



Adoption & Permanency

Statement of Purpose

November 2019



ADOPTION AGENCY STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE AGENCY

Formerly known as National Children's homes and NCH, Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson, a Methodist Minister, founded Action for Children in 1869. Since then, the charity has developed and grown in response to the changing needs of children, young people and families and in line with the best practice of the day. Today, Action for Children is one of the leading UK providers of family and community centres, children's services in rural areas, services for disabled children and their families, and services for young people leaving care. We provide services in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We are also proud to have a working partnership for almost 150 years with the Methodist Church.

Although Action for Children continues to benefit from the support of the Methodist Church, we positively welcome staff and volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and religions who share Stephenson's vision of serving the most vulnerable children, whoever they may be. We acknowledge and celebrate this diversity.

Action for Children has been an approved Adoption Agency since 1926; the Adoption Agency's Statement of Purpose is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children, through the practice of finding adoption placements and providing support to adoptive families. In the Action for Children Adoption Service, there are three adoption teams, in London Bristol and the Midlands.

We are passionate about finding families for children who cannot grow up with their birth family. In fact, because Action for Children was one of the first approved adoption agencies, we are experts at it.

It is no surprise, then, that our adoption services have made a positive difference to the lives of thousands of children, young people and their families. We plan to continue to do so for future generations of children and young people who need an adoptive family.

We find adoptive families for children of all ethnic backgrounds and ages, children with a disability or developmental uncertainty, brother and sister groups of all ages and ethnicities and single children.

We seek to recruit the widest range of adopters to meet the varied needs of the children waiting, welcoming applications from all members of society, including married and unmarried couples, couples in civil partnerships, single applicants, gay and lesbian applicants either as couples or single and applicants with disabilities. The key criteria being that people are able and willing to make a lifelong commitment to meet the physical and emotional needs of the children requiring an adoptive placement in an environment which will ensure they can grow up in a safe, stable environment which will enable them to reach their full potential.



The Agency also fulfils requirements under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, to provide services for adults who have been placed for adoption and, offers a full range of adoption support services to both children in placement and adoptive parents. We also provide training for adopters both pre and post placement and offer informal and formal support networks.

Action for Children Adoption works within the framework of adoption legislation, guidance and best practice. The strategic priorities of the Adoption Agency are the same as the strategic priorities for the whole of Action for Children:

- We will make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people and ensure all our decisions and actions are governed by this imperative
- We will maximise our opportunities to increase support to the most vulnerable children and young people
- We will continually improve Action for Children's efficiency, effectiveness and long term security

We have a respected and highly skilled workforce who all have considerable experience in adoption and who are constantly striving to maintain the high standards of work for which Action for Children is noted.

Please find the address and contact details of Action for Children's head office and the three regional offices.

Head Office:
Action for Children
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford
WD18 8AG
Direct line: 01923 361 599
Mobile: 07841939963
www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Adoption and Permanency Service Midlands
Wheatfield Close
Smith's Wood
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B36 0QP
Telephone 0121 770 0591
Fax 0121 779 7025
E-Mail adoption.mids@actionforchildren.org.uk



Adoption and Permanency Service London
231 Camberwell New Road
London
SE5 0TH
Telephone 020 7703 6400
E-Mail mosaic@actionforchildren.org.uk

Adoption and Permanency Service South West
Horner Court,
637 Gloucester Road
Horfield
Bristol
Somerset
BS7 0BJ
Telephone 01179 58 0158
Fax 01179 512 470
E-Mail swaafp@actionforchildren.org.uk

Each of the projects provides services across approximately a 50-mile radius or within around one hour travel of their office base in order to ensure that service user needs can be easily met. They are each involved in recruiting adopters and supporting the placements of children from all areas of the UK.

The teams deliver a child centred service, which encompasses recognition of racial, cultural, linguistic and religious heritage. The service is aimed at meeting the needs of children for whom local authorities have difficulty in identifying adoptive families. Recruitment is therefore targeted at those who are able to meet the needs of children of all ages but in particular children over three years of age, groups of brothers and sisters, children with disabilities / complex needs or circumstances and those from Black, Asian and mixed parentage backgrounds.

The service aims to provide secure and successful placements with safe families of the highest calibre. Experienced staff provide a prompt and informative response to all enquirers, including a duty system, which deals with all incoming enquiries. Information events inviting potential enquiries to come and find out about the whole adoption process. The stage 1 and stage 2 training and assessment process is thorough and rigorous. Timescales are set in line with the national minimum standards. Approved adopters receive high levels of support from their allocated social worker, are invited to social events and to attend on-going training sessions.

Although this is primarily a service that is used by adults, the needs of the children and young people remain paramount at all times.

Our adoption support service is available to all adoptive families, pre and post-placement and post adoption. We can also offer a service to local authorities to undertake work with adoptive families; this can be either as a contracted service or in the form of specific pieces of work.

There are dedicated Social Workers who provide our Access to Records Service. Each project provides an initial duty service to respond to enquiries including those from people wishing to access their Adoption and Care Records.



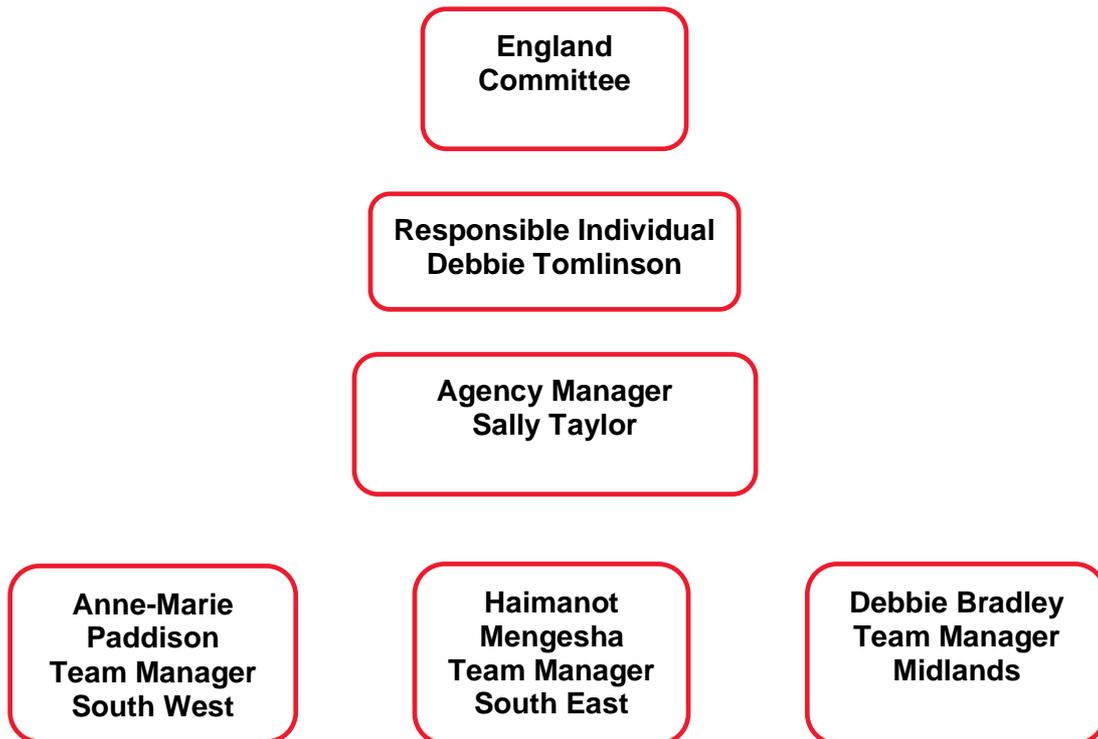
The aim of the teams are:-

- To meet the needs of children through the provision of high quality adoptive families who can offer them a positive experience of family life.
- To improve the life chances of children through adoption and enable them to reach their full potential.
- To ensure that all families help children to achieve a healthy, safe lifestyle, to enjoy every opportunity to reach their full potential so that they may grow up to make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.
- To address the unmet needs of Local Authorities for:
 - Children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds
 - Brothers and sisters
 - Children with a disability
 - Children of all ages and ethnicities, but particularly those over the age of four
 - Children with complex backgrounds
- To provide support services to the children and their adoptive families.
- To provide both post adoption and adoption record access/counselling to people adopted through or cared for by Action for Children in the past
- To offer a service that is inclusive, anti-discriminatory and values diversity.
- To continually strive to improve ways of attracting potential adoptive families

Action for Children Adoption and Permanency projects work closely with Local Authorities, and are members of various National Organisations including the CVAA, CoramBAAF and Adoption UK



THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE AGENCY



MANAGEMENT OF AGENCY

The Adoption Agency is part of the wider Action for Children organisational structure. The Responsible Individual is an Operational Director in Children's Placement Services. The Agency Manager is the Children's Placement Manager who meets monthly with the Team Managers. This group works actively to develop and review the Adoption Agency's Business and Marketing plans, monitors Key Performance indicators and finance and considers new developments, both internally and externally. The Children's Placement Manager meets regularly with the managers of the other family placement services to monitor and review Action for Children Standards to ensure consistency and high quality. The group also explores and reviews current practice with the teams and continually seeks to improve practice locally and nationally. Accountability is to the England Committee. The Committee is made up of Action for Children Trustees and other representatives.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE ADOPTION AGENCY'S WORK

The Adoption Agency is registered with and continually monitored by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). Copies of Inspection reports are available on request or available on the Ofsted website. There are also internal auditing systems in place.



The England Committee provides the accountable link between the Agency and Action for Children Trustees. The reporting arrangements specify that reports should be received at quarterly intervals, with the attendance of the Responsible Individual and/or Adoption Agency manager at no less than 6 monthly intervals.

Action for Children has an agency service plan, which is reviewed annually. The Adoption management team keeps the Service Plan under constant review and key indicators are monitored by Action for Children executive management team on a quarterly basis.

Each Team Manager receives regular supervision from the Adoption Services Manager, who in turn receives supervision from the Responsible Individual. All staff members receive regular supervision and annual appraisal. There is an Agency Standard for recording supervision and for performance management.

Each Team Manager ensures quality in service delivery against Action for Children policies and procedures, copies of which are available on request and by quarterly monitoring of the service.

The Adoption Agency collects comprehensive management information on activities in the Adoption process, e.g. number of enquiries from prospective adopters, time taken to complete an assessment, characteristics of the Adoption Panel and of children placed in order to monitor and target more effectively the families we need to recruit to meet the needs of children, and the service we provide to adopters. Consumer satisfaction forms are also collected from adopters and Local Authority partners who also inform us about the quality of our services and any adjustments we may need to make to improve them. Feedback from the Panel provided by the Chair is incorporated into the 6 monthly Reports.

RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS OF THE REGISTERED PROVIDER, THE RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL AND THE AGENCY MANAGER

Responsible Individual:

Debbie Tomlinson – Head of Fostering & Adoption England

Diploma in Social Work (2004) & BA in Social Work (2006).

Agency Manager:

Sally Taylor – Children’s Placement Manager

Diploma in Social Work, Social Work Degree, GNVQ level 3 in Health and Social Care, A1 NVQ assessor award. Post Graduate Diploma in Play Therapy Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care & Children’s & Young People’s Services CYP Management



THE CONDITIONS IN FORCE IN RELATION TO THE REGISTRATION OF THE REGISTERED PROVIDER UNDER PART 11 OF THE ACT

- 1) Domestic adoption services (DA)
- 2) Adoption support services for children/adults/children and adults
- 3) Birth records counselling
- 4) Intermediary services.

The Adoption Agency must only operate from the branches named (Midlands, South East and South West)

The Agency is registered as an Adoption Support Agency under the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, specifically to provide access to records

Branch Registration Numbers: SCO51421 (Midlands)
 SCO51841 (London)
 SCO51816 (South West)

The Relevant Qualifications of the Team Managers are shown below

Adoption & Permanency Midlands Team Manager: Debbie Bradley - NNEB, DPSW (CSS) PQ, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care & Children's & Young People's Services CYP Management

Adoption & Permanency South West Team Manager: Ann-Marie Paddison - BSc(Hons) Social Work, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care & Children's & Young People's Services CYP Management

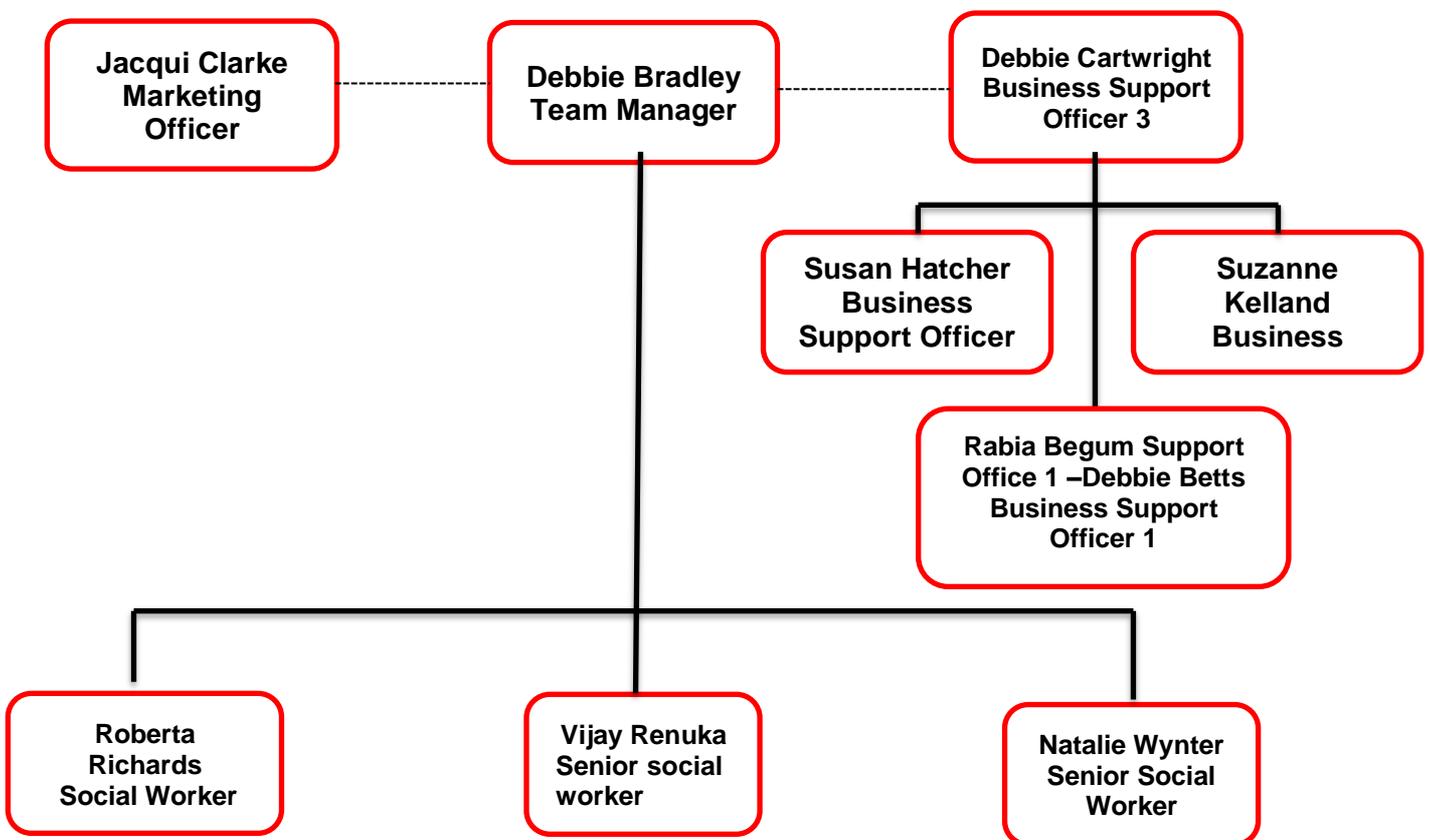
Adoption & Permanency London Team Manager: Haimanot Mengesha - BA Psychology, MA Community Care & MSc Social Psychology, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care & Children's & Young People's Services CYP Management



The Staff working for the purposes of the agency at each project are shown in the tables below

ADOPTION & PERMANENCY MIDLANDS

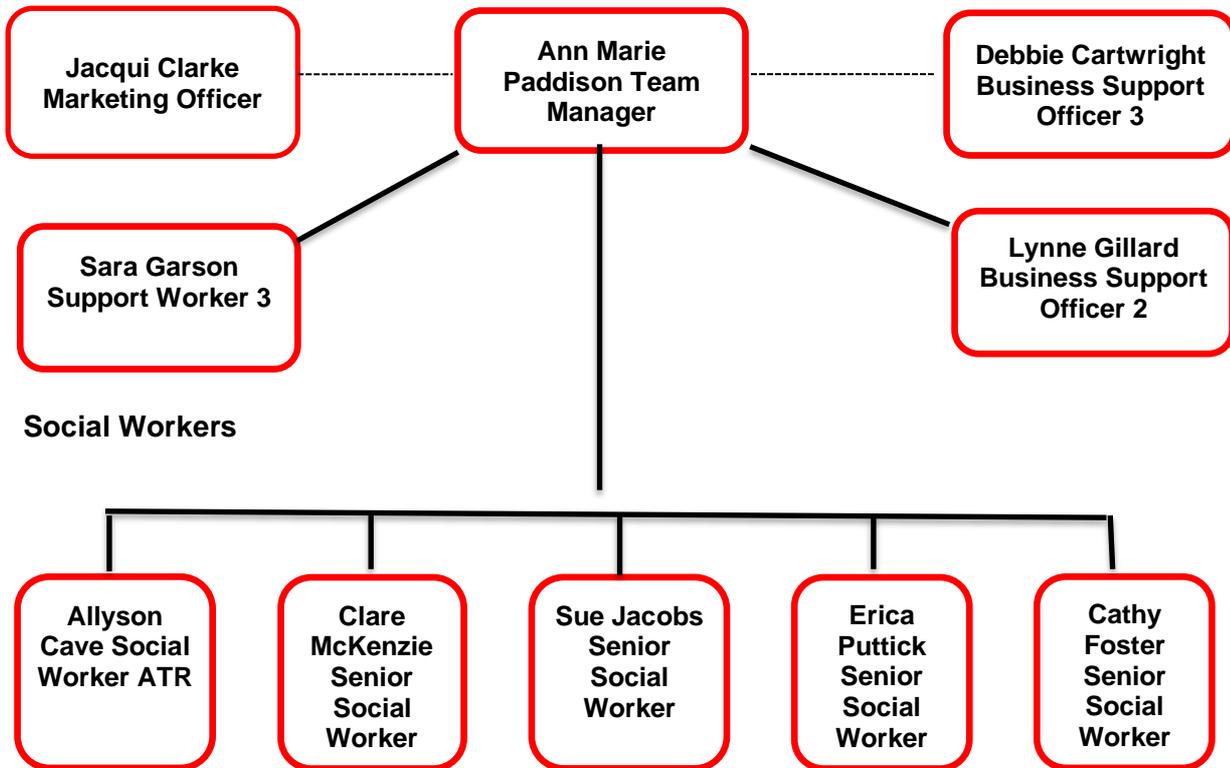
DETAILS CORRECT AS AT: April 2019





ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY SOUTH WEST

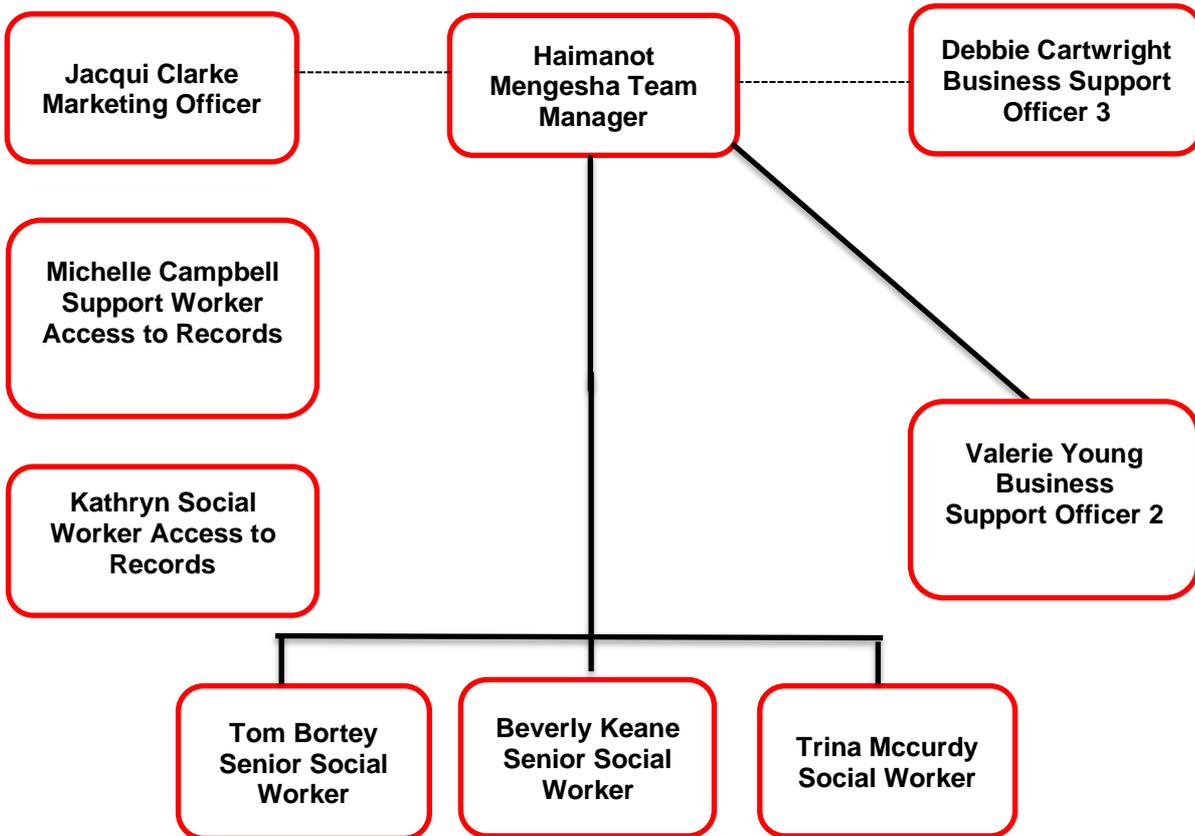
DETAILS CORRECT AS AT: April 2019





ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY SOUTH EAST

DETAILS CORRECT AS AT: April 2019





THE PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING, APPROVING AND SUPPORTING PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

The Adoption Agency's Marketing Officer facilitates the recruitment of appropriate families from local communities. Recruitment is mainly via our website, targeted local newspapers and Social Media campaigns. Adoptive families also help with recruitment via their involvement at training events and by participating in media interviews. There is a marketing strategy in place to ensure recruitment is targeted and effective.

Families come from a variety of backgrounds and bring to the task a myriad of skills and experiences. Applicants undergo a vigorous assessment. The usual statutory checks are carried out, e.g. DBS and health checks; families provide the names of at least three referees, one of whom is a family member; all of whom are interviewed by a social worker. Additional checks are undertaken where necessary.

Assessments are carried out through the 2-stage assessment process. Action for Children aim to take 2 months to complete Stage 1, and 4 months to complete Stage 2 with a break of up to 6 months between if required. Assessments are based on work carried out by the social worker assigned to the family and the family themselves, who participate fully in the completion of the Coram BAAF PAR (Prospective Adopter Report) form.

We have a central adoption panel which meets monthly and panel members are recruited to a Central List. Action for Children has always recognised the importance of involving adopters at each stage of the process, and was one of the first Adoption agencies to invite adopters to attend panel in 1995.

The adoption panel recommends that an applicant is suitable to adopt or not suitable to adopt. The final decision is made by the agency decision maker – a senior Manager within Action for Children. If the decision is that an applicant(s) is not suitable to adopt, information regarding the right to make representation or request consideration by the Independent Review Mechanism is given.

Upon approval the assigned social worker supports the family through the process of identifying a child, introductions, placement and through to adoption of the child. To facilitate effective matching with children we prepare and circulate adopter's profiles and share them with local authorities and consortiums. They are encouraged and supported to attend recruitment exchange days. These are held by the local authorities and they profile the children they are seeking to recruit families for. Also activity days, these events are also held by the local authorities and are an opportunity for adopters to meet the children those authorities consider are the most complex and /or difficult to find families for.

Families are offered post adoption support at their request. A request for adoption support will be followed by an initial assessment that will identify what support/intervention is required. Where appropriate families will be signposted to support services from other agencies, and assisted to access a full assessment of adoption support needs from the relevant Local Authority.

Full details of the Post Adoption Services available can be found in our Adopters' Information Pack.



Action for Children Adoption Panel

ADOPTION & PERMANENCY PANEL MEMBERS

Panel Member	Date of Appointment
Sally Heaven Richards Panel Chair	October 2017
Julie Cooke Panel Chair	September 2017
Aminah Sumpton (Independent Vice Panel Chair)	September 2017
Kate Antill (Independent Foster Carer & Adoptive Parent)	September 2017
Vijay Renuka (Action for Children Social Worker)	October 2017
Bev Keane Independent (Action for Children Social Worker)	September 2017
Erica Puttick (Action for Children Social Worker)	September 2017
David Gibbs (Independent Adopter & Foster Carer)	September 2017
Lynne Hudspith (Independent- Early Years)	January 2019
Louise Ford (Independent - Adopter)	September 2017
Sian McVeigh (Independent - Adopter)	September 2017
Paulette Blake (Independent - Adopter)	September 2017
Shruti Tanna	September 2019
Joy Hopgood-Gravett (Independent- Adopter)	May 2019
Stacey Burnett Agency Decision Maker	September 2017
Advisers on Panel	Date of Appointment
Debbie Bradley Panel Adviser	September 2017
Ryminster Medical Services - Medical Adviser	April 2019

Legal advice is obtained from Coram BAAF

A SUMMARY OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Action for Children provides information that sets out the complaints procedure clearly. It is aimed at informing both adults and children about how to make a complaint or comment on the service. If someone wishes to make a complaint about any individual or service offered by Action for Children they are encouraged to speak to any member of staff or the Team Manager. If individuals are not comfortable with this other options are available.

We will make sure their complaint is looked into fully by the team and/or by a local manager. They will be listened to and what they say will be taken seriously. We will tell them what will be done about their complaint and we will put it in writing.



If they are not happy with the way their complaint is dealt with at any point they can ask for an independent investigation by someone who does not work within the service. They can also ask for someone to support them in this process.

We aim to deal with any complaints in 28 days

If they are a child or a young person

- They have the right to an “advocate”, a person who will help and support you with their complaint.
- They can talk to and meet with the Complaints Manager or another senior manager if they wish.
- If they are not happy after the investigation, they have the right to ask for Action for Children to look at the complaint again.
- If they prefer to make their complaint to the Registration Authority (Ofsted), contact details are provided.

Full details of our complaints procedures can be found on the link below.

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/10286/service-user-info-complaints.docx>

The Action for Children Complaints procedure does not apply to Action for Children staff, volunteers or supporters, other professionals, foster carers, confidential family mediation sessions. There are other more appropriate routes for these cases.

THE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY IS:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD Enquiries number 0300 123 1231 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk