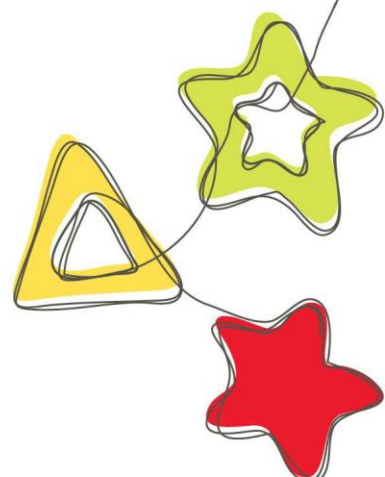


# Adoption & Permanency South West Statement of Purpose



**September 2016**

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## 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 continue to support governments and local partnership agencies, including the Methodist church in Southern Africa, Belize and Zimbabwe.

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, including a specialist team in London primarily focusses on the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic children.

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

It's no surprise, then, that our adoption services have made a positive difference to the lives of thousands of children, young people and their families. And we'll make sure they continue to do so for future generations of children and young people who need a new home.

We find adoptive families for children of all ethnic backgrounds and ages including children from Asian, African- Caribbean, African and mixed-parentage backgrounds, 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 we are seeking to place, in an environment which will ensure they can grow up in a safe, stable environment which will enable them to reach their full potential.

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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 well-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.

## **ADOPTION & PERMANENCY South West**

Action for Children Adoption & Permanency South West is based in Bristol and covers a 50 mile radius of our base. The team recruits adopters from this region and places children from all areas of the UK.

The team delivers 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 aged four years and above, groups of brothers and sisters, children with disabilities / complex needs or circumstances and those from Black, Asian and mixed parentage backgrounds.

The team aims to provide secure and successful placements with safe alternative families. Experienced staff provides a prompt and informative response to all enquirers, including open events, preparation courses and a thorough and full assessment and review process. Timescales are in line with the national minimum standards. Approved adopters receive high levels of support from their allocated social worker, invitations to twice-yearly social events, monthly adopter support group meetings and on-going training sessions.

At all times the needs of the children to be placed or already in placement remain paramount.

Our adoption support service is available to Action for Children adoptive families throughout their adoption experience – pre and post-placement and post adoption.

# Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose



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The aim of the South West Team is:-

- 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 achieve a healthy, safe lifestyle. To enjoy every opportunity to reach their full potential in order that they may make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being;
- To address the unmet need for families for children who:
  - Are from Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds
  - Are brothers and sisters
  - Have disabilities
  - Are of school age
  - Have complex backgrounds
- To provide support services to adoptive families and children;
- To offer a service that is inclusive, anti-discriminatory and values diversity;
- To continually strive to improve ways of attracting adoptive families;
- To provide, where requested, a service to meet the needs of birth families;
- To work collaboratively with other VAA's and Local Authorities in the region to establish ways in which partnership working can benefit adoptive families and children.

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

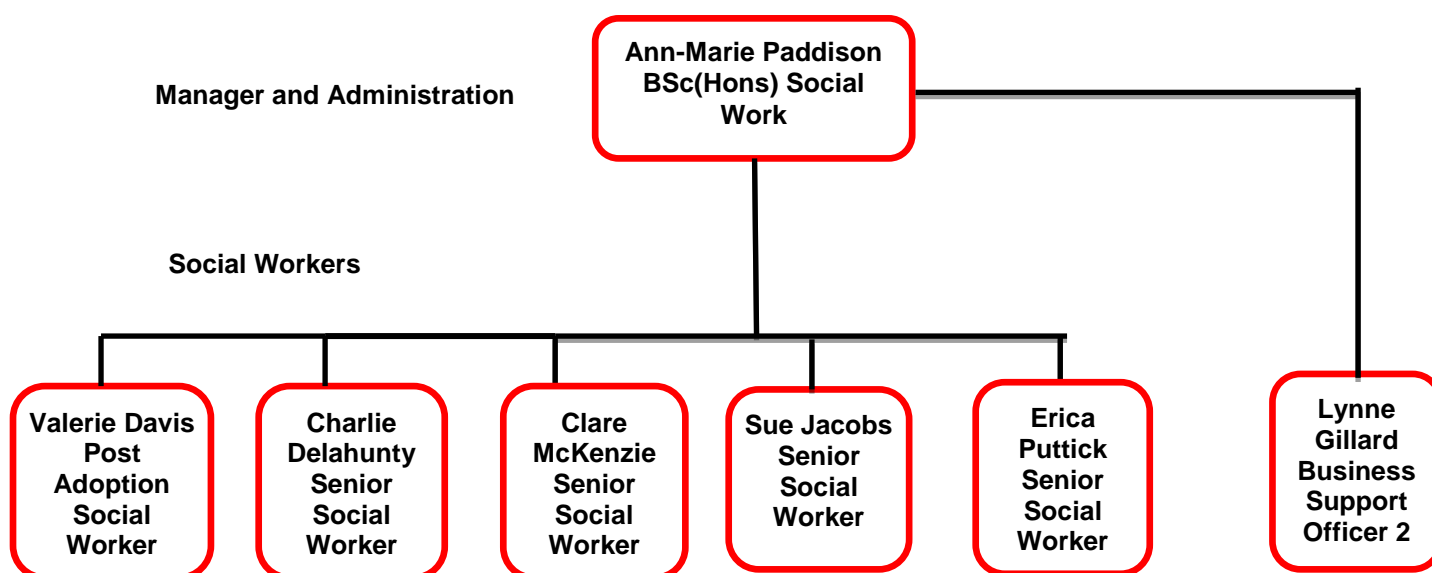
### **Responsible Individual:**

John Downing  
BA (Hons) History, Diploma in Career Guidance, NVQ Level 5 Management, Professional Certificate in Coaching.

Action for Children  
3 The Boulevard  
Ascot Road  
Watford  
Hertfordshire  
WD18 8AG



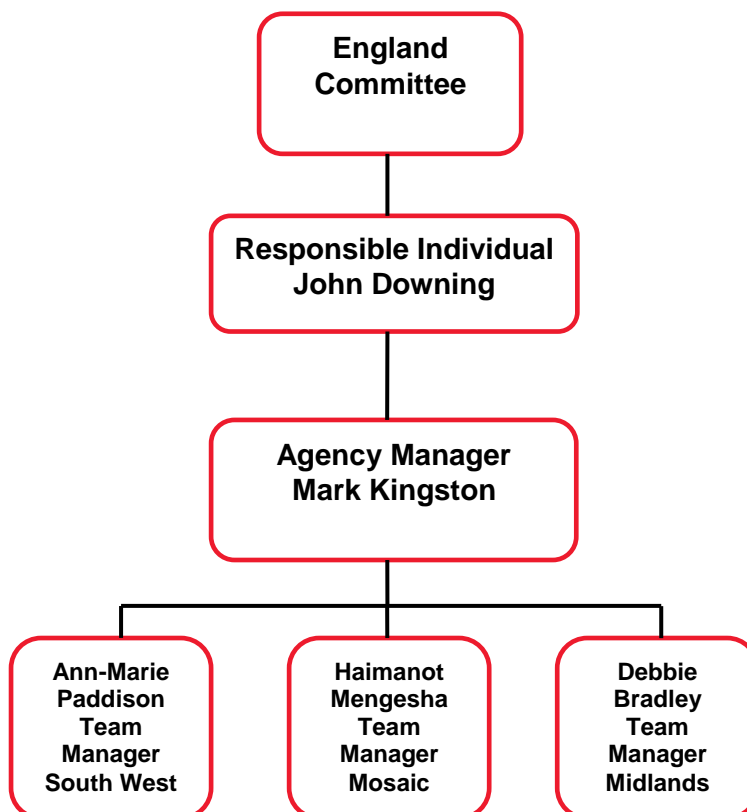
## ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY SOUTH WEST STAFFING STRUCTURE



## ADOPTION & PERMANENCY SOUTH WEST PANEL MEMBERS

Name of Panel Member	Date of Appointment
Julie Cooke- Panel Chair	4 January 2009
Ann-Marie Paddison - Panel Advisor	June 2015
Tom Pyne- Vice-Chair/Independent	12 June 2008
Louise Ford – Independent	17 August 2011
Danielle Lock – Independent	6 March 2013
Paulette Blake – Independent	20 February 2013
Sian McVeigh	1 April 2016
Howard Llewellyn	22 July 2016
Dr Corinne Rees - Medical Adviser	20 March 2013
Tom Sharkey - Legal Advisor	21 August 2011
Brigitte Gater – Agency Decision Maker	September 2012

## 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 Head of Adoption. The Head of Adoption and Team Managers meet monthly. 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 Head of Adoption meets regularly with Children's Placement Managers across the family placement service 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 Officer 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) and Branches are Inspected

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Individually. 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 Business plan which is reviewed annually. The Business Plan is kept under constant review by the Adoption Service Delivery Team and key indicators are monitored by Action for Children executive management team on a quarterly basis.

Each Branch Manager receives regular supervision from the Head of Adoption, 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 Branch 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 via the Chair is incorporated into the 6 monthly Reports.

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

The Adoption Agency has dedicated Marketing Officer to help facilitate the recruitment of appropriate families from local communities. Recruitment is mainly via our website, radio, targeted local newspapers and campaigns. Adoptive families also help with recruitment via their workplace/community newsletters 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. police 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 PAR (Prospective Adopter Report) form.



Each Branch arranges a monthly panel 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, not suitable to adopt, or defers the application giving clear explanations. 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. Approved families are automatically added to the National Adoption Register and local Consortiums. They are encouraged and supported to attend recruitment open events and Baaf activity days.

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 comprehensive Adopters' Information Pack which is available from individual teams. Branch Managers are happy to speak to any enquirers and provide them with additional information.

## **A SUMMARY OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Action for Children provides an illustrated coloured brochure 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 Branch Manager. If individuals are not comfortable with this other options are available.

We will make sure your complaint is looked into fully by the team and/or by another manager. You will be listened to and what you say will be taken seriously. We will tell you what will be done about your complaint and we will put it in writing.

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

We aim to deal with any complaints in 28 days.

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If you are a child or a young person:

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

For further information, contact the Complaints Manager at Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG. If you wish to send any confidential information by mail, please use registered post.”

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.

## **9. THE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY IS:**

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Enquiries number 0300 123 1231

[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)