



Statement of Purpose



This Statement of Purpose sets out Adopt South’s aims and objectives. It explains who we are, our values and principles, the services we provide and the way that we provide them.

The Statement of Purpose is intended to provide information to:

- Prospective and approved adoptive parents
- Children and young people
- Adopt South staff
- Adoption panel members
- Local authorities
- Birth family members
- Other adoption agencies
- Inspectors
- Members of the public
- Partner agencies including Health, the Police and other relevant organisations

Who are we?

Adopt South is a partnership Regional Adoption Agency created in April 2019, as part of the Government's move towards a more focused, consistent and timely delivery of adoption services to provide children in care with an adoptive family. Adopt South is delivered in partnership and brings together the majority of the adoption services previously provided by Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council, with support from voluntary adoption agencies Barnardo's and PACT. Statutory children's adoption work remains a local authority responsibility for the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton.

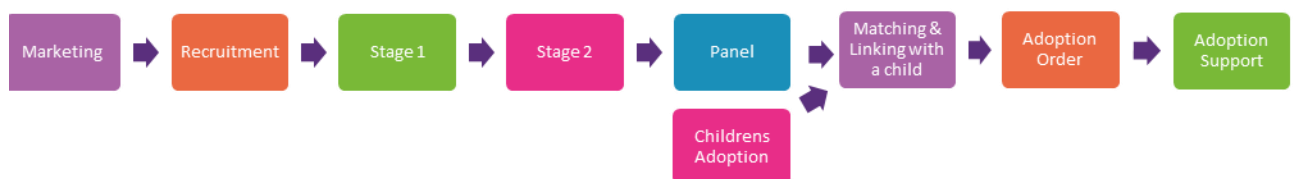
Our Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that adopted children grow up as part of a loving family, who can meet their needs and keep them safe during childhood and beyond.
- To work with all people impacted by adoption in an open, fair and understanding manner.
- To recruit, assess, train and approve sufficient suitable families, who are able to meet the varied needs of the children referred to Adopt South.
- Match children with families who are best able to meet their needs in the timeliest way possible.
- To ensure that our services promote equality, and do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of their age, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, transgender, disability, ethnic origin, religion and culture.
- To ensure that all staff who work for Adopt South are appropriately qualified, experienced, recruited, supervised and supported to carry out their responsibilities.
- To ensure that we maintain confidentiality and security of all adoption records and information.
- To ensure all requirements of the Adoption Agency Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services are met.
- To ensure that all children are well prepared and supported to move onto an adoptive family with a support plan that considers their individual needs.
- To promote brothers and sisters being brought up with opportunities to have enduring relationships with each other in a way that best meets their needs.
- To provide parents with independent advice and support when the Court agrees a plan of adoption for their children.
- We aim to work closely with partnership local authority's Children's Services to ensure that our service remains consistent to their requirements.
- To ensure that we involve service users in the delivery and the development of the service.
- To ensure that we work in partnership with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

- To work with early years provision, schools and colleges, CAMHS and Health in delivering a holistic approach of adoption support in regard to the impact of trauma and attachment needs.
- To provide practical support and training in regard to parenting and therapeutic approaches.
- To ensure everyone involved in a child's life understands their dual identity within their birth and adoptive families.
- To promote children to keep in touch with those most important to them, in the most meaningful way possible.
- We support children retaining their first name given to them by their parent(s).
- To ensure public funds are spent wisely to recruit adopters and support families most in need.

The Adoption Pathway

The road to becoming a prospective adopter is split into a number of stages. These are:



Marketing

Our marketing objectives are to appeal to a wide range of people in our community who want to, or could be, adoptive parent(s). We want to attract those whose experience, love and understanding, and will nurture child/ren who may have experienced early trauma or difficulties.

In order to engage with as wide an audience as possible and to provide a broad a range of different and diverse families, Adopt South utilises several publicity outlets. An innovative and contemporary approach to marketing is employed using the most current methods of engaging with potential adopter(s) and utilising various tools to help such as, digital marketing; analytics; social media with the main areas of engagement being:

- Across the Adopt South region, we offer regular, confidential, drop-in events both day, evenings and weekends to talk to the adoption team and meet adopter(s).



- We offer face-to-face appointments in the evenings through an Eventbrite booking system. These appointments give applicant(s) the opportunity to talk through any questions they may have in the early stages of considering adoption.
- Having a presence at large community events such as the New Forest Show, The Great South Run, ABP Southampton, as well as others including Romsey and Alresford Shows, to enable people to meet us and learn more about the adoption process.
- Build relationships with communities including faith groups, LGBT+ and large organisations who wish to support adoption in the region, such as Hampshire FA.
- Fortnightly Adoption Information Session Webinars and regular applicant communications to support and encourage applicant(s) to register their interest.

Our clear timescales make sure that all applicant(s) know what to expect and how long each stage will take. Our emphasis is on excellent customer service with the aim to make enquiring about how to become an adopter easily accessible.



Recruitment

Our Recruitment Team places high value on providing a welcoming and safe environment to hold discussions and share personal details, with confidentiality being paramount. Individuals can make contact with us by calling, completing a call back form, email, social media, attending one of our drop-in events or our one-to-one Eventbrite appointments.

The Recruitment Team's focus when considering an application is on identifying the individual's qualities and abilities, the possible family potential and helping them understand what Adopt South are looking for in considering applicant(s) who may wish to adopt. All people are welcomed and treated equally, and individuals are measured on their potential capacity to provide sensitive and understanding parenting, a permanent home and stability. We offer training, information sessions and recruitment events in the day, evenings and at weekends which we hope, offers all individuals flexibility as to when they can join us for a further conversation. The Recruitment Team value the contribution of current adopter(s) and they are supported in fortnightly online Adoption Information Sessions which include a presentation on the adoption process and the opportunity to hear from an adopter.



Adopt South have one team that delivers the first stage of the Adoption pathway. The team is based centrally, at Glen House in Swanwick, Southampton, providing a service across all four local authorities. The team aims to nurture and encourage prospective adopter(s) by providing a bespoke package of support to each applicant at the start of their adoption journey. Prospective applicant(s) have a social worker allocated for a period of two months while this initial assessment is completed. The team has a proactive approach which allows for the early exploration of the applicant's individual circumstances, strengths and areas for development. The main values and themes at this stage are of development, participation, learning and community.

Stage 1 emphasises and supports the principle that the best preparation for adoption is having high quality childcare experience. The team works with applicant(s) during Stage 1, by helping to build their childcare experience and knowledge of the needs of adopted children. This will include an exploration of the type of families that are required for children and the levels of complexity that individual children's behaviours or sibling groups they may have to consider in an adoptive family.



The Stage 1 training course introduces the key aspects of the adoption journey and the team use innovative technology through the use of Virtual Reality. This session provides applicant(s) with an invaluable learning experience, increasing understanding of the impact of early abuse and trauma on a child's development and future wellbeing. A detailed learning log, which is presented to the Adoption Panel, supports applicant(s) to record their active involvement with childcare and their learning throughout the adoption process.

Safeguarding is the key responsibility of the Stage 1 team and in line with the Adoption Regulations and good practice guidance.

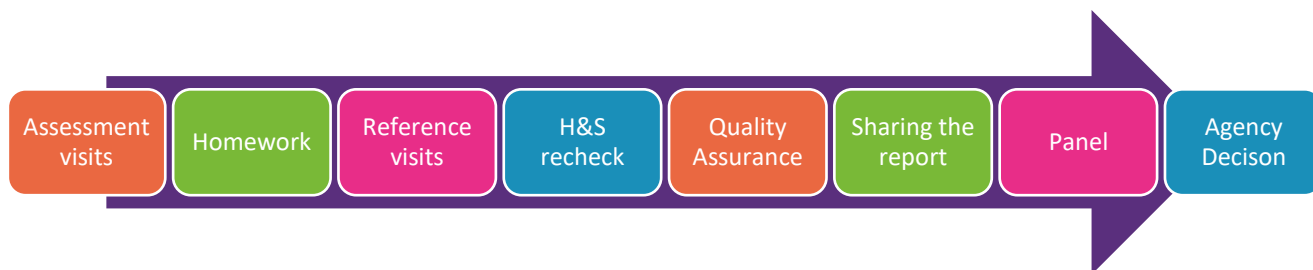
The team will gather such evidence through:



These checks all form part of evidencing safeguarding and has been considered as broadly as possible. The team undertakes Health and Safety home assessments and refer applicant(s) for professional dog assessments when required. The team promotes the idea



that adopter(s) become part of a community-based approach whereby approved adopter(s) support potential adopter(s). The involvement of adopter(s) in Stage 1 is highly valued through their contribution in training and operating as mentors to provide individual support and to share their invaluable first-hand experience with prospective adopter(s).



Once Stage 1 has been completed, then the applicant’s assessment will be moved into the second and final stage of the adoption assessment for prospective adoptive applicant(s). The applicant(s) will be allocated a new social worker in the Assessment Team. The second stage of the assessment process will take up to four months and at the end of this stage, the prospective applicant(s) completed assessment will be presented to the Adoption panel as a completed document called the *Prospective Adopters Report*, or PAR, as it is commonly known. The PAR will cover all different areas that enables the assessor to understand the sort of parent the applicant is or may be.



It is true that this period of the assessment is in depth, but Adopt South have skilled and experienced team members who are there to support applicant(s) through the process. This is about ensuring that each applicant is given the best opportunity to be listened to and that the information that is shared is understood. Applicant(s) will be supported to explore what skills they have to offer a child/ren who needs a family via adoption and how they can further develop their skills and experience. We will work with applicant(s) to explore what their future family may look like and their ability to offer an early permanence opportunity for a child/ren.

At the end of the assessment process, all prospective applicant(s) will be asked to read and sign the PAR, to confirm that they accept the details recorded and add any comments they wish to make. If at this stage, they disagree with any of the recorded details, then they must raise the matter initially with their social worker. There may be times that a manager agrees that a second opinion visit may be helpful to support the assessment recommendation. The assessor will make a recommendation as either suitable or not suitable to adopt. In both these cases, assessments will be presented to panel to enable the Agency Decision Maker to make the decision.



The purpose of an Adoption panel is to consider and make a recommendation for approval to the Agency Decision Maker about suitability to adopt and in regard to matching a child/ren with individual approved prospective adoptive parent(s). Adopt South has a number of panels which meet every month. Each panel has an independent Chair and has a number of independent members. Applicant(s) will be invited to attend the panel with their assessing social worker, where they will be asked a number of questions. At the end of the panel, applicant(s) will be informed of the panel's recommendation. The Agency Decision Maker will make a decision on an approval or match within 10 working days of panel. Applicant(s) will then be notified by their assessing social worker of the decision. As the assessor and panel only make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, it is possible for them to make a different decision. If the Agency Decision Maker makes the decision not to approve, then applicant(s) will be supported to fully understand their options (make representations to the Agency or Independent Review Mechanism).



Adopt South has a dedicated Family Finding Team whose purpose is to work in partnership with the four local authority Children's Teams, to understand which children are waiting for an adoptive family and to seek to match them with an approved prospective adoptive

parent(s). The needs of children are placed at the centre of all matching decisions, with finding the family who is best able to meet their needs. Close working with all professionals involved with the child/ren and prospective adopter(s) is important.

Family finding for children starts at the earliest opportunity to ensure that all children have the same opportunities, irrespective of gender, disability, ethnic origin, language, culture, faith, sexual orientation or gender identity. As part of the matching process, a robust support plan will be identified to ensure it will be as successful as possible.

Adopt South aims to find families for children with our in-house approved prospective adopter(s). There are times when we will need to explore prospective adopter(s) nationally to meet the needs of children waiting. Adopt South are committed to exploring all avenues to find the right family for a child/ren. Adopt South will explore with their own approved prospective adopter(s) whether finding a match through Linkmaker is the right option for them.

Moving In

A child/ren moving home is a big event with a lot of emotions attached. Children can be excited, nervous, anxious and dysregulated. It is around this time that children are having their 'goodbye for now' time with their families. Professionals will support prospective adopter(s) with a transition and introductions plan. Transition plans will be centred around the needs of the child and may look different for each child/ren and will be subject to regular reviews. Once a child/ren moves in, the family will be supported by regular visits from professionals.

Adopt South provides a strong focus upon supporting a new adoptive family, to ensure that the child's needs are being met appropriately. At the point of Adoption Order, parental responsibility transfers fully to the adoptive parents.



Adopt South encourages parent(s) to meet the prospective adopter(s) for their child/ren when it is assessed safe to do so. This is to promote a greater understanding for adopter(s) of the child/ren's parent(s) and to support a relationship to promote any 'keeping in touch'

arrangements that are being considered. It also allows parents to better understand the people who will be caring for their child/ren.

Childrens
Adoption
Team

Adopt South delivers statutory adoption work on behalf of Hampshire County Council, acting as an Adoption Agency to provide adoption services as required under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Adoption Agencies Regulations and Guidance 2013 and the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act 2000).

Adopt South aims to fulfil its range of duties and responsibilities under the above legislation and the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 in meeting the needs of those child/ren who have or may be adopted, their birth parents and those people who are or may be adoptive parents.

Adopt South recognises that children for whom adoption is the plan and adopted children may have specific education, health, and emotional needs. Every effort is made to find families who can meet a child's religious, cultural and ethnic needs and promote a child's sense of identity which is important to a child's well-being and helps them to enjoy and achieve in life. This includes a child's identity with their birth family members.

The Children's Adoption Team will work closely with Care Planning Teams across Hampshire to ensure that adoption is considered at the earliest opportunity to support children to achieve permanence in a timely way. Adoption is not a suitable option for all children, and children will be supported to stay within their family network when it is safe to do so. Adoption will be explored rigorously when there are no other alternative options for children, and this is assessed to be the permanence option that is most suitable to meet their presenting needs. Children's needs are always placed at the centre of their care planning.

A child's identity will be supported, which will include helping them understand their plan of adoption in a way they are best able to understand, providing a life story book and a later life letter. Life story books will include balanced information about a child/ren's parent(s) within a strength-based model of practice.

Support to Birth Parent(s) and Relative(s)

Information is given to birth parents about this service at an early point in the permanency planning process. Birth parents and relatives have access to independent support and counselling if the Court agrees a plan of adoption.

Intercountry Adoption

For families who reside in the Hampshire area (excluding the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton), there is a service level agreement with the Inter-Country Adoption Centre, a registered voluntary adoption agency, to assess, train and prepare those who are seeking to adopt a child/ren from overseas. However, Adopt South (on behalf of Hampshire Adoption Agency) retains some responsibility for child/ren entering the country from Non-Hague Convention countries who require their overseas adoption to be ratified within UK legislation.

Ofsted

Statutory Children Adoption work remains subject to inspection by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) as they remain a Statutory Local Authority function of Hampshire Children's Services.

Inspection is the main way Ofsted check the quality of services for children and young people. The purpose of inspections is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government, of the quality and standard of the service provided.

Ofsted can be contacted to ask more about their inspection of Children's Services, make a complaint or raise a concern about a service that Ofsted inspects or regulates, or inspection reports can be viewed online.

Details are:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231; e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk; website: www.ofsted.gov.uk



The Adoption Support Team provides support for adoptive families. Adopt South provides a range of support services to the child/ren and to adoptive parents and siblings as and when required. The team supports families by understanding their needs by completing an Adoption Support Needs Assessment (ASNA).

The adoption support needs of a child are initially considered before they are linked to prospective adopter(s). Each child who is placed through Adopt South will have what is called an Adoption Support Plan. This plan will outline a number of agreed tasks for individual agencies such as Education, Health and the GP. It will reference the details about keeping in touch with birth families and expectations about how it could be managed in the future. There will be details about the life story work that has been completed. As part of the provision of adoption support to an individual family, it is crucial that the child's voice is heard, and their identity promoted.

An Adoption Support Plan is a document which will change over time and should be regularly reviewed throughout a child's life, until they are 18 years old.

Adopt South is committed to providing a range of services to adoptive families to support the child's journey and to sign post the parent(s) to other services when the needs are beyond those that can be addressed via Adoption Support.

Adopt South considers the following areas to be priorities:

- Promoting the best outcomes for children and young people
- Hearing the voice of the child
- Supporting therapeutic parenting skills
- Supporting and sustaining attachments
- Support around identity, life story and talking about adoption
- Support around sensory and emotional regulation
- Building support networks for adoptive parents via informal events, and a formal peer mentor service
- Promoting Children and Young People's identity and support them to understand their relationships with those people who are most important to them.

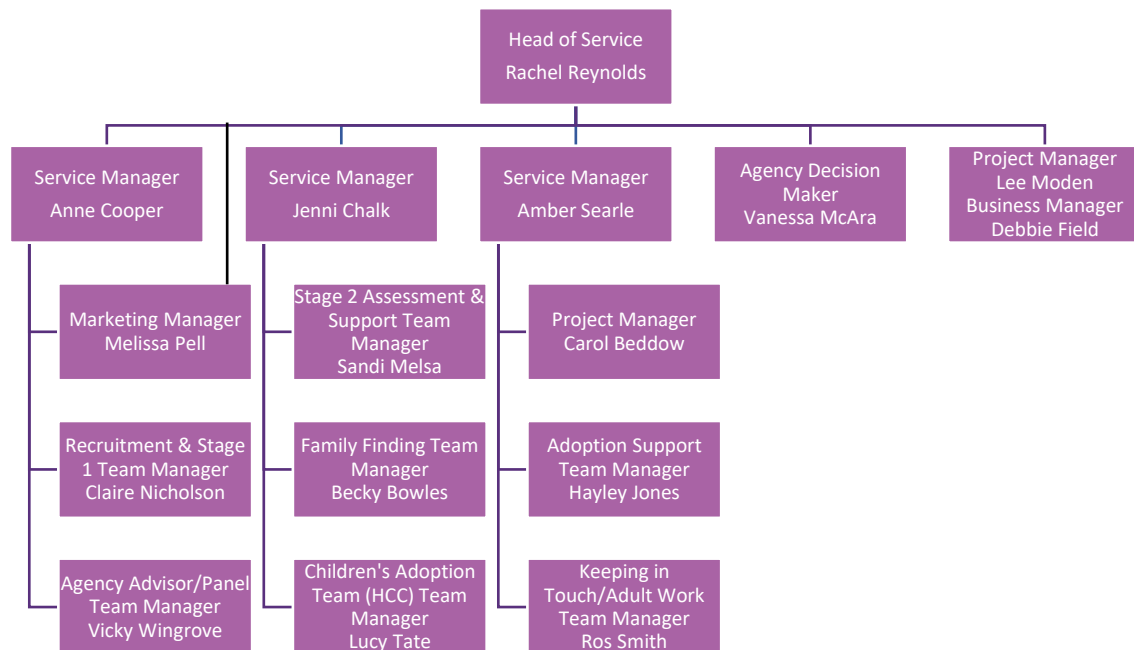
Adopt South is committed to providing flexible adoption support.



Focus Groups

It is important to us at Adopt South, that the voice of children and adults who are impacted by adoption, is used in a meaningful way to always consider how the best possible service can be delivered. We run a range of focus and feedback groups to help us make informed decisions about our service. Anyone who is interested in hearing more about these opportunities can contact Adopt South at comments.adoptsouth@hants.gov.uk. We are especially keen to hear from adopted young people and adults, and birth families.

Organisational Structure



Feedback and raising concerns

Adopt South welcomes both positive feedback and the opportunity for applicant(s) to raise their concerns. Adopt South recognises that as a learning organisation, it needs to be open and transparent about how concerns are considered and then progressed. This reflects the value base of Adopt South which seeks as an organisation to continue to develop and support good practice in the delivery of our Adoption services. Clearly not all concerns may have an accepted outcome from the applicant(s) perspective, but Adopt South is committed to ensuring that everything possible has been done to support and assist applicant(s) in order that they can understand how the matter has been explored and a decision made.

Adopt South is committed to communicating with all those who access their service in an honest, respectful and empathetic way. We welcome the opportunity to meet with people and hear their experiences when they fall below what they expect. We encourage people to talk to their allocated worker in the first instance. However, there may be times when it will be appropriate for one of the management team to meet with people to hear their experiences and feedback.

We can be contacted by email at comments.adoptsouth@hants.gov.uk or write to us at Adopt South, Glen House, Glen Road, Swanwick, SO31 7HD.

Reviewing the services we provide

This Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and updated every twelve months. The information provided meets the requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption and the related Regulations.

Version control

Reviewed and updated	Actions taken
May 2023	Full update

