ADOPTION TEAM

YEAR 2003

ANNUAL REPORT AND SERVICE PLAN

CONTENTS

Introduction

The Adoption Team is subject to a joint arrangement between Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland for the provision of Local Authority Adoption Services. This arrangement has now been in place for six-years and is regarded as a successful arrangement by all three parties. Leicestershire County Council has lead responsibility for the joint arrangement.

Purpose of the Team

- The recruitment of high quality adoptive families who will meet the needs of children who are referred for adoption.
- The preparation and placement of children with adoptive families.
- Advice to and training of Child Care Operations social workers.
- Provision of Post-Adoption work including, Birth Records, Counselling, Work with Birth Relatives, Support and Services to Adoptive Families.
- To provide an Inter-Country Adoption Service.
- The organisation and maintenance of a Post Box Contact Scheme.
- Co-ordination of the Adoption Panel and its work.
- To be a specialist central contact point on all adoption matters.

The National Standards

The National Standards were implemented on 1st April 2003 to ensure that looked after children, birth families, prospective adopters and the general public can expect a comprehensive and timely adoption service.

Their overall aim is to:-

- Place children at the centre of the adoption process.
- Increase the number of children adopted from public care.
- Speed up the process of adoption and avoid delay.
- Inform all parties what they can expect from the adoption service and ensure a fair and equal service everywhere.
- Improve post adoption support services.

The adoption team continues to meet many of the requirements of the standards. From April 2003 all three Panels will be welcoming applicants to Panel whilst considering their approval. Procedures for this have been written and approved

Two new County Council post adoption posts were created and workers have been in post since September 2002.

In addition to this in 2003/04 there is the possibility of funding from Leicester City Council for a further two posts for post adoption work. This is an increasing area of work especially to meet the support needs of adoptive families and children.

The Minimum National Standards

These standards were also implemented on 1st April 2003, and their aim was to ensure consistency in adoption services by local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies across the country. The standards will assist the inspection of adoption agencies by the National Care Standards Commission to ensure they are meeting relevant regulatory requirements. Inspections will take place every three years.

Post Adoption Support Regulations

The local authorities have been consulted regarding effective adoption support services, and in December 2002 draft guidance was received, with a view to these being implemented alongside the National Standards on 1st April 2003. However, there has been a delay in their implementation, which has now been set for 1st October 2003. It is the expectation of the government that adoption agencies will 'hit the ground running' on this date.

The regulations are aimed at improving adoption support for new adoptive families, on a consistent national basis.

The key areas are:-

- Greater use of lump sum payments to support adoptions.
- Financial support should be targeted at the children with the most complex needs, and low-income families.
- Duty to provide information about all services and benefits.
- Arrangements for support in cross-boundary placements.
- The role for a worker to support the prospective adopters at all stages – assessment, preparation, matching, placement and post adoption.
- The need to taper financial support for foster carers adopting children they are fostering.
- The need for prospective adopters to receive full medical and educational history of a child at the matching stage.

The Adoption and Children Act

The Adoption and Children's Bill received the Royal Assent on Thursday 7th November 2002. The new law will not be fully implemented until 2004, although some parts are expected to come into force during 2003.

The key points of the Act are:-

- The Act will align adoption law with the Children Act 1989. It includes the principles of the child's welfare being paramount, that delay is prejudicial to the child's welfare. Agencies placing children should give due consideration to a child's religion, race, language and culture.

- Local Authorities duties to maintain adoption support services are strengthened. They will have a duty to undertake assessment of needs. (Post adoption support services regulations).

- The introduction of Placement Orders instead of Freeing Orders.

- Changes to the length of time a child must be placed with applicants prior to an Adoption Order being lodged.

- Unmarried couples will be able to adopt jointly.

- Special Guardianship will replace residence orders.

The Adoption (Inter-Country Aspects) Act 1999

Changes to inter-county regulations will be implemented on 1st June 2003 following the UK ratification of the Hague Convention. Workers in the team have attended nation-wide training sessions in relation to the changes that are to be implemented.

The National Adoption Register

The Adoption Team continues to submit the necessary paperwork to the National Adoption Register. Since it began in April 2002, the team has had no successful matches, no realistic matches have been offered.

The system used within the team is that all children's details are forwarded to the register following Panel unless we have local matches. Prospective adopters are referred after nine months unless we decide to refer them earlier.

The team does however continues successfully to make use of local, regional and national advertising to recruit appropriate placements for children who are referred for adoption.

Team Resources

The team consists of the following members:-

- Two Team Managers – both white female.
- Five full time and six part-time level 3 social workers – all female, of which one full time is Asian, the remainder being white.
- Two Post Adoption workers – one full time level 3, one unqualified support worker (30 hours).
- Two scale 4 administration assistants – both white female.
- One scale 3 clerk – white female.
- Two scale 1-2 clerks – both white female.

Approximately 50% of the staff are employed by the County the rest by the City. The social work team is extremely experienced in adoption and child care work and all are qualified.

The three local authorities fund the joint arrangement, the proportion of this funding is determined by a periodic monitoring exercise. The County's current contribution is 35% the City 65% Rutland makes a 'flat rate' contribution.

Partnerships and Consultation

The major partnership is the formal joint arrangement between Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland. Quarterly liaison meetings take place as well as the regular monitoring of the work of the team. The joint arrangement is now in its sixth year and is regarded as extremely successful.

The team is also a member of the South Yorkshire / East Midlands Consortium of local authorities (Nottingham, Derby, Derbyshire, Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley) whose purpose is to share approved adoptive families for suitable children. One benefit of this Consortium is that it enables regional placements to be made and allows longer time periods before registering approved families on the National Adoption Register.

We are funding and working jointly with:-

- NORCAP (National Organisation for the Counselling of Adoptees and Parents). This organisation is running on our behalf a group for birth mothers whose children have been adopted.
- Consultations are also in process with FSU (Family Service Unit) with a view to their providing independent counselling for birth parents whose children are the subject of care proceedings.

Other regional and national links include:-

- Membership of MFPG (Midlands Family Placement Group – representing all agencies in the Midlands).
- Membership of EMPAG (East Midlands Post Adoption Group)
- Membership of BAAF UK (One of the Team Managers is the Midlands representative on the Social Work Practice Advisory Committee).

Consultation

Consultation with individuals occurs at different times and in various ways throughout the adoption process. More formal consultation has taken place in the following ways

- Three Yearly Review of the Adoption Team 1999

This included questionnaires sent to key groups with whom the team comes into contact, adoption panel members, users of the service and commissioning teams.

- The Adoption Panels

Apart from the functions of the Panel in recommending adoption for children and families, the Panel represents a cross section of informed opinion on adoption issues. There are also regular training sessions for Panel members.

There are representatives on each Adoption Panel, namely an adopted adult and an adoptive parent.

One member of each Panel is from a voluntary agency.

One member of each Panel is of Asian ethnic origin.

There are three elected members on two Panels, (one for Rutland) one of whom is a Cabinet member.

- **Children**

There are well established mechanisms and statutory requirements which require, "*the ascertainable wishes and feelings (of children) to be taken into consideration".* Children Act 1989 (s1 (3).

This occurs in a variety of ways:-

✓   During the Court process by children's guardians and social workers.

✓   In statutory Review of Arrangements meetings, by social workers, carers and Independent Review Officers.

✓   At Adoption Panel, through the inclusion of questions in the relevant paperwork.

✓   On other occasions, during direct work with the child, or indirectly from school-teachers or other involved agencies.

✓   By children having access to the Children's Rights Service.

- **Adopters**

✓   The adoption team provides evaluation / comments forms at key stages in the recruitment and preparation stages i.e. – At information evenings and during preparation groups.

✓   There is a statutory requirement that adopter's views are obtained about their Form F assessments (from April 2003, applicants will also be able to attend Panels).

✓   Two adoptive parents are members of each Adoption Panel.

✓   Views are obtained from adopters as a result of direct work undertaken with them.

✓   If an adoptive placement breakdown occurs, the views of the adopters are obtained through the Adoption Disruption meeting.

✓   There are agencies which adopters can approach to raise issues including BAAF and Adoption UK.

✓   By use of the Complaints Procedure.

- **Birth Families**

The majority of work with birth parents around the time of an adoption is undertaken by the Child Care Operations team social worker. The Children Act 1989 S22 (4) (a) & (b) determines that:-

Before making any decision with respect to a child whom they are looking after, or proposing to look after, a local authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ascertain the wishes and feelings of: the child; his parents." This process can occur in a variety of ways.

✓	During the Court process by children's guardians and operations social workers.
✓	Through their legal representatives.
✓	In Statutory Review of Arrangements meetings
✓	At Child Protection Case Conferences
✓	At the Adoption Panel through the inclusion of questions in the relevant paperwork.
✓	By use of the Complaints Procedure
✓	Through direct work with adoption social workers in birth parent counselling sessions.

- **Birth Relatives**

Can refer to local and national bodies such as NPN and NORCAP (Natural Parents Network and National Organisations for Counselling Adoptees and Parents).

- **Adopted Adults**

This is a more sensitive area from which to obtain feedback, but consultation can occur through some of the following:-

✓	Two adopted adults are members of all three Adoption Panels.
✓	Birth Records Counselling which is provided for adult adoptees. This by definition is an open-ended service. The adult adoptee essentially defines the end of the process, which should coincide with their satisfaction with the outcome. Unfortunately in the case of some people the records are very old and therefore brief, incomplete, lost or held by other agencies. This can be very frustrating for them but their views about this are ascertained as part of the direct work.

Summary of Key Achievements 2002 – 2003

- Statistical analysis against Quality Protects targets and PAF indicators show continuing good process; the number of children placed for adoption and the number of adoption orders made remain constant.

- The Permanence Panel in the County continues to successfully monitor looked after children under 10-years who have been looked after for more than 3-months.

- The team has continued to recruit a very high number of appropriate adoptive families – 48 in 2002 / 2003 for the 3 authorities.

- Responded to the various DoH consultations on the National Adoption Standards and the Adoption and Children Act.

- Conformed to the National Adoption Register requirements.

- Begun to implement the National Standards.

- Post adoption social workers have been appointed and a post adoption service has started to be developed.

Areas of Challenge

The national context of adoption is one of increased expectation on adoption agencies to perform to very high standards and while that initiative is to be applauded, this can leave staff feeling under great pressure.

The adoption team manages this tension, by prioritising work and by continuing to have a strong team identity. The prospective appointment of extra City post-adoption staff will undoubtedly assist, but the overall pressure of increasing workloads and high expectations will remain.

Summary of Specific Objectives for 2003 / 2004

1. Draw up and carry out action plan to implement National Minimum Standards.

2. Implement, as appropriate new adoption legislation including inter country adoption guidance and regulations.

3. Continue review and update the Recruitment Strategy for adoptive parents.

4. Review assessment and preparation methods for adoptive applicants.

5. Continue work on the regional adoption consortium

6. Continue to progress Post Adoption Services with the appointment of new City staff.

7. Consider training needs for child care social workers re National Standards and new legislation.

9. Continue joint arrangement liaison meetings.

POST ADOPTION WORK

New adoption legislation includes regulations and guidance on Adoption Support Services, comes into force 31st October 2003.

As can be seen in previous Annual Reports, the local demand for post-adoption services has risen year by year, and we have long recognised the need for extra resources, particularly specialist staff, to meet this need. In 2002, the County established three new posts, one in the Therapeutic Social Work Team and two in the Adoption Team. The remit of the Therapeutic social work team post is to work therapeutically with children placed for adoption by the County, or adopted and living in the County. The three workers meet regularly to share information, experience and training and where appropriate arrange to do joint work. Regular liaison meetings take place with the workers and the two-team managers.

Post Adoption Activity

1. from September 2002 for the seven months up until the end of March 2003, the two workers dealt with:-

    - a total number of post adoption cases   81

    - of this total   adopted persons   45
                           birth relatives   18
                           adoptive parents /families   18

2. They have taken on the running of a support group for adoptive parents and started a second one, so there are now monthly meetings (at Wigston and Loughborough alternatively). Originally these groups catered for families who had already adopted a child/ren, but we have extended the groups to include people approved and awaiting a placement.

3. A support group for birth mothers whose children have been adopted from care, is now established (January 2003). This is a joint venture with a voluntary organisation, NORCAP / NPN, whose volunteers actually lead and manage the groups. The post-adoption workers carry out initial screening with the birth mothers, and support the work generally. This venture may lead to a more formal service level agreement.

4. The management of the Post-box (Indirect) Contact Scheme. Over 300 children are now part of this scheme, with either one-way or two-way postal contact. The first review of the Post-box Scheme has now started. But the organisation and management systems are much improved, especially with the invaluable assistance of a member of the clerical staff.

    A review of direct (face-to-face) contact has also started. This has required setting up separate files and re-organising the whole system. Questionnaires are being sent to all the participants in direct contact arrangements from the year 2000 in order to update our information, but also to introduce our post-adoption support services. This inevitably will increase the demand for our

services, but we recognise the fact that early intervention is more likely to prevent disruption of adoptions later.

5. Improvements have been made to the system for referrals of birth records requests for information, tracing relatives and mediation, with a view to improving the administration and location of files.   Both workers deal with individual cases, but unfortunately the waiting time (around 6-months) for service users wanting to access this information has not been reduced. The problem of delay should ease significantly once there are additional City post – adoption workers in post.

6. The two workers have dealt with the majority of referrals of adoptive families struggling with their adopted children. The number of these has risen, and they constitute the most complex and time-consuming cases. Some joint work takes place either with Child Care Operations social workers and / or the specialist worker in the Therapeutic Social Work Team.   Liaison and negotiation with agencies such as CAMHS is necessary.   Increasing, there are major educational difficulties and the workers have supported adoptive families in meetings with school and education staff.

7. Though training courses and taking advantage of available resources (books, videos etc) on attachment issues, the workers have increased their knowledge and understanding of this very crucial area of adoption work. They have raised the awareness of the adoption workers by disseminating new learning on this topic.   A useful workshop also took place with the Therapeutic Social Work Team, led by the team manager of the County Family Support Team.

8. Positive contributions to the assessment and preparation of prospective adoptive parents have been made and plans are underway to provide a "post-approval" preparation day.   Although prospective adopters participate in preparation groups (now 4 days) as part of the assessment / pre-approval process, we have recognised that some of this learning is "lost" through anxieties about whether they will be approved or not. Post-approval training will give the opportunity to build on existing knowledge in a more relaxed atmosphere, and reinforce some key topics such as how attachment theory influences our understanding of how children react in an adoptive enviroment..

Objectives for 2003 – 2004

1. Continue present activity and extend new initiatives and developments as outlined above.

2. Participate in implementing the Adoption Support Services Regulations from October 2003.

    Ensure that there is regular monitoring and review of this growing area of adoption work.

ADOPTION ACTIVITY 2002 – 2003

1.   New Referrals to the Team

YEAR	2002/2003	2001/2002

1   New Referrals to Adoption Team

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	845	781

	2002/2003	2001/2002
City	237	239
County	460	409
Rutland	30	17
Out of Area	118	116

2   Post Adoption: Counselling: Searches: Record Information, Mediation and Support to Families

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	289	285

	2002/2003	2001/2002
a) Service requested by adopted person	172	180
b) Service required by birth relative	77	80
c) Service required by adoptive family	40	25

3.   Enquiries from those interested in adopting a child.

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	267	280

4   Non-Agency Adoption

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	101	71

5   Initial referrals of children to discuss Permanency Plans

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	93	84

6   Birth-parent requests to have a child adopted

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	3	5

7   Inter-Country Adoption

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	13	14

8   Other (includes fostering, training, advice to staff, student information) etc.

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	79	41

Comments

Referrals of children for Adoption /Permanency continue to rise, as expected, but "twin-tracking" means that they do not all result in placements outside of their families.

The rise in referrals of post-adoption support for families is also what was expected, and these are amongst our most complex and time consuming work.

The rise in non-agency adoptions (predominantly step-parent adoptions) was unexpected, and reverses the decline in previous years.

2.   The Children

1   *Initial referrals of children to discuss Permanency Plans (NB siblings count as one referral)

YEAR	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total	**93**	84
City	**50**	50
County	**38**	34
Rutland	**5**	0

2   *Number of individual children where adoption or residence became the plan (adoption pack issued).

Total	**110**	100
City	**69**	57
County	**37**	43
Rutland	**4**	0

3   Number of individual children presented to Adoption Panel for first time

Total	**85**	85
City	**47**	58
County	**37**	27
Rutland	**1**	0

4   Number of children placed for adoption (including foster carer adoptions)

Total	**62**	69
City	**44**	50
County	**18**	19
Rutland	**0**	0

5   Number of children placed for residence (with foster carers)

Total	**4**	6
City	**2**	5
County	**2**	1
Rutland	**0**	0

6   Number of children placed with adoptive families out-of-area (approved by other agencies).

Total	**15**	9
City	**13**	8
County	**2**	1

7   Number of disrupted placements (i.e. before Adoption Order) Number of children = 4 placements

Total	**6***	3
City	**5**	3
County	**1**	0

8   Number of Adoption Orders made.

Total	**55**	53
City	**41**	33
County	**14**	19
Rutland	**0**	1

The high number of referrals of City children has continued, and the County number has remained steady (but many of these cases are "twin-track" so these children are just as likely to be returned to parents or extended family, as go for adoption – it also means that delays occur).

There is a notable increase in the number of City children placed, reflecting the upsurge in children referred from the previous year. Particularly in the City, there were a large number of foster carer adoptions, perhaps reflecting the Department's emphasis on Kinship Care.

The number of disruptions remains low despite the increase in complex placements. The two single children were replaced successfully for adoption (both of these disruptions involved adopters who had birth children). The two sibling groups were in the "difficult to place" category but are now in settled long-term fostering placements.

a) **Placement of babies where birth parents request adoption at or before birth (hospital babies).**

		2002/2003	2001/2002
Total Number		**5**	**6**
	City	2	2
	County	3	4
	Rutland	0	0

One baby was of dual Asian heritage, one baby had Down Syndrome, one was the 3rd baby adopted from a mother with severe learning disabilities. They were placed at ages 4, 5, 6 and 8 months. The number of such "voluntarily relinquished" children remains small.

b) **Placement of children referred from Child Care Teams (including foster carer adoptions).**

		2002/2003	2001/2002
Total Number of Placements		**57**	63
	City	**42**	48
	County	**15**	15

Children Adopted by their Foster Carers		2002/2003	2001/2002
Total		**15**	7
	City	**12**	5
	County	**3**	2

Ethnic Origin		2002/2003	2001/2002
	White/British	**49**	55
	White/African-Caribbean	**6**	9
	White/African/African Caribbean	**2**	2
	White/Asian		1
	African		1
	Asian		1
		2002/2003	2001/2002

Sibling Groups	Singles			**24**	38
	Groups of 2			**9**	11
	Groups of 3			**5**	3
Age at Placement	0-1 years			**10**	20
	1-5 years			**27**	35
	5-10 years			**17**	14
	10+ years			**3**	
Adoption Allowance	**Total**	County	9	**37**	**29**
		City	28		
Inter Agency Placements	**Total**	County	2	**15**	
		City	13		

How Long Children Wait for Placement

(Excludes children being adopted by their foster carers and is calculated from date of the child's Adoption Panel decision).

		2002/2003
0-3	months	10
3-6	months	11
6-9	months	9
9-12	months	5
12-18	months	6
18	months –2 years	0
2 years 10 months		1
Total		**42**

Children wait for placement for a variety of reasons. There can be delays in the legal process e.g. granting of care or freeing orders, suitable families are very scarce for some groups of children, and national advertising is then required; there may, sometimes, be need for more health, medical or other information before family-finding or placement. The children (in our figures above) who waited longest were either in older sibling groups (aged 6 and above) and/or of dual or multiple ethnicity. Unusually, one ten year old was placed within 2-months!

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

3. Summary of work with Adopters

		2002/2003	2001/2002
1.	Referral / enquiries about adopting a child	267	280
2.	Information Evening		
	Number held	7	10
	Number attending (couples count as 1)	72	72
3	Applications		
	Given	51	72
	Not Given / Delayed	8	4
4	Home Study Assessments		
	Begun	44	51
5	Preparation Groups		
	1st time Applicants	5	6
	2nd time Applicants		1
	1st time Black/Asian Applicants	2	1
	Inter Country Applicants	1	
	Parent-craft	4	6
	Number who attended (couples count as 1)	51	67
	*(Excluding Parent-craft)		
6	Approved Families		
	Mainstream	34	52
	Foster Carer Adopters	9	5
	Inter Country Adopters	5	2
	Grand Total	48	59

These figures do not necessarily apply to the same group of people as applicants may start and end their applications across different years. Only first time adopters attend information evenings. Foster carers who are planning to adopt do not usually attend preparation groups or information evenings.

First time preparation groups run for 3-days (recently increased to 4 days) plus parent-craft is a one- day course for people adopting children aged 0-3.

Newly Approved Adoptive Families
(Excluding foster carer adoptions and inter-country adoptions).

			2002/2003	2001/2002
a)	Total number of families approved		**34**	51
b)	Marital Status	Married Couples	**32**	47
		Single	**2**	4
c)	Ethnic Origin	White	**27**	44
		Asian Hindu	**3**	2
		Asian Sikh		0
		Asian Muslim	**3**	2
		African		1
		White/Caribbean	**1**	1
		Other (White/New Zealand)		1
d)	Age range of child/ren for whom approved	0-3	**12**	24
		0-5	**19**	20
		5+	**3**	7
e)	First application to adopt		**31**	41
	Second application to adopt		**3**	10

Inter Agency Placements

Families placed with children from other local authorities

		2002/2003	2001/2002
Total Number		**6**	5
Ethnic Origin of Family	White	**3**	2
	Asian Hindu	**2**	2
	Burmese		1
	Asian Muslim	**1**	
Ethnic Origin of Child	White	**4**	3
	Asian/Tamil		1
	White/African		1
	Asian/Hindu	**2**	1
	Asian/Muslim	**1**	
Age of Child	4 Months	**1**	
	22 Months	**1**	
	2 Years	**2**	
	4 Years	**1**	
	6 Years	**1**	
	7 Years	**1**	
Siblings		**5**	

The establishment of the National Register has not brought about an increase in inter-agency placements.

4.   <u>Non Agency Adoptions</u>

	2002/2003	2001/2002
Total number of referrals / enquiries	**101**	71
Total number of applications	**34**	25
Step-parents applications	**32**	21
Relative applications	**1**	3
Inter-Country applications	**1**	1

The number has increased since last year, we are not certain of the reason as the number had declined in recent years. Changes in adoption legislation e.g. allowing cohabiting couples to adopt may change this figure again in future years.

WORK OF THE ADOPTION TEAM

Core Business

- Recruitment assessment and preparation of families for children looked after who need adoptive homes.

- Preparing children to move to permanent homes.

- Placement of children in adoptive families and support to placement.

- Provision of information, counselling and advice to birth families, adoptive families and adopted persons.

- Consultation service on adoption and permanency issues.

- Post Placement Services.

Service Users

- Children looked after by Social Services Department who need permanent families.

- Adults whose children may be placed for adoption, and their relatives.

- Adults and adopted children who seek help after an Adoption Order.

- Adults who wish to adopt.

- Departmental staff and external professionals seeking advice and consultation.

Policy Framework

- Adoption Act 1976.

- Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and 1997.

- Children Act 1989.

- LAC (98) 20.

- LAC (99) 20.

- Human Rights Act 1998.

- Adoption and Children Act 2002.

- National Standards 2002.

- National Minimum Standards.

- Quality Protects Initiative.

- Adoption – Inter Country Aspects 2000.

- Child Care Operations Code of Practice and Adoption Team Policy, Guidance and Practice.

ADOPTION SERVICE TASKS

1. Recruitment of adoptive families – including publicity, advertising, campaigns, also running of regular information evenings.

2. Assessment and preparation of adoptive families – includes statutory references, home study by social worker (up to 10 sessions), preparation groups, report for Adoption Panels.

3. Support / link work with adoptive families waiting for placement.

4. Supervision and support to adoptive families after placement of child/ren until adoption order (and sometimes post-adoption order).

5. Counselling, information and advice to birth parents requesting adoption for their child.

6. Link work with child care social worker of children referred for adoption – includes counselling birth relatives, advice and information to social worker, preparation of child for move to adoptive home, life story work, family finding for child.

7. Counselling information and advice to adults who have been adopted – includes intermediary work and support with tracing relatives.

8. Counselling information and advice to birth relatives of an adopted person – includes intermediary work and support with tracing relatives.

9. Counselling, advice and information to adoptive parents post-adoption – includes work with troubled children, mediation, inter-agency liaison.

10. Running groups, workshops and events for adoptive parents' post-adoption.

11. Assistance and monitoring of group for birth mothers.

12. Operating a duty system for referrals of work, and advice and guidance to the general public and social services staff. Acting as central point for information on all adoption matters.

13. Managing and reviewing systems for post adoption contact (Post-box scheme and direct contact).

14. Running training / education events for Departmental staff e.g. updates on policy and practice, life story workshop, adoption information sessions etc.

15. Counselling, advice and information on inter-country adoption. Assessment / home studies where required.

16. 'Non-Agency' adoptions (e.g. step-parents) – initial advice, counselling and information to enquirers and Departmental staff, and administrative management of referrals.

REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT STRATEGY 2003 – 2004

1. <u>2002/2003 Targets and Objectives</u>

    a) The target of 30-40 new adoptive families was achieved, with excess. In total, 34 new families were approved. In addition, 9 foster carer adopters and 5 inter-country adopters were approved.

    b) Monitoring how potential adopters located us continued. Referral forms ask duty social workers to complete tick boxes.

    c) Leaflets / posters were re-circulated.

    d) Yellow pages advertising was extended out of Leicestershire to include Nottinghamshire as well as Coventry, Derby and Northants.

    e) A lot of local publicity occurred during National Adoption Week, some in conjunction with City fostering teams. This included newspaper, TV and Radio programmes.

    f) Local press advertising continued at regular intervals through the year, some in conjunction with City fostering teams, to maximise use of the City located fostering and adoption centre building.

    g) We continued to participate in the Trent Consortium for adopters/children, for sharing resources inter-agency with Nottingham, Derby, Derbyshire, Sheffield, Barnsley and Rotherham.

    h) We reviewed our need for families with a birth child requesting to adopt a single child and stopped such recruitment, but offering suitable advice to such enquirers.

2. <u>Current Needs</u>

    No change from the previous year; we continue to need more families for school age children, sibling groups, dual heritage, and black children.

3. <u>Targets and Objectives for 2003-2004</u>

    a) Recruitment, assessment and approval of 30 – 40 new families.

    b) Keep under review the situation regarding taking new applications for children 0-3, healthy, white. We consider such applicants now but did not do so from April 2001 – March 2002.

    c) Continue to monitor and collect data on how potential adopters find us.

    d) Continue Yellow Pages entries as above.

    e) Continue membership of the Trent Consortium for children/adopters.

f) Note/monitor the effects of the introduction of the National Adoption Register (came into operation April 2002).

g) Team Manager to undertake inventory of leaflets, posters etc and ensure up-to-date. Re-circulate where necessary. A new "Childlessness" leaflet is in process.

h) To maximise publicity (local) during National Adoption week.

i) To continue press advertising at intervals, as before.

NB. This strategy to be reviewed in April / May 2004.