

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency

Leicester City
Annual Report 2021/22 and Statement of Purpose

CYPE Scrutiny Commission: 25 October 2022

Lead director: Caroline Tote



Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service Corporate Parenting
- Author contact details: 0116 454 1657
- Report version number: v1

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Leicester City Adoption Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration.
- 1.2. The report identifies the benefits of collaborative working that are emerging through the regional arrangements for adoption including marketing, matching children for adoption and assessment and training of potential adopters regionally which is led by the city. The RAA has enabled the Local Authority to reach more potential adopters at an earlier stage and provided access to shared information on adoption resulting in an enhanced and more cost-effective service.
- 1.3. The Adoption Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our looked after children, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home.
- 1.4. The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- 1.5. The report identifies 31 children were placed in adoptive homes over the last year, and 30 children were matched to prospective adopters. This was achieved despite the restrictions on visiting imposed by national lockdowns impacting on timescales. Of those 31 children placed, 60% were placed with

FAL Adopters showing the increasing impact of the Regional Adoption Agency.

- 1.6. A total of 44 Adoption Orders were made this year reflecting our ability to match and place children during covid. Some of our children who had a plan for adoption waited for longer for the formal adoption order to be made by the courts, resulting in a higher annual figure for adoption than the previous year.
- 1.7. Of those 44 children adopted, 25% were aged 5 or above which is an increase on the previous year, and 23% had diverse heritages from African, African-Caribbean, Asian and mixed groups. 30% of our adopted children were part of a sibling group, which is the same as the previous year. This is encouraging for older children and siblings some of whom are historically more difficult to place.
- 1.8. There is no comparative data for the Regional Adoption Agency at present whilst the new arrangements are embedded. As regional comparisons are complicated by the different configuration of RAA arrangements nationally, the proposal is to develop enhanced local monthly data and performance for FAL.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 This report is for information only and the Executive are asked to note and approve the Annual Report 2021-2022 and Statement of Purpose for 2022-3.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 The report has been prepared in consultation with the Service Manager for the Adoption Service and shared with relevant stakeholders in the Adoption Team and Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team. The report will proceed to Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny.

The report contains some direct quotations from carers and adoptive parents who have been supported by the Adoption Service over the past year.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1 This is a covering report for the attached Adoption Service Annual Report 2021/22 and Statement of Purpose 2022/23.

5. Detailed report

5.1 Please refer to the attached main report. If you have any questions about the information contained in this Annual Report or the Statement of Purpose, please contact the adoption team on 0116 454 4550.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Martin Judson, Head of Finance
Adult Services / Education and Children's Services
Tel 37 4101

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

Pretty Patel, Head of Law
Tel 37 1457

6.3 Equalities implications

6.3.1 The equality act expects us to show due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. Our public sector duty expects us to demonstrate how we do this and included within this is how we undertake decisions, what information we are informed by and what

impacts we have taken into consideration to address needs now and in the future.

- 6.3.2 The aims, objectives and services provided by the Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Leicester City Adoption Service in the annual report refer to the support provided to and outcomes of children across all protected characteristics.
- 6.3.3 The service advances equality of opportunity by ensuring that prospective adopters understand the relevance and importance of a young person's choice by ensuring that Children and young people's ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief and language is fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made about them and that the needs of disabled children are fully recognised and considered when decisions are made.
- 6.3.4 The service also advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations by encouraging and publicising adoption services to enable all members of the community to consider adoption as a positive option and to recruit from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet children's individual needs and by recruiting adopters who will respect a child's birth and family origins and who will bring up an adopted child knowing and understanding their origins. The commitment to providing Life Story Books and Later Life Letters of a high quality for adopted children also helps to ensure this happens.
- 6.3.5 In addition, the service helps to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by recruiting adopters who will respect the diverse cultures and lifestyles within society and who will bring up children who will respect these differences.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officers
Tel 37 4175

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

6.4.1 There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Environment Team
Tel 37 2284

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6.5.1 None

7. Background information and other papers:

7.1 Adoption Service Annual Statement of Purpose 2022/ 2023

8. Summary of appendices:

8.1 None

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

9.1 No

10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

10.1 No

**Family Adoption Links
Regional Adoption Agency
Leicester City
Annual Report 2021-2022**



Background

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of Leicester City's Adoption Service activity and performance, as part of Family Adoption Links, from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

We are also required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people, and adopters.

The Adoption Annual Report and the Statement of Purpose are available to all staff, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents, and other professionals in a variety of formats. You can find the most up to date copy on our website

www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

Summary

Adoption services are essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children who are looked after, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home.

The primary aim is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

Adopters will become the permanent family for a child who cannot, for whatever reason, return home. They will take on all the rights and responsibilities of a birth parent. They will give the child stability, love, and security throughout their childhood and beyond.

The service supports our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched families. Our aim for children who are cared for is that they will have a clear understanding of why they are looked after by the local authority, be given an opportunity to make sense of their experiences; knowing who is there to support them to achieve their goals and lead successful lives.

We are committed to supporting our adoption families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about adoption services and the support offered can be found on the website [About Adoption | Family Adoption Links](#)

If you have any questions about the information contained in this Annual Report or the Statement of Purpose, please contact the adoption team on 0116 454 4550.

Family Adoption Links Adoption Agency

The government's Education and Adoption Act (2016) set out expectations for adoption services through the establishment of regional adoption agencies (RAA). By the end of 2020 every local authority was expected to become part of a RAA.

Following discussions with East Midlands authorities, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire and Leicester City agreed on an aligned partnership model and this was further strengthened by the formal inclusion of North Lincolnshire Council in early 2020 and Northamptonshire Children's Trust in January 2022.

It was agreed that Lincolnshire County Council would become lead authority for the RAA and the partnership was launched in October 2020 under the banner of "Family Adoption Links".

The RAA oversees several key areas of adoption provision including the recruitment of adopters, assessment and training, matching and placement of children along with development and coordination of post adoption support services. The delivery of services to children and adopters remains integrated into broader Childrens services within each Authority.

The strategic direction and development of the partnership is invested in the Board which comprises:

Jane Moore, Director of Children's Services, Leicestershire County Council

Janice Spencer, Assistant Director, Lincolnshire County Council

Sharon Cooke, Assistant Director, Leicestershire County Council

Caroline Tote, Assistant Director, Leicester City Council

Paul Cowling, Service Lead, North Lincolnshire

Emma Sweeney, Head of Service, Rutland Council

Cornelia Andrecut, Director, Northamptonshire Children's Trust

The partnership has a strategic Vision that states:

"We're a dynamic regional partnership aimed at delivering excellence in every aspect of adoption.

We strive to ensure the best possible match for children and adoptive parents and develop a comprehensive range of support services to ensure a positive adoption journey.

We seek to develop the widest pool of professionals who engage in innovative and ground-breaking new adoption practices".

A pooled budget was created within the RAA to fund central hub staffing costs including the RAA Head of Service post, marketing officer, data analyst and business support officer. All of these were in post by April 2021. The provision of the posts was funded by equal contributions from all partnership Authorities. This has augmented the central Government grant allocation and provided firm staffing foundations for the first three years of operation. The intention is that the partnership will deliver a range of financial benefits, including better value for money through economies of scale and a decrease in the number of children requiring specialist, intensive and costly placements or services.

The combined RAA Head of Service post governs the management and decision-making of those Local Authority budgets in conjunction with the Adoption Managers that hold responsibility for the budgets locally. This ensures consistency in decision-making and assists

with regional improvements, identifies areas where practice needs to be aligned and future efficiencies could be identified.

Progress

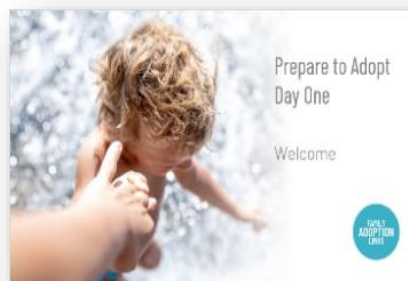
The Partnership has developed the “Family Adoption Links” regional brand. This regional brand reflects the vision, mission, values and strategic outcomes of the Partnership.

The Partnership initially appointed an interim Regional Head of Service responsible for the delivery of the RAA, and a temporary Head of Service has been in post on a part-time basis since May 2021. The Regional Head of Service has a single line of accountability to the Management Board and undertakes a range of key functions in conjunction with Service leads across the partnership.

The operational focus for the first full year of operation has been to develop five core pillars as the foundations for effective partnership working. The emphasis on these has been successful in developing collaboration in both strategy and operational delivery.

Marketing and Branding

The partnership has been successfully re-branded with a new logo, a suite of corporate colours and fonts, imagery that reflects the children we are family finding for and easy to use corporate guidelines to help all members of the partnership produce visually appealing work. Each adoption service has been re-named as Family Adoption Links Location creating consistency across the partnership and the fresh new logos ensure instant brand recognition. Many guides and presentations have been created in the new style:



Website

A new website has been created to maximise the recruitment and support activities for the partnership. Reflecting the dynamic and innovative new branding, the new site is designed to be engaging and user-friendly empowering potential adopters and adopters at every stage of their journey.

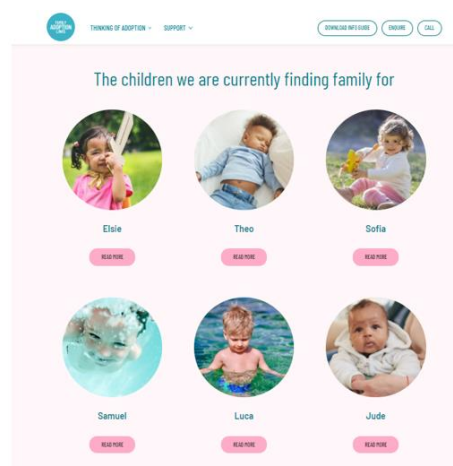
By including the 'You Can Adopt' Information guides, a 'You Can Adopt' Information video and the ability to book onto our 'You Can', Adoption Information events at any time, we are able to deliver a better response to enquiries, maximise event attendance and reduce administration time.

Featuring full editorial control, the website is more flexible and adaptable with information and uses storytelling and testimonials to give potential adopters confidence. The most popular page is the 'The children who need adopting' section receiving 11.58% of the total website traffic over the last 5 months.

The website will also serve as platform for delivering the professional, consistent and outstanding adoption support services we seek to provide as a partnership and become a single point of contact for those seeking post adoption support and training.

Social Media

Content and posts from the Family Adoption Links Facebook page was seen by 29,910 people in the last 12 months (1/4/21-1/4/22). The partner accounts of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Leicester were re-named to reflect their new identities and work is ongoing to move these accounts and their followers to the central account as soon as possible.



Adoption Information Events

By creating centralised Adoption Information Events hosted on Eventbrite, the partnership has enjoyed incredible economies of scale both in terms of time and money. The corporate presentation delivered on a rotational basis receives positive feedback from both staff and potential adopters at each event and since the events began in November, we have welcomed 139 potential adopters online.

Some of the feedback we received...

"The online event was really good, very informative and good having 2 adopters on to chat as well. Denise really seemed very passionate about her role and the team and RAA as a whole."

"We found it very informative, and I must say the topics covered were all relevant and exactly what is needed at this stage thank you."

"It was great with all the information we needed, thank you again."

Marketing and Workstreams

Marketing is fully involved in each of the partnership's workstreams from producing striking new presentations for the Assessment and Training group to creating enticing videos for priority children in the Family Finding workstream. We are committed to digitalising wherever possible to ensure the user journey is as seamless as possible. Highlights of this include...

The Family Adoption Links Lincolnshire's Adoption Support event.

Now the event is

- Publicised on 'Thrive' the adoption support newsletter
- Advertised on the support section of the website
- Linked to Eventbrite where you can choose your date and book in with all of the required information
- Guests then receive automatic email reminders to reduce no shows and ensure they have relevant information for the event
- After the event, guests receive an email with a link to a feedback form on Microsoft teams for instant feedback

'Thrive' the post adoption support newsletter

- Created and distributed via Mailchimp
- Great feedback "Thoroughly enjoying the new email newsletters from Family Adoption Links. Great read and great articles."
- Excellent performance statistics

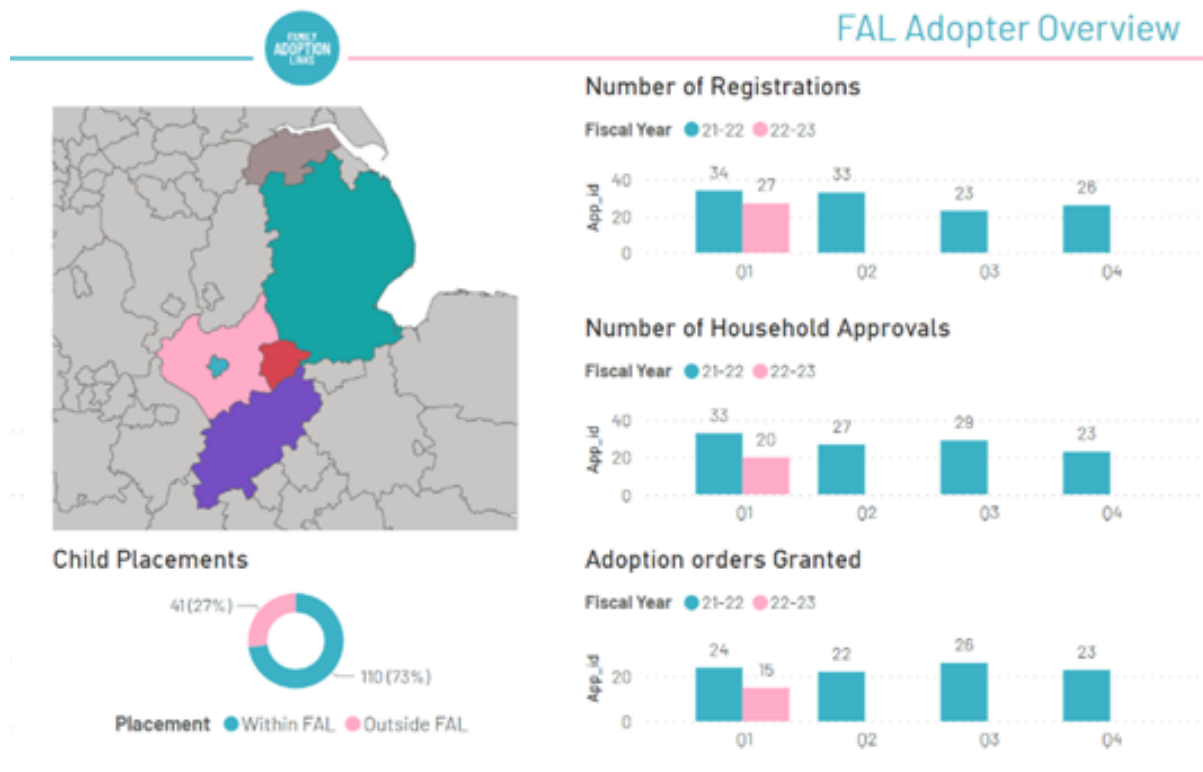
Data

The Data analyst employed centrally has worked collaboratively with partnership representatives to deliver an agreed submission to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) on a quarterly basis. Work is taking place to deliver a regional data set that will support recruitment and family finding activity. Microsoft Power BI will provide accurate adoption reporting facilities for both individual Local Authorities and the region and provides visuals that will support the presentation of adoption data for any OFSTED inspection. Work is currently taking place to facilitate the sharing of this to all partner authorities. Data is seen as key to service delivery within the partnership and our analyst contributes to the development of all work streams. By forging productive working relationships this has moved the partnership to the point where it is able to deliver the required adopter lead data in a timely fashion for the quarterly ASGLB return. Coupled with the development of the local data set, the partnership is moving towards a more consistent and timely delivery of key information which supports all adoption activity.

Performance in the first 12 months

The recruitment and approval of adoptive parents continued against the backdrop of the covid 19 pandemic. Panels continued to operate virtually, and matches have in many ways been enhanced by the advent of Teams. The court processes have sadly been subject to some

delay and as a result, the plans for some children have been delayed. Nevertheless, activity across all partners has remained strong.



- Leicester City workers successfully approved 19 adopter households over the year.
- A total of **44 Adoption Orders** were made this year for **Leicester's children**, following the covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, which had resulted in some of our children who had a plan for adoption waiting for longer for the formal adoption order to be made by the courts in 2020-21.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Adoption Orders made in year	33	22	38	27	20	44

- Over the last year 31 children were placed in adoptive homes, and 30 children were matched to prospective adopters. Despite the restrictions imposed by national lockdowns, children have continued to be matched and introduced to prospective adopters and placed in their adoptive homes. Of those 31 children placed, 60% were placed with FAL Adopters.
- As seen from the table below, of those 44 children adopted, 25% were aged 5 or above (20/21 was 12%), and 23% had diverse heritages from African, African-Caribbean, Asian and mixed groups, lower than last year where it was 35%. 30% of our adopted children were part of a sibling group, the same as the previous year.

Child characteristics:	Aged under 5 years old	Aged 5 years old and over	Female	Male	BME	Disabled	Part of sibling group	Harder to place
Number adopted in last 12 months	33	11	22	22	10	1	13	24
Number waiting with a PO...	12	2	8	6	6	0	4	9
...of which have been waiting at least 18 months since BLA	4	2	3	3	3	0	3	5

- The average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family for adopted children was 555 days in 2021-22 making the 3-year ASGLB average for 2019-22 at 512 days. The Adoption Scorecard target is 426 days and 28% of our children met this target.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Last 12 months
Leicester City	390	422	566	515	555
National	420	433	459	489	

- The average number of days between the date of the placement order to the date the child was matched to prospective adopters was 249 days in 2021-22. The Adoption Scorecard target is 121 days and 34% of our children met this target.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Last 12 months
Leicester City	154	177	131	169	249
National	171	173	190	207	

Workstream Development

The Partnership has brought together regional operational managers responsible for Adoption from each partner agency. This group demonstrates a shared purpose to deliver services for families that are locally determined but at the same time have clear links to wider local, regional and national priorities. The group meets monthly, and a service lead is allocated to core functions essential to develop a regional approach. The workstreams are Assessment and Training, Family Finding and Post adoption support.

Assessment and Training

The Assessment and Training workstream is led by Leicester City. An agreed modular approach to both pre and post approval training is in place. The content of the preparation courses has been agreed with joint delivery across the partnership commenced in 2022. In addition, the group has developed an integrated and seamless training plan to support adopters post approval. The mode of delivery has been enhanced by the development of the website which acts as a hub for online and face to face training modules. The ambition is for

all courses to be available to adopters across the partnership which should enable more rapid access and provide staff flexibilities.

Family Finding

The Family Finding workstream is led jointly by Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. The ambition of the partnership is to provide a consistent approach to family finding and ensuring that the partnership can meet the needs of most children requiring adoption. The adoption of a single approach requires practice to change for some partners and proposals for achieving a whole partnership approach will be made to the Family Adoption Links Board. The workstream has effectively developed an agreed process for the partnership and the refreshed approach to family finding will be in place in 2022. This will bring together information of all adopters and children matched within partner authorities and identify those who would benefit from a broader range of adoptive homes and importantly offer an integrated and creative opportunity to identify families for children who have additional needs and developmental complexities.

In support of the family finding model Linkmaker have been asked to set up a FAL area on their system, so that there is a 'shared area' where all the FAL children's profiles will appear and all the approved adopters are able to register, search and express interest in the children. Each of the LAs in the partnership has a representative who will attend the monthly family finding meetings, bringing with them the up-to-date position of children and adopters in their LA. In order to make sure the meetings are focussed on the children who have been the more difficult to place, and those who have been waiting the longest, a data system will track all the children, which has links to the profiles on Link Maker which will support the process and ensure that the meetings are effective. The meetings started in April 2022 and there will be ongoing monitoring of the process and the outcomes.

Preventing Delay

All Leicester City adoption workers carry out family finding, in addition to recruitment, training, and assessment of adopters. This works well as workers can talk to adopters during their assessment regarding specific children whose profiles are anonymous. A Childcare Support Worker assists social workers in the family finding by putting children on Link Maker, assisting with profiling the children, and attending matching meetings with Family Adoption Links.

Adoption Workers are allocated to a child at the point of Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decision. Advice is also given to children's social workers on completion of siblings together or apart assessments in cases where there may be reasons for children being placed separately. The Adoption Manager or team member attend Legal Planning Meetings and Permanence Planning Meetings to support children at an early stage who have a plan of adoption.

"M was really fantastic as our Adoption Social Worker. She led us through the whole process really well making sure we got everything done in time and chasing people for missing paperwork etc. She went out of her way to make sure we found all the assessments as easy as possible, taking into consideration we also had two young boys with additional needs to look after while going through the process of adopting R. She

would do calls later at night when the boys were asleep and worked to our schedule. M was absolutely fantastic and I'm sure all the adopters she works with would say the same. Super-efficient, kind and genuine, we really enjoyed having her on our team."

Adoption social workers are allocated to every relinquished child as soon as the referral is made to adoption, in order that social workers can be guided by experienced adoption workers and cases are progressed speedily to adoption panel, and in appropriate cases placements are secured. The numbers of relinquished children are usually 2-3 per year.

Child Permanence Reports (CPR's) reflect the needs of the children with a plan of adoption. Internal audit activity has shown that CPRs are not of a consistently good quality, while some reports are excellent, the majority need amendments. These are quality assured at a Panel by the Adoption Team Manager and a Service Manager in the Child in Need Teams. This ensures that children's wishes, and feelings are captured.

The service is committed to finding permanence for harder to place children including older children and those with complex needs and reducing delays in the time it takes to family find and prepare both the prospective adoptive family and the children before placement.

Adoption Support

Adoption support is led by North Lincolnshire. It builds on the practice delivered within the other workstreams. All partners have a different post adoption support offer and that is likely to remain the case. The ambition is for all adopters at the point of initial contact, to have information about the support available with the website signposting the local details. The group is developing a core offer which establishes a starting point for both prospective and registered adopters and is informed by shared practice expertise from across the region. As part of this work the workgroup has focused on the following areas:

1. Post Adoption Support Directory
2. Therapeutic Suppliers List
3. Adoption Support Fund
4. Quarterly Adopters Newsletter – second edition available
5. Post Placement and Post Order training offer across FAL which includes virtual / face to face training modules and E Learning modules.
6. Training Calendar goes live April 2022

The concentration on a core offer has enabled FAL to create some economies of scale in both the provision of information and training for adopters and developing a partnership directory of therapeutic providers which may support more effective commissioning for all partners. The provision of the Adoption Support Fund will continue for the next 3 years, and our challenge will be to ensure quality and value for money in post adoption provision, balancing what each Authority delivers with what is drawn down from the Government fund.

Transition Support

Adoption social workers are skilled in transition work with children. The transition books which are used for many of the children both prior to and during introductions have proved invaluable especially when sibling groups are divided with children being placed in different

placements. Where children are placed separately for adoption, contact is promoted between siblings, and the adoption team provide financial assistance to enable contact to take place where children are placed at a distance to one another to promote the children's identity.

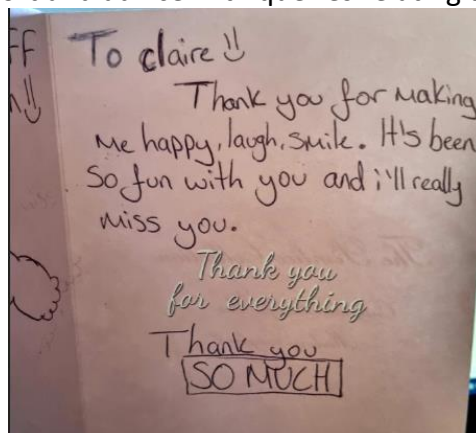
Adopters receive support from the Children and Families Support Team (CFST), who provide post adoption support to adoptive families and their children and may also be working with a child prior to placement and can continue this work post placement.

Adopters receive full information on children prior to placement, and all are offered a consultation with the Agency Medical Advisor, a visit to the child's foster carer, nursery, or school. Support workers from CFST also carry out visits to adopters, pre-placement where adopters are about to take on complex children. Advice is provided on possible issues and behavioural management techniques. We have introduced a new therapeutic parenting module which is a one-day course and received very positive feedback from those attending.

Leicester's Adoption & Post Adoption Support

Leicester's Adoption and Post Adoption Support continues to be provided by the Children and Families Support Team (CFST), a multi-professional team with a wide range of knowledge and skills around Theraplay, Play Therapy, systemic approaches, attachment, and therapeutic parenting.

Over the last 12 months, Adoption support has been provided to 17 children, young people, their families and adults impacted by adoption. This support has been provided in a variety of diverse ways ranging from one off support, making Post Adoption assessments of need, and providing longer term support and advice with queries relating to historic adoptions.



CFST offers a range of support to adopters both pre and post Order ranging from a dedicated duty system, one off visits, through to longer term support, and a bi-annual newsletter. The Walk and Talk groups and coffee mornings have not yet restarted.

CFST support Adoption Preparation Days (along with birth parents, CAMHS, adopted adults and adopters) to ensure families have an awareness of the team and the support they provide to enable them to seek help at an earlier stage. In addition to this, the Team Manager also sits on Leicester's Adoption Panel, which can highlight support for families, ensuring smoother transitions.

Feedback relating to two adopted adults:

"I wish I could give an award for the best service from a local authority, as it would go to you. So efficient and helpful on both cases, thank you so much.

Regards S C
Manager

Origins (Support After Adoption & Support After Care)

Feedback from a birth parent:

"The service provided was warm and friendly and gave me a safe space to discuss any thoughts and feelings surrounding adoption. S was very knowledgeable about the process and drew on previous experiences to answer any questions honestly and thoroughly. The service has helped me to talk openly about difficult emotional and mental problems and to see the positives in what has been a very difficult time.

I honestly can't thank you enough for working with me and helping me through this. You have been an absolute godsend and put me at ease going through the adoption process of which I could find no information about to answer my concerns prior to speaking with you. I just wish I had spoke to you from the start. Finally, receiving the support and encouragement I needed to get through the difficult emotional turmoil has made me feel much more positive about my decisions and the situation overall so thank you.

As part of the post adoption support, applications are made to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) when required, alongside the therapeutic support that is provided by CFST. Over the past 12 months, Leicester has made 63 assessments of need and applications to the ASF where children and their adopted families are now in receipt of therapeutic support; enabling them to access several different therapeutic interventions including Theraplay, Play Therapy, Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, Crisis Intervention Therapy and Sensory Processing Interventions.

"I just wanted to email you, to let you know the difference which has been made to our family by accessing Post Adoption support.

To give you just a brief overview, at the start of 2021, I felt desperate to find appropriate support for my 13 year old Daughter and myself. We were in a very difficult place, where I was at a point where I didn't feel I was the right 'Mum' for E to be able to meet her needs. And felt the future for us both together was bleak, I was also extremely anxious concerning what the future held for E. We had by this time had a few incidents where Police were required to be called due to E's aggression towards me. Our home was being destroyed by E throwing things. I didn't feel safe in my own home, and I used to dread each day.

E was receiving support from Cahms, due to her deteriorating mental health. However, it was clear this was not enough to support her or us together. During the first week of January, I spoke to L (Post Adoption Team). I think I was on the phone for almost 2 hours, I remember I was extremely distressed concerning our situation and felt at a crisis point. L listened and offered reassurance during the call. By the time I had finished talking to her, I felt I had off loaded to L everything that was happening and due to L's response felt there was hope that we would receive the right support.

L spoke to me several times that week to explain a plan and what support would be offered and she arranged meetings for the following week. As we already had several professionals involved with our family, L set up a Professionals meeting, so everyone was aware of what each other were doing and their roles. L's communication was and continues to be supportive and responds to any issues in a timely manner and is realistic in her approach.

Subsequently, E is now receiving individual weekly therapy sessions and we are both having weekly Family Systemic therapy which is being paid for by the Adoption Support fund. It would have been impossible to fund this therapy myself and I know this support is vital for us.

Reflecting on the last 7 months, since I made the call to L, although it has continued to be a difficult journey, I can now see positive change in both E and myself. I have started to feel safer in our home. E has now been discharged from Cahms, her attendance at school has improved and we have had no further involvement with the Police. I feel less daunted by the future for E and hopeful for our future as a family.

Thank you for the support your team has and continues to offer. L has gone above and beyond what I expected, and I will always be so thankful that she answered my call.

Understanding the child's life history & experiences

There is a commitment to providing Life Story Books and Later Life Letters of a high quality for adopted children. A tracking process has been developed to ensure that this work is carried out. Adoption workers quality assure the books before they are given to adopters. It is recognised that for older children it is important for them to have the books at the point of transition. Where this is not possible, adoption workers strive to produce a shortened book as a tool for adopters and the child to use immediately.

Moves are planned carefully, with a meeting to plan the timetabling. A Pause and Plan meeting halfway through ensures the plan can be refined if the children or adopters need more time, or more information or advice. Transition books are used with the children to help them understand the planned move.

During the pandemic, we have had significantly positive results from transitions from foster care to adoption, by starting with virtual introductions. At the first lockdown, our foster carers downloaded Microsoft Teams. The transitions started with adopters and foster carers talking virtually over teams. Children are a part of this and remain close to their secure base with the foster carers, experiencing a sense of safety. Adopters have shown the children around the house and have built up a relationship with the children before meeting face to face. Children have kissed the screen, tried to feed adopters on the screen, and a child on the day of placement was confident to go into his new home knowing the rooms and where their bed was and naming the teddies he had met virtually. The fear seems to be reduced, and children move easily between the virtual and face to face worlds. A significant benefit is that introductions are longer as no-one needs to take leave or time off. We will retain this practice going forward.

Foster carers are offered training in preparing a child to move onto adoption, and a foster carer provides training to adopters on transitions, to enable them to see the foster carer as a partner to support the child. Foster carers assist with introductions, helping children who are adopted to develop secure attachments to their new parents.

Engagement with Key Stakeholders

Family Adoption Links Head of service is continuing to engage key stakeholders within and beyond the Councils to align services and to identify broader opportunities for transformation and development. This includes representing the region to the Department of Education (DfE), at the National RAA Leaders Group and the Regional Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board. The service has engaged with Adopter voice on a 12-month contract to ensure that the views of adopters is reflected within service delivery. Adopters actively support the delivery of information events and preparatory training. In addition, following a meeting of stakeholders involved in the "child's journey" FAL will convene meetings for ADMs and Panel advisors as an opportunity to share good practice, work towards achieving consistency and consider training needs.

Conclusion

The partnership development has taken place against a backdrop of a pandemic and staff changes. Development of the partnership is centred on core areas which when completed will provide the partnership with genuine momentum and provide opportunities to modify adoption practice and create some staffing efficiencies. Progress is very much in line with the expectations of the Revised Government strategy for adoption "Achieving Excellence Everywhere" issued in July 2021.

Looking Ahead to 2022-23

There is a Regional Adoption Service Delivery Plan which is reviewed monthly, and progress is reported to the Board. There are 7 key priority areas with identified key actions and leads. The priority areas are:

1. General Governance

To ensure that all the Governance arrangements are in place for the RAA, that the arrangements are effective and reviewed with the overall aim of achieving the best outcomes we can for children and families.

2. Quality Assurance

To ensure there is a clear framework in respect to RAA quality assurance with the intended aims being:

- Ensuring consistency of practice across the RAA
- Having shared manager oversight of practice
- A shared system which evidences the outcomes and high standard practice being achieved by the RAA.

3. Performance

- To have a clear understanding of the combined performance of the RAA
- To identify areas where improvements are needed
- To celebrate areas of achievement within performance
- To contribute to the clear understanding of the outcomes being achieved for children and families across the adoption scorecard
- Prompt and timely submission of performance data on behalf of the RAA to the relevant bodies.

4. Marketing and Recruitment

- A robust brand that stands out and clearly identifies us as being Family Adoption Links and the geographical areas that the RAA covers
- A successful Marketing and Recruitment Strategy and Plan that ensures we recruit the adopters that we need for children across the RAA. This will be evidenced by RAA family finding and the matches taking place across the RAA

5. Adopter Assessment and Post Approval Training

- All those who approach the RAA and who are assessed by the RAA receive a consistent baseline experience with regards to their initial enquiry; assessment and preparing to adopt training.
- Following approval there is an RAA core offer of post approval training for all approved adopters to ensure consistency of approach and preparation across the RAA.

6. Family Finding, Matching and Placement

Every child who has a need for an adoptive family can be placed with their adoptive family in a timely way. This will include the following.

- A clear system across the RAA for family finding which includes knowing the children we are family finding for and having a clear understanding of our cohort of children and any areas of pressure i.e., identifying families for harder to place children.
- By having a clear understanding of the above this helps drive our recruitment for adopters based on a sound understanding of our sufficiency need.
- To align and have consistent practice across the RAA in respect to family finding, matching and placement.
- We have resilient and well-prepared families across the RAA who provide a secure and loving home to children by way of adoption.
- All within the adoption system receive support and feel supported throughout family finding, matching and placement.
- Children are at the heart of the adoption system and receive good preparation for moving to live with their permanent family

7. Post Adoption Support

- To align and have consistent practice across the RAA in respect to post order support.
- To have a RAA Core Offer that is accessed by all families across the RAA.
- The RAA Core Offer is also underpinned by a local offer that considers specific needs within different local areas.
- We have resilient families across the RAA who provide a secure and loving home to children by way of adoption and who can access support when they need it.
- All within the adoption system receive support and feel supported and the support provided is based on what children and families tell us that they need

Appendix 1

Overview of the Adoption process for potential adopters

1. Your initial contact with us

When you contact the Adoption Service, we will ask some questions to learn more about you and your personal circumstances, and we can answer any questions you may have. We will then send out an information pack if requested within 10 days.

2. Registration of Interest Form

If, after receiving further information via an Information Session followed by a home visit (Initial Visit) you wish to proceed, you will then need to complete the Registration of Interest Form (ROIF)

3. Call from a Recruitment Team social worker

Once the Recruitment Team receives your ROIF we will contact you within 5 days of receiving it and a social worker from the service will have a detailed discussion with you. We will then let you know if we can accept you into Stage One of the process.

4. Stage One

Statutory references and checks will be taken up. Stage One will usually be completed in 2 months but can be extended up to a maximum of 6 months. It will be very much an adopter led process and will move at your pace. If your application is not able to progress to Stage Two, the adoption team will inform you in writing of the reasons and if appropriate refer you on to other agencies if applicable.

5. Plan and agreement

During Stage One the service will draw up a Stage One Plan (agreement) and ask you to sign an agreement setting out what the Recruitment Team will provide, and it will detail what steps you need to take and what needs to happen for you to progress to Stage Two.

6. Stage Two

You will be allocated a worker to complete your adoption assessment following completion of a Stage Two Agreement form. The agreement will set out details of each visit (minimum of 6) and you will be given a provisional panel date for your approval. You will receive further information and training in both Stage One and Stage Two which will include Adoption Preparation Groups. As part of the course you will have the opportunity to speak to experienced adopters who share their knowledge of what it is really like to adopt a child. All this information is brought together in the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR).

7. Adoption Panel

This happens on completion of the adoption assessment. At the end of the assessment, your PAR is presented to the Adoption Panel, which meets at least monthly. Adopters are invited to attend. You will be given the panel's recommendation on the day. This then goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who formally considers the recommendation and decides within seven days.

8. Finding the right match

We work with you to identify the right child and we will complete a Matching Plan Agreement with you. How long you must wait depends on the needs of the children and what age and type of child you are best suited to. We try to place children as soon as possible and matches can take place as soon as a few weeks after approval but usually there is a wait of several months before a match is made. If you have not been matched within three months and with your agreement, your details will be referred to Link Maker which means potential matches for you could be made with children from across the country.

9. Matching Panel

The adoption panel considers the appropriateness of the match between yourselves and the child/children. It then makes a formal recommendation that the child can be placed with you, and this is then subject to the Agency Decision Maker agreeing the match within seven days of the date of the panel. This process may be slightly different, if you have been matched with a child from another area, in which case you will attend the adoption panel in the area with responsibility for the child.

10. Introductions

Your child's placement is carefully planned and following a series of introductions they will move and become part of your family. Your social worker supports you as you get used to becoming an adoptive family. The local authority has a statutory duty to review the child's placement up until an adoption order is granted.

11. Adoption Order

Following the placement of a child, or children, the granting of the Adoption Order usually takes three to six months, although in some cases it can take longer.

A printable version of the attached created for prospective adopter can be found on our website <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption>.

More Information

The Adoption Service maintains a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that support the management of the Service, the care of children and advice / guidance / protocols many of which can be found on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.



Family Adoption Links Leicester City Adoption Service

Annual Statement of Purpose 2022 / 23



Purpose

As an Adoption Service in England we are required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people and adopters.

The Statement of Purpose is available to all staff, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents and other professionals in a variety of formats. You can find the most up to date copy on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

Summary

Leicester City Council is part of Family Adoption Links (FAL), a regional partnership of Adoption Services.

This partnership comprises of Leicester City Council, Lincolnshire County Council (who provide adoption services for Rutland Council), Leicestershire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust. It has been agreed that Lincolnshire County Council will act as host for the arrangement.

The interagency agreement creating the partnership commenced on 14th October 2020 and describes how FAL manages the provision of all core adoption functions on behalf of the local authority. Agency decision making for adults and children are maintained within the local authority in line with corporate parenting responsibilities.

Through working in partnership, we benefit from the regional sharing of best practice, pooling of resources and developing a strategic approach to the development of a range of services from the marketing of adoption across the region through to the commissioning of post adoption support services.

The service allows our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched families. Our aim for children who are cared for is that they will have a clear understanding of why they are looked after by the local authority, be given an opportunity to make sense of their experiences, knowing who is there to support them to achieve their goals and lead successful lives.

The Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided, as well as details about our complaints and quality assurance services.

The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

We are committed to supporting our adoptive families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about the adoption service and the support we offer can be found on our websites <https://familyadoptionlinks.org.uk/> www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this Statement of Purpose, please contact the adoption team on 0116 454 4550.

Our Vision, Principles and Values

The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

The service aims to:

- Place children at the centre of the adoption process and always act in their best interests, ensuring the process is timely and avoids delay.
- Have the widest range of adopters trained to meet the needs of children placed.
- Ensure matching delivers the best quality outcomes for all children.
- Recruit high quality adoptive families to meet the needs of children referred for adoption, whilst recognising that family life can be experienced in different ways.
- Provide a range of services and information to adoptive families, birth families and adoptive children.
- Provide a range of post adoption support services for families and children to ensure adoptive placements are successful.
- Provide a service that meets statutory requirements and National Minimum Standards.
- Ensure adopters receive a consistent, high quality and professional service at all stages of the process.
- Have the same high standard of adoption support for all adoptive families across the region.
- Ensure Family Adoption Links, local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies work together to promote and maximize choice for children and adopters.

Objectives of the Service

- To ensure children's needs have been fully assessed and an adoption plan is in the child's best interest.
- To provide a suitable adoptive placement for every child with a plan for adoption.
- To ensure, that the views of children and young people have been listened to and have been given due consideration in any decisions that are taken about their future.
- To regularly publicise adoption services to enable all members of the community to consider adoption as a positive option, and to recruit carers from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet children's individual needs.

- To recruit adopters who will respect a child's birth and family origins, and who will bring up an adopted child knowing and understanding their origins.
- To recruit adopters who will respect the diverse cultures and lifestyles within society, and who will bring up children who will respect these differences.
- To recruit adopters who will respect a young person's choice, in terms of sexuality, gender and religion.
- To recruit, train and retain highly skilled and appropriately qualified staff that understand the adoption process, and can support family placements.

Principles

The Adoption Service believes that: -

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- It is best for children where possible to be brought up by their own birth family.
- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes, and feelings will be actively sought and fully considered at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays in adoption can have a negative impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children and young people's ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, religion and language should be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made about them.
- The ongoing needs of children should be fully recognised and considered when decisions are made, recognising any disabilities and learning difficulties.
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family should be valued and respected.
- Children have the right to grow up knowing they are adopted and should have access to information about their family of birth.
- Where appropriate children should continue to have contact, either directly or indirectly, with those family members who are significant to them.

Standards of Care

The Adoption Service aims to provide safe, secure and high-quality care in family settings for children whom a plan for adoption has been agreed. This will be achieved to the standards set out in the Adoption Services Regulations 2002, 2011 and The Adoption Agencies (Panel

and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 (referred to as the "Regulations"), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005), The National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014) and The Statutory Guidance amended (2011) and July (2013 and 2014).

The Service

Service Manager: Georgina Oreffo

Telephone: 0116 454 4506

Family Adoption Links (FAL) is a regional adoption partnership which includes Leicester City Council, Social Care and Education.

The Agency Decision Maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Kate Wells, Head of Service, Child Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

The Adoption Service Team

The Adoption Service includes qualified and experienced staff as follows:

- Team Manager: who is responsible for the day to day work of the Adoption Assessment Team.
- Three full-time and four part-time qualified, Social Work England registered social workers with experience in adoption work.
- One part time Adoption Support Worker.
- One full and two part time Admin and Business Support Officers.

Governance and Management

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) will be accountable to the Family Adoption Links (FAL) Management Board which is responsible for delivering the agreed vision and will enable partners to have a continuing demonstrable focus on achieving permanence through adoption for Children Looked After. The FAL Management Board is accountable for delivery of services within scope and will continue to provide strategic leadership as the service develops.

The Board includes representatives of each partner and takes decision by consensus. The Board is chaired by a Director of Children's Services (on behalf of the respective Local Authorities) and includes Assistant Directors responsible for permanency. The FAL Management Board will ensure there are clear strategic plans in place to manage future demand, develop quality services, deliver value for money, and achieve appropriate efficiencies and cost savings. The Board has appointed a Head of Service for the Regional Adoption Agency who oversees the work of the adoption service in each local authority. The Head of Service reports to the board and is responsible for the delivery of adoption services within each LA. Each partner LA retains its own adoption service manager who is the Registered Manager.

The FAL Management Board will keep members fully informed regarding the progress and performance of the RAA.

Service Functions

The service provides: -

- Recruitment and assessment of adoptive families; including publicity, information giving and attendance at regular drop-in sessions across Leicester and Leicestershire.
- Assessment and preparation of prospective adoptive families, which includes visiting their homes, undertaking a home study assessment, references, checks, and preparation groups.
- Support for approved families awaiting placement, advice and guidance to adoptive families during the matching process and post placement; this includes workshops and events for adoptive families in conjunction with the Children and Families Support Team (CFST).
- Delivering training and educational events and providing guidance for departmental staff that are preparing and supporting children, their parents and carers during the adoption process.
- Provision of adoption support services to adoptive families and birth relatives.
- Facilitation of direct and indirect contact arrangements and in a limited number of cases, supervision of contact.
- Provision of a specialist consultation and advice service.
- Counselling, information, and advice to Birth parents, (First Families) whose children might be adopted, and prospective adopters and adults who have been adopted, including access to birth records counselling.

Safeguarding Arrangements

Leicester Children's Social Care & Early Help Service and its Adoption Service are part of Leicester's Safeguarding Children Partnership Board arrangements.

The assessment of adopters includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited.

Training is mandatory and covers specific areas such as safer caring, the implications of looking after children who have been impacted by trauma and the implications of how a child's attachment may have been affected in their early years.

Allegations that are made against adopters prior to an order being made are investigated using an established procedure by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process to ensure its timeliness. Where allegations are made following the granting of an adoption order these are managed using standard Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board procedures.

Recruitment

The Adoption Service welcomes enquiries from people from all backgrounds, whether single, in a relationship, or married, and regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race or religion. There is no upper age limit for a prospective adopter(s), but adopters need to be in good general health with lots of energy and love to give to a child.

In addition to our comprehensive website, an information leaflet and brochure is available to explain what adoption involves and the processes that prospective adopters will follow.

The Adoption Service has a well-defined recruitment strategy whose aim is to prioritise the recruitment of adopters who can best meet the needs of all children requiring adoption.

In addition to our own information on adoption, “First 4 Adoption”, the Government’s ‘adoption gateway’ provides information for those interested in adopting.

Leicester City Council is a subscribing member of ‘New Family Social’ which is a UK-wide support network run by, and for, LGBT+ adopters and prospective adopters. More information about the support network can be obtained on their website together with clear information about the adoption process.

The role of Adoption Panel

Leicester City Adoption Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 17)

The adoption panel only considers:

- whether a child who is looked after by Leicester City Council should be placed for adoption, where a parent relinquishes their child or consents that adoption is the best outcome for their child.
- recommending whether prospective adopters are suitable to adopt, and
- recommending whether adopters are suitable for a particular child or children (matching).
- the general running of the adoption service, and to receive reports giving overview information about the general running of the team.

Prospective adopters and approved adopters who are to be matched with a child are encouraged to attend the Adoption Panel.

The Adoption Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include:

- An independent chair
- Independent Vice Chair
- Social workers with experience of adoption and other relevant specialisms
- Medical adviser
- Independent Members (not employed by the Adoption Service and who may have personal experience of adoption or other relevant experience).

- Panel Adviser

The adoption panel meets at least monthly and occasionally twice monthly to ensure the adoption work of the Adoption Agency is not subject to delay.

Following a recommendation by the Adoption Panel, the papers and minutes of the meeting will be passed to the “Agency Decision Maker” (ADM) who has responsibility for decision making on behalf of the Agency. The decisions are made following consultation with the panel adviser and access to the panel minutes. Decisions are made within seven days of the approved minutes of the panel recommendation. The decision will be put in writing to the prospective adopter(s).

Reports on children for whom an Adoption Plan is proposed are considered directly by the Agency Decision Maker after a comprehensive quality assurance process. Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012.

Monitoring the Quality of the Adoption Service

The quality of the Adoption Service’s work and standards are regularly monitored: -

- The managers of the service ensure that staff are appropriately skilled, trained and supervised in accordance with the City Council policy to ensure they are fulfilling statutory compliance and meeting the quality standards required by Leicester City Council.
- The work of the adoption team is governed by Adoption Standards, Guidance and Regulations. The Regional Adoption Agency also submits information against national performance indicators.
- The work of the adoption team is monitored to ensure appropriate timescales are adhered to.
- The Adoption Panel independently scrutinise all assessments and judgements made about voluntarily relinquished children being considered for adoption, and those of prospective adoptive parents.
- The Adoption Panel scrutinise all reports on children at the point of matching for adoption. The Adoption Panel has a critical role to play in the provision of independent expert oversight.
- Adoption Panel members are appraised annually, and the performance of the Panel reviewed to ensure that it carries out its role efficiently and effectively.
- The Agency Decision Maker observes at least one panel each year and attends relevant training days.

- The Adoption Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted according to national guidelines.
- Feedback is gathered throughout the process by evaluation and questionnaires.
- Case files are subject to regular internal quality assurance audits.
- The performance of the Adoption Agency is published by the Department for Education on behalf of the Government.

Complaints Procedure

Any formal complaints are considered through the Local Authority complaints procedure. Copies of the procedure and complaints forms can be requested from the Adoption Team Telephone: 0116 454 5440.

All complaints and matters of concern are treated with respect and will be dealt with as promptly as possible, within specified timescales. The adoption service aims to resolve problems in the first instance by informal negotiation. A central record will be kept of all complaints as part of the agency's quality management process; these records are open to inspection by Ofsted.

Children who are already placed in adoptive placements (i.e., children in the care of the Local Authority) have access to a Council's Children's Rights Officer, who will assist any child if they wish to make a complaint and support them throughout the process.

Post Adoption Support

As part of Family Adoption Links, the post adoption support in Leicester is provided by the Children and Families Support Team (CFST).

The Team of ten workers is supported by two part time Team Managers.

The team has a range of qualified Mental Health Practitioners, Adoption Support Workers, Social Workers, and a Post Special Guardianship Support Worker. These full time and part time workers provide post adoption support services alongside other placement services.

Services to Adopted People

Adults who have been adopted can approach the Registrar General when they are 18 years old and ask for details from their original birth certificate. Once they have obtained this information a request can be made to the service for a Birth Records Counselling Service. This involves obtaining a file from either the local archive or from another adoption agency. This work is provided on a statutory basis.

First Family Support

A requirement of National Adoption Standards is to offer independent counselling to birth parents during care proceedings where a plan of adoption is proposed. Counselling for birth parents, independent of the adoption process is provided in Leicester through the Children and Families Support Team. A leaflet explaining the service is available.

Contact Services

There are now over 550 adoption post box arrangements. The post box enables written (indirect) information to pass between adoptive families and children's birth families via the adoption team. These arrangements provide confidentiality for adoptive families and can sometimes involve the exchange of information from adoptive families between several birth relatives of the adopted child. An email facility is available that is popular amongst adopters for the exchange of indirect contact material.

Of those contact arrangements in place, 2% involve direct contact arrangements which require supervision and support from post adoption support services. A leaflet on the Post Box Scheme is available.

Services to Children

The service provides additional support to parents through the Contact Scheme. We have access to a supply of books, and other media platforms for direct work with children. Counselling is possible with older children. Children participate in social events such as the annual party, summer event and "Play and Stay" and the service delivers a young people's forum, for teenagers to those in their early 20's.

Services to adoptive families

Family Adoption Links keep in touch with adoptive families through our regular newsletter called "Thrive". This provides details of activities and relevant articles about adoption.

The service continues to organise on-line therapeutic training relevant to adopters. The team has a rolling training programme to enhance the understanding of attachment issues as well

as develop skills to parent traumatised children. Learning in the company of other adopters is experienced as supportive and sometimes useful on-going contacts are established. Other professionals including schoolteachers, health visitors, adoption panel members and social workers can also attend this training and helps build positive professional relationships which are supportive of adopted children and families.

The adoption support workers provide training to other departmental staff; for example, writing Life Story Books. An information booklet for schools on adoption issues is available to schools attended by children who have been adopted. Training has been provided to schools by the team on attachment issues and how to respond to these. The Virtual School Team (for Children Looked After) can provide additional advice and support in school to assist adoptive children's transition to a new school.

The Service has access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) through the Young People's Team, to respond to the needs of adoptive families. The Educational Psychology Services from the city and the county also contribute to post adoption placement support.

Adoption Support Fund

CFST undertakes post adoption assessments of need and makes applications to the Adoption Support Fund where appropriate. The Adoption Support Fund enables adoptive families to access therapeutic adoption support, following assessment of support needs after the child is made subject to an Adoption Order.

OFSTED Inspection

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting the Adoption Agency. The last inspection of Leicester City Council local authority children's services took place in 2021. The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers was judged to be **good**.

Ofsted's stated:

Early consideration is given to permanence planning in all situations regardless of the circumstances, including to support reunification with parents. Regular permanence planning meetings help to drive progress and ensure that all necessary assessments are taking place or commissioned accordingly. Delay in achieving permanence for children is rare. Once decisions have been made for permanence for children, these are progressed in a timely manner. This is the case irrespective of which permanence option is identified to be in the best interests of the child. Children's life-story work is sensitively and imaginatively completed for children with permanence decisions, to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of their families and experiences.

Recruitment and assessment of foster carers and adopters is thorough, timely and analytical. Training builds their confidence and enables children to be well matched to their carers or adopters.

Ofsted will also receive and may investigate any complaints about the Adoption Service.

They can be contacted at: -

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

Overview of the adoption process: a guide for potential adopters

1. Your initial contact with us

When you contact the Adoption Service, we will ask some questions to learn more about you and your personal circumstances and we can answer any questions you may have. We will then send out an information pack within 10 days if requested.

2. Registration of Interest Form

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4. Stage One

Statutory references and checks will be taken up. Stage One will usually be completed in 2 months but can be extended up to a maximum of 6 months. It will be very much an adopter led process and will move at your pace. If your application is not able to progress to Stage Two, the adoption team will inform you in writing of the reasons and if appropriate refer you on to other agencies if applicable.

5. Plan and Agreement

During Stage One the service will draw up a Stage One Plan (agreement) and ask you to sign an agreement setting out what the Recruitment Team will provide, and it will detail what steps you need to take and what needs to happen for you to progress to Stage Two.

6. Stage Two

You will be allocated a worker to complete your adoption assessment following completion of a Stage Two Agreement form. The agreement will set out details of each visit (minimum of 6, usually over four months) and you will be given a provisional panel date for your approval. You will receive further information and training in both Stage One and Stage Two which will include Adoption Preparation Groups. As part of the course you will have the opportunity to speak to experienced adopters who share their knowledge of what it is like to adopt a child. All this information is brought together in the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR).

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The adoption panel considers the appropriateness of the match between yourselves and the child or children. It then makes a formal recommendation that the child can be placed with you and this is then subject to the Agency Decision Maker agreeing the match and this is done within seven days of the date of the panel. This process may be slightly different, if you have been matched with a child from another area, in which case you will attend the adoption panel in the area with responsibility for the child.

10. Introductions

Your child's placement is carefully planned and following a series of introductions they will move and become part of your family. Your social worker will continue to support you and the local authority has a statutory duty to review the child's placement up until an adoption order is granted.

11. Adoption Order

Following the placement of a child, or children, the granting of the Adoption Order usually takes three to six months (although in some cases it can take longer).

If you have any questions, or want to know more detailed information about any of the stages below, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us Tel: 0116 454 4540

Review of the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose

The Adoption Service reviews the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis to ensure its aims, objectives, services and facilities provided remain appropriate to the care of children and young people. The next review is due in June 2023.

The Adoption Service maintains a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that support the management of the Service, and the care of children.



Family Adoption Links

