



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED  
ALL**

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

**Cabinet**

**20 December 2004**

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**Commission for Social Care Inspection of Leicester City Council  
Adoption Service and the Adoption Service Annual Report**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Social Care and Health**

**1. Purpose or Report**

This report introduces to Cabinet the outcome of the National Care Standards Commission Inspection (CSCI) of the Leicester City Adoption Service, which took place in October 2003 (Report attached). It is a requirement that the Cabinet consider this formally. Associated with the inspection is the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose, contained within the Adoption Team Annual Report (Report attached).

**2. Summary**

2.1 All Local Authority Adoption Agencies are inspected every third year, to ensure that they meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the amended Adoption Act 1976, the amended Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003. This was the first time the service had received such an inspection.

2.2.1 The Leicester City Adoption Service as a service provider is expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. These standards provide the basis against which compliance by the service is judged.

2.2.2 The CSCI inspection of the Adoption Service proved complicated because the adoption service is provided as part of a joint arrangement between Leicester City Council, Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils and it was evident that the inspectors had some difficulty understanding how the service is delivered through the joint arrangement.

2.2.3 The four inspectors decided to treat each local authority as having its own adoption service, and each was therefore inspected separately. Artificial distinctions were made within the service to conform to the inspection design, which resulted in difficulties that persisted throughout the inspection process and were also manifest in the final report. Ultimately this led to delays, especially in the production of the final report on the Leicester City Adoption Service. Indeed the final date for responding to the CSCI on the inspection report was exactly one year after the inspection took place.

2.2.4 The inspection identified three areas where the service received Statutory Requirements (these are areas where the service was deemed not to be meeting the minimum standards). All three areas have been addressed and actions implemented. In four areas the service was judged to be almost meeting the standards, eighteen were met and a further three were seen to have exceeded the standards. There were a total of nine 'Good Practice Recommendations'. All of these have been included in an action plan and given that the recommendations were similar for all three authorities, this plan applies across the whole service.

2.2.5 The Statement of Purpose (2003) was judged to meet the relevant standard, although this has now been revised for 2004. The current Statement of Purpose is contained within the Adoption Service Annual Report attached to this report. The National Minimum Standards require that the Statement of Purpose is approved by the executive side of the council and therefore needs to be presented to Cabinet. As this document should be accessible, assuming it is approved by Cabinet, it will be posted on the Leicester City Council website.

2.2.6 The Annual Report provides a concise summary of the Adoption Team activity and performance. It highlights a number of the challenges facing the team and how the service is developing to meet these new challenges, particularly in the area of post adoption support services following the introduction of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 Guidance and the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2002.

### **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- a) Cabinet note the final report of the Commission for Social Care Inspection into the Leicester City Adoption Service.
- b) Cabinet acknowledge the statutory Requirements and Good Practice Recommendations contained within the confidential part of the CSCI inspection report, together with the departmental response and action plan.

- c) Cabinet recognises the work of the Adoption Team and the monitoring of its activities as contained within the Annual Report and approves the Statement of Purpose, according to Standard 17.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption.

#### **4. Headline Financial and Legal Implications**

- 4.1 The implementation of the National Minimum Standards in adoption has caused significant additional costs, especially in the area of post adoption support to adoptive placements, additional training and preparation of prospective and approved adopters. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 Guidance and The Adoption Support Services Regulations (2003) also provide, for the first time, the potential for any adopters living in the area to seek adoption support services, this includes financial provision. This has for example already included, from adopters, requests for support from private organisations, which could be at very considerable expense to the authority.
- 4.2 Other additional costs associated with the implementation of the National Minimum Standards relate primarily to administrative and other resource costs, such as the requirement to provide written information about adoption services and updated procedures.
- 4.3 This is scheduled to continue into 2005/06, but the costs will need to be considered as part of future years' budget strategies should the grant come to an end. Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance Social Care and Health Department (Tel: 252 8800)
- 4.4 There are no Legal implications arising from the report. Cathy Healy, Senior Solicitor (Tel: 252 6712)

#### **5. Report Author / Officer to contact:**

Mark Tingley Service Manager, Children and Families Resources  
(Tel: 299 5810)

#### **DECISION STATUS**

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Reason</b>	N/A
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	No
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	Cabinet

**A D O P T I O N  
T E A M**

YEAR 2003/04

Statement of Purpose and  
Annual Report

# **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND FUNCTION:**

AMENDED JUNE 2004

## **Adoption agencies of**

**Leicester City Social Care and Health Department**

**Leicestershire County Social Services Department**

**Rutland Social Services Department**

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**Statement of Purpose and Function**  
**Adoption Service**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Statement of Purpose and Function explains the aims, objectives and services provided by the Adoption Team for Leicester City Social Care and Health Directorate, Leicestershire Social Services and Rutland Social Services. It is part of the Local Authority's responsibility in fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption Regulations and National Minimum Standards (2000).
- 1.2 The Statement of Purpose and Function is available to staff of the organisation, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents, and other professionals.
- 1.3 The addressees of the three Local Authorities who have approved the statement of purpose and function are as follows:

Leicester City Council  
Social Care and Health  
New Walk Centre  
Welford Place  
Leicester LE1 6ZG

Leicestershire County Council  
Social Services Department  
County Hall  
Glenfield  
Leicestershire LE3 8RL

Rutland County Council  
Social Services Department  
Catmose  
Oakham  
Rutland LE15 6HP

## **2. Aim of the Adoption Service**

### **Primary aim**

- 2.1 The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed as a matter of priority within a loving and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- 2.2 Additionally the aims of the service are to:-
- Place children at the centre of the adoption process and act in their best interests at all times, ensuring the process is timely and avoids delay.
  - Recruit high quality adoptive families to meet the needs of children referred for adoption.
  - Provide advice and training for childcare social workers on all matters related to applying for an adoptive placement.
  - Provide a range of support services and information to adoptive families and children to ensure adoptive placements are successful.

## **3. Objectives of the service:-**

- 3.1 To ensure children's needs have been fully assessed and that it is considered to be in the child's best interests to be adopted before a matching process starts.
- 3.2 To ensure that the views of children and young people have been listened to and given due consideration in any decisions taken about their future.
- 3.3 To publicise regularly adoption services to enable members of the community to consider adoption as a positive option. To recruit carers from a wide variety of backgrounds who will meet children's' specific racial, cultural and linguistic needs and who will respect their birth and family origins.
- 3.4 To recruit, train and retain highly skilled and appropriately qualified staff who have experience in the making and supporting of family placements and in understanding the effects the adoption process can have on all parties. To ensure all staff of the service are committed to ensuring children and families receive the support and advice required to maintain stable family life.

## **4. Principles**

- 4.1 The Adoption Service believes that:
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that 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 taken into account at all stages.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language should be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made.
- The particular needs of disabled children should be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made about them.
- 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.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many different organisations, professions and individuals who have to work together to meet the needs for services of those affected by adoption.
- 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 with family members who are significant to them.

## **5. Management of the Adoption Service**

5.1 The adoption service is provided through a joint arrangement between Leicestershire, Rutland and Leicester City local authorities. Leicestershire and Leicester City provide managers who are responsible for the adoption team. Leicestershire County Council is the lead agency.

### **5.1.1 Leicester City Council**

Name of Manager: Mark Tingley.

Address Eagle House  
11 Friar Lane  
Leicester  
LE1 5RB



Experience and qualification of the Manager are: -

Mark Tingley has a CQSW and a BA in Social Science. He has over twenty years experience as a social worker and social work manager, having worked both in London and Leicester.

The registered provider is Leicester City Council Social Care and Health Department.

The agency decision-maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Kim Bromley-Derry, Service Director.

#### 5.1.2 **Leicestershire County Council**

Name of Manager: Cath Sartoris

Address: Social Services Department  
Bassett Street  
South Wigston  
Leicester.  
LE18 4PE

Experience and qualification of the manager are:-

Cath Sartoris has a degree in Social Studies and a CQSW from the University of Leicester obtained in 1974. Cath Sartoris also has a Diploma in Management from the University of Leicester obtained in 1996. She has worked extensively in children's services.

The registered provider is Leicestershire County Council Social Services Department

The agency decision-maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Flick Schofield, Assistant Director

#### 5.1.3 **Rutland Council**

Name of Manager: Stephen Attwood

Address: Rutland Social Service Department  
Catmose  
Oakham  
Rutland  
LE15 6HP

Experience and qualification of the manager are:-

Steve has been a qualified Social Worker for over 25 years. He has extensive experience in children's services. In 2003 he obtained a Certificate of management from the Open University.

The registered provider is Rutland County Council Social Services Department.

The agency decision-maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Colin Foster, Director of Social Services.

5.2 The Adoption Service employs a number of qualified and experienced staff as follows:

- Two Team Manager posts (Faye Andrews works full time for the Leicester City Council and Mary Lowles and Bridgett Puddepha are the managers for the Leicestershire County Council, both working 18.5 hours), who manage the day-to-day arrangements of the Adoption Team. All the managers have social work qualifications and extensive experience of child care and adoption services over many years.
- Five full - time and six part time experienced social workers, who are all qualified and experienced in adoption work.
- Two post-adoption workers, one qualified in social work and one unqualified support worker, who has relevant experience. Rutland County Council makes a contribution to these posts. Two further workers are to be in post by the summer 2004, funded by the Leicester City Council.
- Two administrative assistants and three clerks who provide administrative support to the team.
- A full time Receptionist for the Fostering and Adoption Information Centre

## **6. The Work of the Adoption Team**

6.1 The Adoption Team is based at:

Eagle House  
11 Friar Lane  
Leicester  
LE1 5RB

6.2 This team provides the following services:

- Recruitment of adoptive families; including publicity, information giving and regular information evenings.
- Assessment and preparation of prospective adoptive families, which includes visiting the home, undertaking a home study, obtaining reference checks and the provision of preparation groups.
- Support for approved families awaiting placement.

- Advice, guidance and support to adoptive families during the matching process and post placement, this includes workshops and events for adoptive families.
- Running training and educational events and providing guidance for departmental staff who are preparing children, their parents and carers.
- Provide adoption support services, to adoptive families and birth relatives.
- The facilitation of direct and indirect contact arrangements.
- The provision of a specialist consultation and advice service.
- Counselling, information and advice in relation to the following individual situations:
  - Birth parents whose children might be adopted.
  - Prospective adopters.
  - Adults who have been adopted, including support with tracing relatives. This includes access to birth records counselling.
  - Birth relatives of an adopted person, who want support with tracing relatives.
  - People who wish to adopt children from another country.
  - Non agency adoptions including step parents who wish to adopt their partner's children.
  -

## 7. **Enquiries about Adopting a Child (recruitment of prospective adoptive families)**

7.1.1 A range of leaflets are available to explain to people what adopting children is all about and the processes that prospective adopters will need to go through. The Adoption Service welcomes enquiries from people from all backgrounds, whether single, in a relationship or married, and regardless of sexuality, race or religion. There is no upper age limit for a prospective adopter but adopters will need to be in good general health with lots of energy and love to give to a child.

7.2 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 local children requiring adoption. The recruitment strategy is published within the annual report of the Adoption Service and can be obtained on request by contacting the Adoption Team at Eagle House.

## Process for Assessment and Approval of Adopters

### Target Times

	Interest in Adoption/receive Information Pack
	↓
Within 1 - 8 weeks	Attend Information Evening - send form back.
	↓
Within 1 month	Home Visit by Adoption Worker(s) - discussion of personal situation and wishes/what sort of child.
	↓
Within 2 weeks	Application forms offered after agreement by the Adoption Team
	↓
Within 3 Months	Completed Application Returned. References taken up (CRB, Probation, Social Services, Child Protection Register, Personal References, employer, and school). Medicals arranged with GP.
	↓
3 Months	Preparation/Assessment. Attend Groups/meet other Adopters. Adoption worker completes "Home Study".
	↓
	Adoption panel to recommend approval of adopters, applicants are able to attend Panel.

### APPROVAL BY ADOPTION AGENCY

	↓
	Adoption Social Worker visits 3 monthly until/unless child is placed. Adopters complete family "Album".
	↓
	Child's Social Worker makes choice of suitable adopters/visit to discuss and give information by child's and adoption social workers. May provide a video
	↓
	Agreement to go ahead on the "Matching" taken to Adoption Panel for recommendation.

6-9 months  
Depends on  
circumstances  
and Legal  
situation

### APPROVAL BY ADOPTION AGENCY

	↓
	Post approval training one day
	↓
	Introduction and placement of child.
	↓
	Placement is reviewed at intervals. Both child and adoption Social Workers continue to visit.
	↓
	<b><u>ADOPTION COURT HEARING</u></b> (Attended by adopters with child and social worker) - <b><u>ORDER MADE</u></b>
	↓
	Adoption support services available.

## **8. Local Authority Adoption Panel and Decision Making Responsibilities**

8.1 Each of the three Local Authorities has their own Adoption Panel, which considers cases arising from their area. The Panel has the responsibility to: -

- Consider the assessment of prospective adoptive parents and recommend whether they are approved as adoptive parents.
- Decide whether adoption is in the best interests of the child.
- Agree the matching of child or children to a family.

8.2 The Adoption Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include qualified social work managers, health professionals, elected Members of the Council, lay people (who are not employed by the Service/Council and may have personal experience of adoption). A legal adviser attends the panel.

Following the recommendation of the Adoption Panel, the papers are passed to the "Agency decision maker" who has responsibility for the final approval. The decision is put in writing to the prospective adopter(s).

## **9. Monitoring the Quality of the Adoption Service**

9.1 The quality of the Adoption Service's work and standards are regularly monitored

- The managers of the Service ensure the staff are appropriately trained and supervised on a regular basis to ensure they can undertake the functions of their work within guidance and legislation. The work of the team is subject to regular inspection. The local authorities submit information on achievements against performance indicators.
- An annual report is produced by the three Local Authorities on the activity, achievements and areas of development within the Adoption Service.
- The Adoption Panel independently scrutinises all assessments and judgements made about children being considered for adoption and those of prospective adoptive parents. The Adoption panel has a critical role to play in the provision of independent expert oversight.
- Elected members of the Council have a duty to be accountable for the Adoption Service.
- The Adoption Service is subject to a three yearly inspection by The Commission for Social Care Inspection.

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- The Adoption Service is subject to a three yearly inspection by The Commission for Social Care Inspection.
- Feedback is gathered from a variety of service users through evaluation questionnaires.

## **10. Complaints Procedure**

- 10.1 Each of the three Local Authorities has a complaint procedure. If a complaint is made it will be considered by the relevant Authority.
- 10.2 Copies of the procedure and complaints forms can be requested from the Adoption Team at Eagle House, 11 Friar Lane, Leicester, Tel: 2995899.
- 10.3 Generally, there are three stages to the procedure. **Stage 1** will involve the manager responding to the complaint and attempting to resolve the matter informally. **Stage 2** will involve an investigation by an independent person, at **Stage 3** an independent panel considers the complaint. There are clear timescales for the complaint to be considered, investigated and responded to.
- 10.4 All complaints and matters of concern will be treated with respect and confidentiality, and will be recorded as part of the responsibilities of the Council. These records are open to Inspectors of The Commission for Social Care Inspection.
- 10.5 Children who are already placed in pre-adoptive placements (i.e. children in care of the Local Authority) also have access to a Children's Rights Officer, who will assist any child in making a complaint if they wish, and support them throughout the process

## **11. Reviewing the Statement of Purpose and Function**

- 11.1 The Statement is reviewed and approved on an annual basis by the executive side of the council who have a responsibility for the Adoption Service for each Local Authority.

## **12. Commission for Social Care Inspection**

The local office is:

Commission for Social Care Inspection  
 The Pavilions  
 5 Smith Way  
 Grove Park  
 Enderby  
 Leicester LE19 1SX  
 Tel: 0116 2815900  
 Fax: 0116 2815910

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2003/04**

Summary of Key Achievements for 2003-04

Areas of challenge

Summary of specific objectives for 2004-05

Statistics and Activity 2003-04

Post Adoption Report

Appendices

- Work of the Adoption Team
- Recruitment Strategy

## **Summary of Key Achievements**

- Statistical analysis against PAF indicators show continuing good progress; the number of children placed for adoption and the number of adoption orders is above the national average.
- The Permanence Panel in the County continues to successfully monitor looked after children under ten years, who have been looked after for more than three months. The City Permanence Panel is to be relaunched in 2004.
- The team has continued to recruit a high number of appropriate adoptive families – 38 in 2003-04 for the three authorities.
- Responded to the Department of Education and Skills consultations on the Adoption and Children Act regulations and guidance packages.
- Established post-approval preparation day for adopters.
- Conformed to the National Adoption Register requirements.
- Continued to implement the National Standards.
- Established a successful adoption support service.

## **Areas of Challenge**

The national context of adoption is one of increased expectation on adoption agencies to perform to very high standards, to place more children for adoption and to offer greater support to those who have adopted. The implementation of the Adoption and Children Act in 2005 will lead to a major transformation of adoption services

The adoption team manages these challenges, by prioritising work and by continuing to develop a strong team identity. The prospective appointment of extra city adoption support staff will undoubtedly assist in our work, but the overall pressure of increasing workloads and high expectations will remain.

## **Summary of Specific Objectives for 2004-05**

1. Continue to develop the action plan to implement new regulations and guidance.
2. Implement, as appropriate, new adoption legislation, including inter-country adoption guidance and regulations.
3. Continue to review and update the Recruitment Strategy for adoptive parents.
4. Review the assessment and preparation methods for adoptive applicants.
5. Continue to work to develop the regional adoption consortium.



6. Continue to progress adoption support services with the appointment of new City staff.
7. Help to meet the training needs for child care social workers especially regarding the implementation of new legislation and the implications for their practice.
8. Develop an independent support and counselling service to birth parents.
9. Continue to hold joint arrangement liaison meetings.

## STATISTICS 2003 - 2004

### 1. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY

	<b>2003/04</b>	2002/03
1. New Referrals	900	845
• City	275	237
• County	460	460
• Rutland	21	30
• Out of area	144	21
2. Post Adoption Referrals	357	289
• Adoptees	202	172
• Birth relatives	99	77
• Adoptive parents/family	56	40
3. Enquiries from people interested in adopting a child	260	267
4. Referrals of children for adoption or residence (by case)	84	93
5. Adoption Pack issued (individual children)	94	110
• City	60	69
• County	34	37
• Rutland	0	4
6. Number of individual children placed for adoption	65	62
• City	27	44
• County	35	18
• Rutland	3	0
7. Number of individual children placed for residence	12	4
• City	6	
• County	6	
8. Disrupted placements (individual children)	3	6
• City	3	5
• County	0	1
9. Information Evenings held	6	7

Applications given	50	51
Applications not given/delayed	8	8
10. Home Studies begun/allocated	38	44
11. Preparation Groups	7	8
• Pre-approval	5	
• Post-approval	2	
12. Approved adoptive families	38	48
• Mainstream	33	34
• Foster Carers	3	9
• Inter-Country	2	5
13. Non-Agency Adoption Referrals	104	101

### Comment

1. The number of our referrals has risen, largely caused by the significant increase in adoption support work (see separate report in this document).
2. Referrals of looked after children for adoption planning remains steady, but because adoption plans are twin tracked alongside rehabilitation to parents or placement with family members, there has been a drop in the number of children whose final plan is adoption. Surprisingly this year, for the first time during the existence of the joint arrangement, a larger number of County children than City children were placed for adoption.
3. Recruitment of new adoptive families remains a priority (see appendix) but the figure for approved families has remained steady, compared with previous years.

2. CHILDREN

	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2002-03</b>
1. Number of individual children where adoption or residence became the plan (adoption pack issued)	<b>Total</b>	94	110
	City	60	69
	County	34	37
	Rutland	0	4
2. Number of individual children presented to Adoption Panel for first time	<b>Total</b>	93	85
	City	49	47
	County	42	37
	Rutland	2	1
3. Number of children placed for adoption (including foster carer adoptions)	<b>Total</b>	65	62
	City	27	44
	County	35	18
	Rutland	3	0
4. Number of children placed for residence (with foster carers)	<b>Total</b>	12	4
	City	6	2
	County	6	2
	Rutland	0	0
5. Number of children placed with adoptive families out-of-area (approved by other agencies) * 3 placements of 7 children	<b>Total</b>	7*	15
	City	2	13
	County	5	2
6. Number of disrupted placements (i.e. a breakdown before the Adoption Order) * 3 children but 2 placements	<b>Total</b>	3*	6
	City	2	5
	County	0	1
7. Number of Adoption Orders made	<b>Total</b>	60	55
	City	33	41
	County	26	14
	Rutland	1	0

- a) Placement of babies where birth parents request adoption at or before birth (hospital babies):

<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>6</b>
CITY	5
COUNTY	1
RUTLAND	0

Of the City babies, three were Hindu, one was Sikh, one Thai, and the County baby was Nigerian. For the first time, there were no white/ British babies. All the babies were placed with culturally appropriate families.

- b) Placement of children referred from childcare teams, including foster carer adoptions

<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>59</b>
CITY	22
COUNTY	34
RUTLAND	3

- CHILDREN ADOPTED BY THEIR FOSTER CARERS

<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>4</b>
CITY	1
COUNTY	3
RUTLAND	0

- ETHNIC ORIGIN

WHITE/BRITISH	56
WHITE/AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN	2
ASIAN/MUSLIM-SIKH	1

- SIBLING GROUPS

SINGLES	19
GROUPS OF 2	17
GROUPS OF 3	2

- AGE AT PLACEMENT

0 – 1 year	5	(one of these a baby with Downs Syndrome)
1 – 5 years	42	
5 – 10 years	12	

#### INTER AGENCY PLACEMENTS

TOTAL PLACEMENTS	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF	7

## CHILDREN

- HOW LONG ALL CHILDREN WAIT FOR PLACEMENT  
(excludes children being adopted by their foster carers and is calculated from date of child's Adoption Panel recommendation)

0 – 3 months	11
3 – 6 months	22
6 – 9 months	15
9 – 12 months	0
12 – 18 months	11
18 – 24 months	2

### Comment

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. Sometimes there may be need for more health, medical or other information before family-finding can begin or a placement made. The children (in our figures above) who waited longest were either in older sibling groups (aged 6 and above) or are held up in legal proceedings. Very few children waited longer because of their ethnic origin.

### 3. ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Prospective applicants are recruited and assessed according to the National Standards. Information evenings are held regularly and all prospective applicants are visited at home prior to applications being agreed. National Standards criteria are applied and priority is given to applicants who appear to offer themselves as potential families for children in our care, for example, sibling groups.

First time preparation groups run for four days and we have recently started to run 'post-approval' groups for approved adopters waiting for placement.

<b>a) TOTAL NUMBER OF APPROVED FAMILIES</b>	<b>38</b>
• MAINSTREAM	33
• FOSTER CARERS	3
• INTER COUNTRY	2
<b>b) MARITAL STATUS</b>	
• MARRIED COUPLES	35
• SINGLE	3
<b>c) ETHNIC ORIGIN</b>	
• WHITE	27
• WHITE/EUROPEAN	4
• ASIAN HINDU	3
• ASIAN SIKH	1
• AFRICAN/CARIBBEAN	2

- ASIAN/MUSLIM 1

**d) AGE RANGE OF CHILDREN FOR WHOM APPROVED**

- 0 – 3 14
- 0 – 5 16
- 5+ 8

**e) INTER AGENCY PLACEMENTS** (Approved adopters placed with children from their local authorities)

Total Number 2

4. NON AGENCY ADOPTIONS

These include step-parent adoptions (always the majority), close relative adoptions, or inter-country placements where UK adoption is a requirement. The number continues to remain steady.

<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES/REFERRALS</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>37</b>
• STEP-PARENT	35
• RELATIVE	2
• INTER COUNTRY	0
• COUNTY	25
• CITY	10
• RUTLAND	2

## **ADOPTION SUPPORT**

New regulations and guidance were introduced for adoption support services on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2003. This was one of the first sections of the Adoption and Children Act to be implemented.

The demand for adoption support services has increased year by year. To meet this demand, three new posts were established in the county in 2002, one in the Therapeutic Social Work Team, and two in the adoption team. The city is currently recruiting to two posts to complement the county workers in the adoption team. Rutland contributes to the costs of the two county workers.

### **Adoption Team Activity**

Objectives as set out in the last annual report 2002-2003 were to:

- Continue present activity and extend new initiatives and developments;
- Participate in implementing the Adoption Support Regulations;
- Ensure regular monitoring and review.

### **New Referrals**

Total number of referrals to the Team were 357 (an increase of 68 cases from the previous year). Of these, the majority continue to be from adopted adults (202) who were requesting a variety of services, but commonly access to their records and help in tracing their birth relatives. Birth relative enquirers (99) seek similar services, often requesting contact with their adopted children. Requests from adoptive families (56) are the lowest in number but are the most time-consuming and complex. They are increasingly urgent and sometimes traumatic cries for help from adoptive families with extremely troubled adopted children and young people.

### **Services to Adopted Adults**

Some cases involve straightforward information and counselling, but they frequently involve searches for relatives and support for mediation and reunions. Dilemmas can arise about the advisability of 'cold contact' of unknown relatives.

A difficulty regarding access to information is now common to all adoption agencies as the law is open to interpretation. Issues of conflicts over rights and privacy are impossible to cover in policy and procedure. In addition, the referrals from young adults who were adopted from care are now increasing. Some of these adults have painful, if not traumatic, histories and there may be a large number of case files to read. Some of these young adults are extremely vulnerable and need much support to embark on renewing contact with parents and relatives from whom they were removed through care proceedings. This is very different from the work previously done with adopted adults.

### **Services to Birth Families**

Birth relatives who request information and tracing or contact with adoptees, present similar tasks and dilemmas to those mentioned in the section on services to adopted adults. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 will offer additional guidance on tracing



and intermediary services for birth relatives, which may lead to an increase of referrals.

A leaflet has been designed and produced by the adoption support workers describing the services that are available and describing how to access information.

Birth mothers are offered the opportunity to join an independent support group (see 'Groups'). A future development, when staffing allows, would be to set up a similar group for fathers. The new requirement (National Adoption Standards) to offer for independent counselling to birth parents during care proceedings means birth parents will have the opportunity to use this service and then be offered the existing support group once an adoption order has been made.

### Services for Adoptive Families

The number of referrals of families struggling with the problems of their adopted children and young people has increased. The 2003 regulations (Adoption and Children Act 2002) has recognised the need for support services and also raised awareness for adoptive parents that their requests for help are legitimate.

The adoption team, particularly the adoption support workers are one of the main first points of call for adoptive parents. When a family makes contact information and advice may be all that the family needs. For other more complex situations the worker may carry out an initial assessment, followed by individual or family casework. In some instances the family may be referred to an access or childcare team, or to the Therapeutic Social Work Team. There may be joint work with any of these teams. In the county a protocol has been developed to describe the roles and responsibilities of all those involved. This is to try to ensure that families receive a seamless service and are not passed from one worker to another.

The adoption support workers run two evening support groups for adoptive parents (currently in Loughborough and Melton). Attendance is variable but feedback is positive. Adopters are now making their own informal contacts with one another. An additional support group has been established in the daytime for parents of children with attachment problems. This came about as a result of a suggestion by an adopter following a successful seminar on Attachment (see below).

The team has also funded a ten-week course (by use of the city's adoption support budget) run by 'Adoption UK' called 'A Piece of Cake' for adoptive parents. There are currently sixteen participants which is the maximum, and attendance has been excellent. If final evaluation is positive, we hope to repeat this course.

The workers have organised day seminars by a well-respected clinical psychologist on 'Attachment' issues and resolutions. These have been well attended by adoptive parents and have resulted in mutual support networks being formed. Fortunately we have been able to invite a number of social workers to these events and hope they can be repeated. (These have been funded from the city adoption support budget).

Social events such as the annual adoption party for children and parents continue to provide opportunities for families to support each other. Summer events such as picnics have been organised by adopters.

Links with CAMHS have been both positive as well as rather frustrating.

Positive initiatives have included:-

- CAMHS course for parents on the impact of abuse and trauma (social workers attended with adopters but they are only available to parents before the making of an adoption order);
- Joint work on some individual cases;
- A CAMHS psychologist providing a session at prospective adopters' preparation groups;
- Services to children who have been placed for adoption.

However, frustrations remain over delays in taking cases, inconsistencies of the service, a surprising lack of awareness by some psychiatrists about adoption and attachment. Discussions are on going with the CAMHS service to address some of these issues with a view to trying to obtain specialist adoption workers.

Education issues are a central concern of many of the parents who ask for help. Currently there is only limited understanding of attachment issues and its affects on behaviour within schools. The P.L.A.C.E. (Promoting Looked After Children's Education) Panel has now extended its remit within the county to consider the needs of children placed for adoption. There is no equivalent forum in the city or Rutland but most of the adoption support work currently lies within the county area.

The adoption support workers have now devised a detailed leaflet for schools, following consultation with teachers and parents. It is hoped that when this has been distributed it will be a fruitful source of information.

Finally, a resource bank of books, videos and tapes is being established for sharing with adoptive families and social workers.

Developmental work on respite care and buddying schemes (between adoptive families) has been considered and may be possible to progress once new workers have joined the team.

### Contact Services

Improved management of the Post Box (indirect contact) Scheme has been assisted by excellent and necessary clerical support, relieving some of the social worker and support worker duties.

Separate files for direct contact arrangements have been established, as such arrangements have increased. A review of direct contact cases (from the year 2000) took place, with a satisfactory response rate from both adopters and birth relatives. Responses were collated in a report and shared with the team to inform our practice. Yearly listing of direct contact arrangements assists information for Court statements, which are commonly requested on contact issues. It is planned to carry out reviews approximately every three years. A leaflet on the Post Box Scheme is due for updating this year.

### Services to Children

Indirectly, we have supported children through services to their parents and through the Contact Scheme. We have access to a reasonable supply of books, tapes and videos for direct work with children. Counselling is possible with older children. Children participate in social events such as the annual party and summer picnic.

Discussions are currently taking place regarding setting up a children's support group. Liaison/links with the Children's Society who already run several groups for children/young people are being followed up.

### Training/Education

An essential part of any specialist worker's task is to create and offer opportunities for dissemination of knowledge to colleagues as well as the people who are served. The adoption support workers have in the past year:-

- Run a session for prospective adopters as part of preparation training;
- Run a complete day for approved adopters waiting for placement;
- Presented a seminar on attachment issues to child care managers;
- With the Therapeutic Team Social Worker (adoption), presented sessions to the three Adoption Panels as part of their training.

It is planned to undertake with the Therapeutic Team Social Worker, sessions to child care staff, following the agreement of Departmental protocols on working arrangements for adoption support services.

### Groups

As described above, the following groups have been set up or are involved in post-adoption issues:-

- Prospective adopters preparation final day.
- Approved adopters 'refresher' for those awaiting placement.
- Two support groups for adoptive parents.
- Support group for adopters encountering attachment problems.
- Birth mothers support group run at the Laura Centre by independent workers; referrals/liaison/support work from the post-adoption workers.

Plans for a children's/young person's group will continue to be considered.

### Co-Working/Collaboration

Regular meetings, formal and informal, take place with the Therapeutic Team Social Worker and Team Manager. Some joint working is possible with some cases but this requires case-by-case planning as there is no 'blueprint', which covers all situations. This requires commitment to negotiation and joint skill sharing. As far as we know, there is no other adoption agency, which mirrors this arrangement.

### Dilemmas

Inevitably, there are a few:-

- How to set limits on working with cases which, potentially, have no 'cut-off' point. We may need to take a harder look at our criteria and time limits.
- How to use limited resources effectively; one issue which has already arisen is the demand by some adoptive parents to be referred to highly specialist services such as 'Family Futures', 'Keys' and The Post-Adoption Centre. These are very expensive resources but as yet no data is available on the outcomes they can achieve for children in adoptive families.
- How to engage other agencies such as Health and Education in a more meaningful and effective way.
- How to differentiate the routes into adoption support services via childcare operations/access/adoption team/therapeutic team.
- How to access effective local therapeutic intervention for the most traumatised children.

#### Aims and Objectives for 2004-2005

1. Incorporate the City adoption support workers into the existing team whilst monitoring and reviewing its overall functions.
2. Continue the existing liaison and co-working with the therapeutic social work team.
3. Implement the Support Services regulations and participate in continuing government consultation on regulations and guidance.
4. Press for closer involvement and communication with CAMHS and Education where possible, and raise awareness of adoption issues.

**WORK OF THE ADOPTION TEAM**

Core Business

- The recruitment, assessment and preparation of families for children looked after who need adoptive homes.
- The preparation of children to move to permanent homes.
- The placement of children in adoptive families and the provision of support to the placement.
- The provision of information, counselling and advice to birth families, adoptive families and adopted persons.
- A consultation service on adoption and permanency issues.
- Adoption support services to adopted children, adoptive families and birth families.

Service Users

- Children looked after by Social Services Department who need permanent families.
- Adults whose children may be placed for adoption, and their relatives.
- Adoptive families, adopted children and birth relatives who seek help after the making of 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.
- Support Services Regulations and Guidance 2003.
- Adoption – Inter Country Aspects 2000.
- Child Care Operations Code of Practice and Adoption Team Policy, Guidance and Practice.

**REVIEW OF THE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY 2004**

1. 2003-04 Targets and Objectives

- a) The target of 30-40 new adoptive families was achieved. In total 33 'mainstream' families were approved. In addition, 3 foster carer adopters and 2 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 continued out of Leicestershire to include Nottinghamshire as well as Coventry, Derby and Northamptonshire. A larger, high-profile advert was agreed and published and details included in the YELL.COM website.
- e) A lot of local publicity occurred during National Adoption Week, some in conjunction with the 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 the city fostering teams, to maximise use of the city centre -located fostering and adoption building. The city featured advertising on buses and bus shelters in prime locations. An interview with an adoptive family was featured in the County magazine 'Leicestershire Matters' and Leicester Link.
- 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. Consultation took place regarding a new East Midlands Consortium which was established in May 2004.
- h) We continued to prioritise applicants for siblings and children of dual/mixed heritage.

2. Current Needs

We continue to need more families for school age children, sibling groups, dual heritage, and black children.

3. Targets and Objectives for 2004 – 2005

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

- b) Keep under review the situation regarding taking new applications for very young single children.
- c) Continue to monitor and collect data on how potential adopters find us.
- d) Continue Yellow Pages entries as above.
- e) Participate/review membership of the new East Midlands Consortium.
- f) The Team Managers to undertake an inventory of leaflets, posters, etc and ensure they are up-to-date. Re-circulate where necessary. A new 'Childlessness' leaflet is in process, as well as an updated general information leaflet.
- g) To maximise local publicity during National Adoption Week.
- h) To continue press advertising at intervals, as before.



Please ask for: Mark Tingley  
Direct Line: 0116 2995876  
Direct Fax No: 0116 2995887  
Our Ref: 354mtmb  
Your Ref:

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2004

Ms Karen Dolton  
Commission for Social Care Inspection  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, West Point  
501 Chester Road  
Old Trafford  
Manchester M16 9HU

Dear Karen

**Re: Leicester City Adoption Service Inspection**

Please find enclosed our Action Plans in relation to the Statutory Requirements and Good Practice Recommendations, following the inspection of the Leicester City Adoption Service.

Further to our telephone conversation of 19<sup>th</sup> October 2004, please note that I have not signed the Provider's Agreement, as discussed.

I hope that the enclosed is satisfactory, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you require to discuss further any matter relating to the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mark Tingley  
Service Manager (Placements)  
Looked After Children's Service

Enc

**ACTION PLAN TO THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
IDENTIFIED IN THE ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL  
ADOPTION SERVICE ON 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2003 BY MAUREEN MOORE**

**Please provide the Commission with a completed Action Plan, indicating how recommendations are to be addressed**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
<b>No</b>	<b>Refer to Standard</b>	<u>Action being taken to address Recommendations</u>
1.	LA7	Independent support workers are now available to work with birth parents, where required.
2.	LA9	A proforma has been developed to ensure that Child Care Social Workers share relevant information with birth parents by recording this activity and the birth parents' comments
3.	LA9	The Service continues to develop its work with birth parents (see LA7 above) – this includes the appointment of two Post Adoption Social Workers and attendant policies for the use of these services with birth parents.
4.	LA11	Panel Members receive annual training. Inter-Country Adoption training will be prioritised within this Panel training.
5.	LA17	Written procedures for monitoring the work of the team will be reviewed and amended, as appropriate.
6.	LA18	Protocols for the engagement of specialist advisors are currently being drawn up.
7.	LA20	Since the inspection, a significant amount of computer related equipment has been installed within the Adoption Team.
8.	LA26	As part of the ongoing review and revision of policies and procedures, amendments will be made to update these documents, in line with this standard.
9.	LA27	The manual file tracking system has been reviewed and improved, with staff awareness of the system increased. The team electronic database is to be replaced in due course, to further improve file tracking procedures.

**ACTION PLAN TO THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
IDENTIFIED IN THE ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL  
ADOPTION SERVICE ON 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2003 BY MAUREEN MOORE**

**Please provide the Commission with a completed Action Plan, indicating how statutory requirements are to be addressed and a completion date within the stated timescale.**

<b>STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Action being taken to address Statutory Requirements</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1.	11	LA11	All Adoption Panel Members now have current and satisfactory CRB checks	Complete
2.	6 & 11 Sch. 3 & 4	LA15, LA19, LA28	All Human Resources records have been audited to ensure compliance with Schedules 3 & 4.	Complete
3.	17	LA27	A system is now in place to collate complaints across the Service.	Complete