aims to:

- Value and celebrate diversity and promote equality of opportunity.
- Ensure that all employees and service users including early permanence carers and children alike are treated equally with fairness.
- Treat all complainants in the same way in line with the Equality Act 2010. Any discrimination will be challenged, and actions taken accordingly.
- Ensure our working practices are characterised by flexibility, efficiency and excellence, the result of a supportive management style that enables its diverse work force to realise their full potential in serving our customers.
- Ensure our employee profile reflects diversity at every level of the organisation, and posts will be filled through a fair system of recruitment and promotion.

6. Organisational structure

Adoption West is a regional adoption agency and registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency. The agency operates from three offices within the communities that we serve.

Structure



The three offices are:

Phone number for all enquiries: [03303 550 333](tel:03303550333)

Trowbridge Office
County Hall, Wiltshire Council,
Bythesea Road,
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

Bristol Office
B Bond
PO Box 3399
Bristol City Council
BRISTOL
BS1 9NE

Gloucester Office
Second Floor, The Link
Block 5
Shire Hall
GL1 2TP

7. Accessing Adoption West services

Phone number for all enquiries: 03303 550 333

If you would like to speak directly to a Recruitment and Assessment duty worker, please call between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, or between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. At other times, your call will be answered by a member of our Business Support Team.

The Adoption Support Helpdesk is open 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. (on the number above) Monday to Friday and aims to respond to all enquiries within 3 working days. You can also email adoptionssupporthelpdesk@adoptionwest.co.uk

8. Governance arrangements

Adoption West is managed and overseen by the Service Director who is accountable to the Adoption West Board. The Adoption West Board is comprised of six Board Directors, one from each partner local authority, a representative from the Voluntary Adoption Agency sector, an adopter and an additional board member with specialist finance function. The Board meets quarterly to monitor and evaluate the ongoing performance of the agency. See Appendix 3 - Governance Arrangements Diagram.

The Chair of the Adoption West Board is the Responsible Individual for the agency.

9. Management structure

The senior management group comprises the Service Director who is the registered manager for the VAA, two Service Managers and a Business Manager

The VAA Registered Manager (Alison Lewis, Service Director) is a qualified social worker with over 38 years' experience in children and families social work in both the statutory and voluntary sector including 19 years as a practitioner and manager in adoption services. Alison Lewis has a BA (Hons) degree with CQSW (Certificate of Qualification in Social Work) 1986 and a Diploma in Child Protection Studies 1990. Alison Completed the DfE/ Deloitte's Regional Adoption Agencies Leadership program in August 2019.

Adoption West has regional teams for Adoption Support, Recruitment and Assessment and Family Finding, each team is managed and overseen by a Team Manager who is supported by either Deputy Team Managers or a senior practitioner dependent on team size. The Team Managers are supervised and supported by a Service Manager. The Birth Links service for adopted adults and birth

family support is in the adoption support service area and is managed by a Deputy Team Manager and reports to the Service Manager. The agency has three Agency Advisors (2.2fte) who are managed by the Service manager who is also responsible for the Adoption Panels.

10. Agency Decision Maker

The Agency Decision Makers for the approval of adopters are Alison Lewis, the Adoption West Service Director and Alison Hall the Service Manager for family finding and panels. The Agency Decision Making responsibilities for all decisions relating to individual children, including the matching decision, remains with the ‘home’ local authority responsible and accountable for the child. As of 29th May 2025, the local authority ADMs were:

Local Authority	Agency Decision Maker
BANES	Felicity.groves@BATHNES.GOV.UK
Bristol	James.beardall@bristol.gov.uk Fiona.tudge@bristol.gov.uk Tara.parsons@bristol.gov.uk Carrie.Yeates@bristol.gov.uk As from July 2025 JAMES MCFEAT will join the pool of ADMs as James Beardall is living Bristol.
Gloucestershire	Dan.Jones@gloucestershire.gov.uk Julie.miles@gloucestershire.gov.uk Rachel.townsend@gloucestershire.gov.uk Shabana.Warne@gloucestershire.gov.uk
North Somerset	Jane.Anstis@n-somerset.gov.uk Laura.clements@n-somerset.gov.uk
South Gloucestershire	Zafer.yilkan@southglos.gov.uk
Wiltshire	Nicole.Mills@wiltshire.gov.uk Netty.lee@wiltshire.gov.uk Katrina.mcjannet@wiltshire.gov.uk

11. Our social work teams

The agency has:

30 full-time equivalent social workers.

9.7 full time equivalent support workers work alongside social workers, providing support to children and families along including maintaining relationships services such as letterbox and direct contact.

3 full-time equivalent Team Managers and 6.8 Deputy Team Managers

2.2 full-time equivalent agency advisors

All social work staff/managers employed by Adoption West have a relevant qualification, either (BA, BSc or BSW) in social work, a master's degree (MA, MSc or MSW) in social work, or a DipSW, or CQSW. They are also registered with the Social Work England as required by law to enable them to practice. Social Workers are required to maintain their registration with Social Work England and to continue to develop their knowledge and skills while they are registered so that Adoption West can be confident that they are able to practise safely and effectively.

The qualifications of staff and their suitability to practice are checked at the time of recruitment and on an annual basis through the appraisal process.

The core functions of the teams are to:

- **Recruit, train and assess** a sufficient number of adopters and early permanence carers.
- **Maintain a high-quality group** of adopters to ensure the full range of needs can be met to deliver positive outcomes for children in care within the region.
- Ensure an **appropriate range** of placements is available in the interests of matching assessed need, including racial, ethnic, religious and cultural factors.
- Promote and encourage **permanency** to offer a stable home for life for children.
- Ensure that Family Finding for children is undertaken in a timely way minimising delay for children and finding adoptive families that meet their diversity needs appropriately.
- To ensure that children are **matched** to adopters and early permanence carers that can meet their individual needs.
- Carry out an **Annual Review** of each adopter and early permanence carer
- Provide **preparation and on-going training** to potential adopters and early permanence carers in order to improve the outcomes for children in care.
- Deliver good quality **support and supervision to adopters and early permanence carers**
- Provide **assessments of need** and review of support plans as agreed with adopted families
- Support the **child's sense of identity** via lifestory work and letterbox and direct contact,
- Deliver good quality **support and development training** as outlined with the Adoption minimum standards to adopters and children
- Administer the use of the **Adoption Special Guardian Support fund (ASGSF)** to access therapy for children
- Identify **providers of therapeutic** services in the region
- Working in partnership with other professionals, teams and agencies on behalf of adopted families

12. Birth Links

A Birth Links team provides services to:

- adult adoptees in tracing birth records and links to intermediary support.
- Birth parents and family members

This service is managed by a deputy team manager and a Service Manager, thereby being independent from the line management of the teams and team managers.

13. Safeguarding Children

Adoption West has a safeguarding responsibility for all the children that use its services and with whom the agency has contact. This responsibility includes taking all possible steps to ensure their welfare and to protect them from harm.

By working to provide secure and stable early permanence and adoptive homes for children and working closely with adopters and local authority social workers we aim to achieve the best outcomes for children.

Our work is underpinned by the government guidance [Working together to safeguard children](#) and the Adoption West Safeguarding Policy is available on our website www.adoptionwest.co.uk

14. Recruitment of Adopters

Recruitment is targeted, based on knowledge of children likely to be placed for adoption on a regional basis. By tracking the children that 'should be placed for adoption' and building a comprehensive picture of the regional need for adoptive placements, Adoption West is developing a more realistic picture of placement requirements. This information informs the recruitment of adopters and enables prospective adopters to gain a better understanding of adoption activity in the region. Adoption West involves partners in the information gathering and recruitment process so that all relevant agencies are able to provide services to meet local need.

The RAA engages proactively with partner agencies to ensure the timely placement of children to ensure a broad range of appropriate prospective adopters are available for children to be placed.

The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters are set out in detail in the Adoption West Procedures.

Recruitment

The team depends upon a variety of methods to attract interest from members of the public, including:

- Working at a national level with regional adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies
- Social media
- Information on Adoption West website
- Local press and radio advertisements
- General publicity via posters and leaflets in public places

- Specific recruitment campaigns
- Specific advertising of children/sibling groups
- Event stands
- Word of mouth

Please see the 'Recruitment Strategy' 2024-27 for further details

Information is provided on the Adoption West website www.adoptionwest.co.uk regarding adoption and early permanence, and further information is provided through initial conversations and literature for prospective adopters.

Early Permanence

Adoption West takes a proactive approach to early permanence. All children and adopters are considered for early permanence unless there are reasons not to do so. The aim is to enable more children to benefit from early placements with potential adopters.

Early permanence is an 'opt out' option in Adoption West, all adopters are invited to consider early permanence and to attend initial training.

Should a prospective adopter decide they do not wish to consider early permanence, or their circumstances do not meet requirements for early permanence, they may 'opt out' and continue their assessment as prospective adopters only.

Enquiries to adopt (Pre stage 1)

- Information sessions are held at least every two weeks , you can book a place directly from the Adoption West website
- Following this you can complete the enquiry form on the website and a social worker will then call you to have a discussion about the adoption process and answer any personal queries.
- Following this discussion if you have all the information, you need you can submit a Registration of Interest.
- The Adoption West manager will accept or decline the ROI within 5 working days.
- When accepted the enquirer is considered as a prospective adopter and starts Stage 1 of the process. A Social Worker is allocated to undertake the initial work.

15. Assessment, Approval and Family Finding

The adoption assessment process is divided into stages, we aim to complete:

- Stage 1 within 2 months of registration of interest, and
- Stage 2 within 4 months of completing Stage 1.

Prospective adopters can choose to have a break in the assessment process between stage 1 and 2 for up to six months. Stage 2 will be completed within 4 months of the date at which it is agreed with the adopters that the assessment will resume for Stage 2. A break of longer than six months

Stage 1

- The prospective adopter will receive the letter of acceptance to stage 1
- A meeting will be arranged with a social worker to discuss the process including the completion of the prospective adopter's workbook and the stage 1 agreement
- The prospective adopters will be invited to the Preparation Course – one day, and the half a day of Early Permanence training – “An introduction to early permanence”.
- All checks and references will be completed including DBS and medical

Applicants, and any household members over the age of 18, must consent to an ‘Enhanced’ Disclosure by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) LAC (97) 17 which specifies offences that automatically exclude an individual from becoming an early permanence carer or an adopter.

The end of Stage 1 a review meeting with manager, worker and applicants will be held. At this point the prospective adopters may choose to ‘opt out’ of early permanence. Applicants can have the opportunity to go on hold between stage 1 and 2 for up to six months, if this suits their circumstances.

If the agency has reasons not to progress an applicant to stage 2 of the process, they will be advised in writing of this and will have recourse to the Adoption West complaints process.

When the applicants are progressed to stage 2, the allocated social worker will initiate the Stage 2 acceptance letter, including the Adoption Preparation Course for Stage 2 and Friends and Family training

If prospective adopters decide to continue with an early permanence assessment, the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) will be completed and their suitability as early permanence carers will be assessed as part of the adoption assessment process.

Stage 2 Process:

- The allocated worker will commence the assessment and completes the Stage 2 Agreement – this will be approximately 6 sessions being a mix of in person and virtual, plus a minimum of 3 reference visits, observations of any.
- A potential panel date will be allocated at this point.
- Additional Early Permanence assessment and questions will be completed within the report.
- The applicants will be linked with experienced adopters and or early permanence carers.
- The prospective adopters will be invited to a further 3-day preparation course over 3 weeks.
- The prospective adopters who wish to provide an early permanence placement will be invited to a one-day specific training course.
- A Mid-Point Review will be held with the Manager and the applicants – a phone call or face to face - (at this meeting the panel date will be confirmed).
- The Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) is completed with applicants
- Panel Preparation Meeting will be held to prepare for Adoption/Permanence Panel

- The prospective adopters attend Adoption Panel, if they wish.
- The Agency Decision Maker will confirm approval of the prospective adopters or make a "qualifying determination". A Qualifying determination is made by an adoption agency when it considers a prospective or existing adopter is not suitable to adopt a child.

Second or subsequent adopters

Families who have already been assessed as adopters can apply to adopt again as long as there is a year's gap following their child's adoption order being made and there is a 2-year average age gap between that child and a potential new child.

They are invited to write to express an interest in adopting again and will be offered a home visit to discuss their circumstances.

If it is appropriate to proceed, they would then complete the registration of interest form and start in stage 2. All checks and references, including a new medical and DBS will be completed in stage 2.

They will be offered training. If their interest is in respect of a subsequent sibling of a child they have already adopted, the timescales and age gap would not necessarily apply. This assessment would be given high priority and the home visit would include the child's social worker.

Adoption by existing foster carers

Foster carers will notify the local authority for the child in writing of their wish to be considered as adopters for a child or children in their care. If the child/rens plan is for adoption, a meeting will be held between workers from Adoption West, the local authority fostering team and the child's social worker to consider next steps. This will be discussed with the foster carers, who will also be informed of their legal rights.

A fast-track process will be provided for approved foster carers who want to be assessed as adopters. The process will start at the beginning of stage two (as above). The foster carers will be offered prospective adopter training.

Specific guidance for these circumstances has been agreed by Adoption West and all six local authorities and will be shared with foster carers. Please refer to the Adoption by Foster Carers Policy – July 2023

Inter-country adoption

Adoption West has currently commissioned a service with Coram IAC – The Centre for Adoption. This service provides:

- The IAC Advice Line is staffed by qualified and experienced intercountry adoption Social Workers and overseen by a dedicated manager.

- Information Sessions, Preparation Courses and Assessments of Suitability that have an exclusively intercountry adoption focus.
- IAC's specialist Medical Advisors, Social Workers and Adoption Panel members who have many years of experience in intercountry adoption and the issues affecting children being placed from overseas.
- After placement and post order support and prepare progress reports on children's placements for those overseas countries which require them.
- Intercountry Adoption Support Workshops are provided which bring an exclusively international adoption perspective.

More Information about intercountry adoption can be found on the Intercountry Adoption Centre (IAC) website [Coram IAC: Intercountry Adoption Centre](#)

Non-Agency Partner Adoptions (often referred to as step-parent adoptions)

Enquiries received through the Adoption West duty process and/or the local authority will be responded to by an Adoption West social worker, who will provide initial information and guidance. If the applicants decide to proceed and make an application to the court Adoption West will be requested to undertake an assessment and complete a report providing the court with a recommendation.

Matching and Family Finding

By working closely with local authorities and maintaining thorough tracking processes regarding individual children's plans Adoption West can undertake early work on planning for adoption. The family finding service plans for each child as soon as they are known, and work begins to identify a family to match their needs by working across the RAA including VAA partners. Based on the analysis of potential matches identified locally, the RAA can simultaneously consider the national adopter pool for potential families

16. Adoption Support Services

Parenting an adopted child who may have complex needs can be challenging and adoptive families are likely to need professional advice and help at some time. Adoption West will work with families in order to better meet these challenges.

Adoption West has a comprehensive adoption support service for all those affected by adoption. This service is provided in partnership with a number of voluntary sector agencies and other independent providers. Social workers and support staff in the adoption support teams have additional qualifications including DDP level 1 and 2, Non Violent Resistance (NVR) and Therapy.

Adoption Support Services is delivered through a 3-tier model of service delivery, across the 3 hub offices.

Tier 1 – Universal accessed by all adopters these include:

- Events for adopters and children e.g. seasonal gatherings, conferences
- Newsletter / information & guidance
- Support groups / forums
- Therapeutic parenting courses

Tier 2 – Social Work Assessment / Intervention required

These services are delivered locally in each office by social workers and support worker for families with emerging adoption support issues/concerns.

- Requests for assessment of need – completed by social worker.
- Events and networking with other adopters
- Signposting for peer to peer support (It Takes a Village) and universal services in the community
- Social Workers/support workers – multi agency working and providing adoption knowledge to supporting children, families and the professional network in terms of understanding the long-term impacts of early life trauma, separation, loss and attachments issues.
- Support with contact issues
- Life-story work post order
- Access to VSO for support to address education issues.
- Access to Therapeutic Consultation
- Specialist groups – NVR, Parenting Our Teens, Theraplay, Groups for young people.
-

Tier 3 – Specialist Therapeutic Intervention

Following an assessment of need completed by Adoption West, specialist therapeutic services are identified and funded through the Adoption Special Guardian Support Fund (ASGSF) in place until 2025.

Adoption West in collaboration with partner agencies and local providers is working to establish specialist therapeutic services through commissioning arrangements across the RAA using the common framework for commissioning services.

Keeping Connected - Maintaining Relationships

Where possible Adoption West is committed to enabling children to keep connected to their birth family, this maybe via letterbox or by planned meeting up times.

Letterbox (Indirect Contact) and Meeting Up (Direct Contact)

Arrangements for letterbox and meeting up across the 6 local authorities is provided by the RAA staffed by administrators and support workers with management oversight from the Adoption Support Team manager or deputy manager.

17. Adoption Panel

The main purpose of the Adoption Panel is to consider and make recommendations to the adoption agency on the following:

- people to be approved as adoptive parents.
- whether an assessment to approve adopters should continue following a brief report to panel
- approval of the match between children and adopters and
- the placement of children for adoption where their birth parents request adoption to be the plan often referred to as relinquished for adoption.

Adoption West administers three Adoption Panels, with one Central List of panel members. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic the panels are currently operating virtually via MS Teams. The panel meets on approximately 5 occasions per month.

Independent of the Adoption Agency, the Adoption Panel plays an important role in the scrutiny of the proposals presented to determine whether all the issues have been appropriately clarified and whether the proposal is sound. The panels have an Independent Chair with significant experience of adoption work. The Adoption Panel has access to medical and legal advice to assist in their recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Adoption Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, the recommendations based on detailed written reports; the applicants are invited to attend the Panel in person.

Membership of the panels meets the statutory regulations and takes its members from a central list. Members include those who have personal experience of adoption and others with relevant skills and experience and aim to reflect the diversity of the population of the district. Panel members are required to undertake training, at least annually, and attend an annual appraisal.

The Adoption Panel delivers an independent quality assurance role that provides Adoption West with valuable feedback on the quality of adoption work across the whole service and is used to inform the development and improvement of services to children and adopters. Where this feedback refers to the service provided by a local authority this is fed back to the respective manager responsible for adoption work in that authority.

If the Agency Decision Maker does not approve the prospective adopter as suitable, the prospective adopter may apply to the Independent Review Mechanism for an independent review of the proposed agency decision and the prospective adopter's case. This information is provided to adopters in writing following the outcome of the Agency Decision.

Contact details for the IRM are as follows:

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)
Unit 4 Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley

LEEDS

LS12 6AJ

Tel No: 0845 450 3956 (charged at local rate) or 0113 2022080

Fax: 0845 450 3957 or 0113 2637414

Email: irm@irm.org.uk

Website: www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

18. Annual Review of Prospective Adopters

Where prospective adopters do not have a child placed within 12 months from approval, the adoption social worker and their manager along with the adopters will undertake a review. This review reflects their current circumstances to ensure they wish to continue with the process of adopting, all checks and references are up to date and that their approval terms remain appropriate.

Annual reviews are also an opportunity for the prospective adopter/s to comment on the service they receive, and to identify any perceived gaps in service provision, resources, training or support.

19. Commissioning Arrangements

Commissioning/Grant arrangements are in place to establish a standard regional offer covering the following areas:

- adoption support services via CSS Adoption Bristol
- therapeutic support provision (ASGSF providers)
- intercountry adoption
- licenses / subscriptions
- It Takes a Village (ITAV) – Peer to Peer support across the region
- CATCH (PACT) online resources for prospective adopters from stage 1

Commissioning arrangements will be monitored and managed to ensure high quality; good value services are being provided regionally.

20. Complaints

Adoption West wants to listen to the views of those people who use its services and to respond quickly. We will ensure that:

- Adopters and Early Permanence Carers are provided with the Complaints Policy
- Complaint investigations are completed promptly.
- Action taken to follow up complaints and outcomes are monitored by the management team.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service you should expect from us

- the behaviour of our staff in delivering that service
- any action, or lack of action, by our staff or others engaged on behalf of Adoption West

Anyone who is dissatisfied about any aspect of our service that they have not been able to resolve immediately with the member of staff concerned, should use the Adoption West Complaints process set out in the Complaints Policy. Full details of the Complaints Policy can be found within Adoption West policies and on the Adoption West website, prospective adopters will be given information about the Complaints Policy when they begin an assessment.

21. Monitoring and Evaluating Outcomes

Adoption West are committed to maintaining high standards and to continually striving to improve the services we provide to children, adopters and early permanence carers. Our adoption service has several ways we monitor the service we provide;

- Monitoring reports are submitted to the management team and the Adoption West Board.
- In partnership with the local authorities Adoption West reports to a Scrutiny Panel comprising elected members from each council and service users
- Feedback from children, adopters and early permanence carers
- Staff supervision, linked to the appraisal system
- Monthly recorded visits to early permanence carers, and shared with the approving local authority fostering team,
- Annual reviews,
- Bi-annual Adoption Panel Report
- Feedback from training sessions
- Complaints, compliments, and their outcomes
- Managers monitor data about incidents of concern in adoption, including allegations and disruption in any placement.

22. Ofsted Inspection

Adoption West must comply with the requirements of the Adoption Agency Regulations and must meet the national minimum standards for adoption and will be inspected accordingly under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) for each partner local authority and independently as a voluntary adoption agency.

Ofsted can be contacted at:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate
Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Coram BAAF

Adoption West is a member of Coram BAAF. This is a national organisation providing general advice, information, training, research and further reading about all aspects of early permanence and adoption practice. The website is informative and a helpful resource for training purposes.

Website: www.corambaaf.org.uk

23. Appendices

1. Values and Principles of Operation
2. Governance Arrangements
3. List of Adoption West Directors

Appendix 1

Values Statement (Adoption - National Minimum Standards 2014)

Children

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

Adopted Adults and Birth Relatives

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved - adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.



Appendix 2 - Adoption West Governance and Commissioning Arrangments



Appendix 3. List of Adoption West Directors

Title	First name(s)	Surname	Local Authority	Position	Is this person disqualified?
Ms	Mary	Kearney Knowles	Bath and NE Somerset	Director	No
Ms	Hannah	Woodhouse	Bristol	Director	No
Mr	Paul	Shallcross	Gloucestershire	Director	No
Ms	Jane	Anstiss	North Somerset	Director	No
Ms	Rhian	Evans	South Gloucestershire	Director	No
Ms	Alison	Elliot	Wiltshire	Director	No