

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

**CYP Scrutiny
Cabinet**

**3rd November 2009
9th November 2009**

Annual Adoption Statement of Purpose 2009

Report of the Strategic Director, Children

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To introduce the cabinet to the updated Leicester City Council Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose and Annual report of activity during 2008-2009, contained within the Statement of Purpose at Appendix 1.

2. Summary

- 2.1** This report accompanies the revised Statement of Purpose for the Leicester City Council as an Adoption Agency. It provides key information on the volume and nature of the work of the adoption team.
- 2.2** Leicester City Council as an Adoption Agency discharges this function through the Adoption team, delivered through a joint arrangement with Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils.

3. Recommendations (or OPTIONS)

- 3.1** Cabinet note and formally approve the Statement of Purpose
- 3.2** Cabinet note and approve the activity of the Adoption team (2008/2009)

4. Report

- 4.1** Standard 1 of The Adoption National Minimum Standards requires that, "there is a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency and the adoption agency ensures that it meets those aims and objectives." The standard details what the Statement of Purpose should contain, including aims and objectives of the adoption agency and an accurate description of the facilities it provides.
- 4.2** The Statement of Purpose should be reviewed, updated and where necessary modified at least annually before approval by the Executive side of the council. After approval, the Statement of Purpose becomes a public document and this is published on the Leicester City Council website.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no changes proposed that would have any significant financial implications. -
Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance and Efficiency, CYPS, ext. 29 7750

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no Legal Implications.
Kamal Adatia – Barrister, Head of Community Services Law, Tel: 0116 252 7044

6. Other Implications

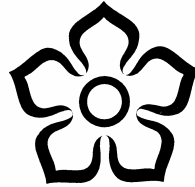
OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	No		
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	No		

7. Consultation

8. Report Author

Mark Tingley, Service Manager Placements, extn: 39-5876
Lorraine White, Head of Service, Social Care & Safeguarding, extn: 39-5213
Andy Smith, Interim Director, Social Care & Safeguarding extn: 29-8306

Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



Leicester
City Council

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**Leicester City Council Adoption Agency joint
arrangement with Leicestershire and Rutland
County Councils.**

**Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
Adoption Team
2009**

**Eagle House
11 Friar Lane
LEICESTERSHIRE
LE1 5RB**

**Telephone 0116 299 5899
Fax 0116 299 5900**

May 2009

1. **Introduction**

This Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided by the Adoption Team for The Children and Young People's Services of Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland. It is part of the responsibility in fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption Regulations and National Minimum Standards (2000).

The Statement of Purpose is made available to staff of the organisation, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents and other professionals.

The addresses of the three Local Authorities who constitute the joint arrangement are as follows:-

Leicestershire County Council
Children and Young People's Service
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester, LE3 8RL

Leicester City Council
Children and Young People's Service
New Walk Centre
Welford Place
Leicester, LE1 6ZG

Rutland County Council
Children and Young People's Service
Catmose
Oakham
Rutland, LE15 6HP

2. **Aim of the Adoption Service**

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.

Additionally, it is the aim of the service 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, whilst recognising that family life can be achieved in families headed by married couples, single people and couples in same sex relationships. Adults with and without birth children can provide suitable placements

- Provide advice and training for Child Care Social Workers on matters related to applying for an adoptive placement.
- Provide a range of services and information to adoptive families, birth families and adoptive children.
- Provide a range of support services for families and children to ensure adoptive placements are successful.

3. Objectives of the Service

To ensure children's needs have been fully assessed and that it is considered that adoption is the correct plan for a child before a matching process starts.

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 specific racial and cultural needs as well as any issues arising from disability or illness.

To recruit adopters who will respect a child's birth and family origins and who will bring an adopted child knowing and understanding their origins.

To recruit adopters who will respect the diverse cultures and life styles within society and who will bring up children who will also respect these differences. To recruit adopters who will respect a young person's choice in terms of sexuality and religion.

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 the staff of the service are committed to ensuring children and families receive the support and advice required to maintain stable family life.

4. 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 taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.

- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children and young people's ethnic origin, sexuality, religion and language should be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made about them.
- The particular needs of disabled children should be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made.
- 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, either directly or indirectly, with those family members who are significant to them.

5. Management Structure and Staff Group

The Adoption Service is provided through a joint arrangement between Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils. Leicester City and Leicestershire provide managers who are responsible for the Adoption Team. Leicestershire County Council is the lead agency.

6.1 Leicestershire County Council

Name of Manager: - Cath Sartoris

Address: - Children and Young People's Service
Bassett Street
South Wigston
Leicester, LE18 4PE

The experience and qualifications 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 Children and Young People's Service.

The Agency Decision Maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Keith Peers, Assistant Director.

6.2 Leicester City Council

Name of Manager: - Mark Tingley

Address: - Eagle House
11 Friar Lane
Leicester, LE1 5RB

The experience and qualifications of the Manager are:-

Mark Tingley has a CQSW and BA (Hons) Social Science obtained in 1980. He has nearly thirty years experience as a social worker and social work manager, having worked both in London and Leicester in both fieldwork and children's resources resources.

The registered provider is Leicester City Council Children and Young People's Service.

The Agency Decision Maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Lorraine White, Head of Service, Children's Resources.

6.3 Rutland County Council

Name of Manager: - Donna Gallagher

Address:- Children and Young People's Services
Catmose
Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HP

Experience and qualifications of the manager are:-

Donna Gallagher has a CQSW from Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham obtained in 1984. Donna has an NVQ5 in Management obtained in 2005. She is also an accredited Practice Teacher. She has worked extensively in Children's Services and Mental Health Services.

The registered provider is Rutland County Council.

The Agency Decision-Maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Stephen Attwood.

7. The Adoption Team

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

- Two Team Manager posts: Sara Draycott works full-time for Leicester City Council and Bridget Puddepha works just under full time hours for Leicestershire County Council. The two managers are responsible for the day to day work of the Adoption Team. Both managers have social work qualifications and extensive experience of child care and adoption services over many years.

- Three full-time and seven part-time social workers, who are all qualified and experienced in adoption work.
- Four adoption support workers - two qualified in social work and two support workers who have relevant experience.
- Three part time qualified social workers for the provision of birth records counselling.
- Two administrative assistants and four clerks who provide administrative support to the team and reception support to the Eagle House building. There is also a part time clerk to assist in developing and maintaining the adoption team data systems.
- Two part-time receptionists

8. **The Work of the Adoption Team**

The Adoption Team is based at:-
 Eagle House
 11 Friar Lane
 Leicester, LE1 5RB

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, references, checks, and 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.
- Provision of 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 access to birth records counselling.
 - People who wish to adopt children from another country.
 - Non-agency adoptions including step-parents who wish to adopt their partner's children.

9. Inter Country Adoption

The service has always offered an Inter country service to prospective adopters who wish to adopt child from abroad. This has increasingly proved a complex and difficult area as each country has different adoption rules that change from time to time. In order to give a better service to this group of people a service level agreement has been agreed with The Yorkshire Adoption Agency (Limited). This adoption agency has developed a good level of expertise in this area of work. From October 2006 they have dealt with all enquiries and assessments for inter country adoption on behalf of the joint arrangement.

10. Enquiries about Adopting a Child: (Recruitment of Prospective Adoptive Families)

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 sexual orientation, 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.

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 time scale for the assessment process is shown in Appendix 1.

11. Local Authority Adoption Panel and Decision-Making Responsibilities

Each of the three Local Authorities has an Adoption Panel to consider cases arising from their area. The Panel has the responsibility to:-

- Consider the assessment of prospective adoptive parent(s) and recommend whether they should be approved.
- Decide whether adoption should be the plan for a child.
- Agree the matching of children to a particular family.
- Take an interest in the general running of the adoption service and to receive reports giving over view information about the general running of the team.

The attendance of prospective adopters and approved adopters who are to be matched with a child is now part of the established procedure for the panel

The Adoption Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include qualified social work managers, a medical adviser, elected Members of the Council, lay people (who are not employed by the Service/Council and who may have personal experience of adoption). A legal adviser and a panel adviser also attend the panel. All the panels have an independent chair.

Following a recommendation of the Adoption Panel, the papers and minutes of the meeting are passed to the “Agency Decision Maker” 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 always made within seven days of the panel meeting. The decision is then put in writing to the prospective adopter(s).

12. 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 the staff are appropriately skilled, trained and supervised on a regular basis to ensure they can undertake the functions of their work.
- The work of the adoption team is governed by Adoption Standards, Guidance and Legislation. The three local authorities submit information on achievements against performance indicators.
- The work of the adoption team is monitored to ensure appropriate timescales are adhered to where ever possible.
- 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.
- Adoption panel members are appraised annually and the performance of the panel reviewed to ensure that it carries out its role efficiently and effectively.
- Elected members of the Council have a duty to be accountable for the Adoption Service. In Leicester City, two Councillors are members of the adoption panel.
- The ADM also observes one panel each year and attends panel training days
- The Adoption Service is subject to a three yearly inspection by Ofsted.
- Feedback is gathered from a variety of service users through evaluation.

13. Complaints Procedure

Each of the three Local Authorities has a complaints procedure. If a complaint is made, it will be considered by the relevant Authority and the complainant will be informed which of the relevant Authorities will be dealing with their complaint.

Copies of the procedure and complaints forms can be requested from the Adoption Team at Eagle House, 11 Friar Lane, Leicester, ☎Tel: 299 5899.

All complaints and matters of concern are treated with respect and are dealt with as promptly as possible and within specified timescales. The adoption service aims to resolve problems in the first instance by informal negotiation. A central record is 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 care of the Local Authority) also have access to the Council's Children's Rights Officer in Leicestershire and Leicester City, who will assist any child in making a complaint if they wish, and support them throughout.

14. The Recruitment of Prospective Adopters

Adoption Team deals with a high number of enquiries, in 2008/09 the total number of referrals to the team was 1037, of which 310 were from people showing an interest in adopting a child. Of these 108 were from the City, 202 from the County and 5 from Rutland. 55 people expressing an interest in adopting came from other areas. The majority of enquiries are still from childless couples who want to adopt a baby or very small child. This image of adoption is however slowly changing and there has been some success in recruiting single and same sex couples. The team has been successful in recruiting appropriate numbers of Asian adopters according to the number of Asian children and babies available for adoption.

In 2008/09 seven information evenings were held, attended by 62 households, which were comprised of 48 White British couples, 1 Hindu Asian couple, 5 Asian Muslim couples, 2 Asian Sikh couples, 1 African Caribbean couple, 1 same sex male couple, 2 same sex single couples and 2 single female applicants. The evenings are run by social workers from the team with the help of adoptive parents.

In the same period four Preparation Groups were run for 33 applicants, comprising 26 White British couples, 1 African Caribbean couple, 1 Asian Sikh couple, 4 Asian Muslim couples and 1 single White British applicant. These groups have involved the input of birth parents, adopters and adult adoptees, as well as the CAMHS and post adoption workers.

The Team has continued to recruit a high number of appropriate adoptive families - 35 were presented to the adoption panels in the last year, all of whom were approved. There were 3 same sex couples, 2 single adopters, 2 inter-country adopters. Seven were of Asian origin, of these, 3 were Hindu, 2 Sikh and 1 Muslim, the remainder were White British couples.

In the City 67 children were referred for adoption in 2008/09, of whom 33 were presented to the adoption panel for consideration of a recommendation for a plan for adoption. In the same period 30 children were placed in adoptive families and 24 children were adopted.

15. Adoption Support

There are now 4 adoption support workers within the team and three part time workers dealing with birth records counselling work.

A leaflet for schools on adoption issues has been produced and distributed. There has been a very positive response to this.

The CAMHS Service has funding for two posts to increase the capacity of the Young People's Team to respond to the needs of adoptive families. The Educational Psychology Services from the city and the county contribute to post placement support.

Total number of referrals to the adoption support team in 2008/09 was 347. Of these, the majority continue to be from adopted adults (109) who were requesting a variety of services, but commonly are seeking access to their birth records and want help in tracing their birth relatives. Birth relative enquiries (57) seek similar services, often from people requesting contact with their adopted relatives.

Requests for help from adoptive families total 56. These are the lowest in number but are usually the most time consuming and complex. The needs of families are often urgent and sometimes traumatic cries for help from adoptive families who are trying to care for extremely troubled adopted children and young people.

The adoption support workers run various support groups and drop –in sessions for adoptive parents. These groups run at different times of the day and include "Play and Stay" sessions. Attendance is variable but feedback is positive. The team has organised several one day workshops for adopters run by 'Adoption UK'. These have covered topics including: education and the adopted child, dealing with teenagers, telling and life story-books. Take up by adopters has generally been low, but feedback has invariably been positive.

We are now able to keep in touch with adoptive families through a new quarterly newsletter called "Reaching Out". This provides details of organised activities and includes relevant articles about adoption.

The workers continue to organise day seminars by a well respected clinical psychologist on attachment issues and resolutions. They are run as a rolling programme, two or three times a year. These have been well attended by adoptive parents and have greatly enhanced their understanding of attachment issues as well as their skills to parent damaged children. Learning in the company of other adopters is experienced as supportive and sometimes useful ongoing contacts are established between them. Other professionals including school teachers, health visitors and social workers attend this training and helps build positive professional relationships which are supportive of adopted children.

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. We also organise an activity day for children in the school summer holidays. Children's art therapy sessions are organised and this provides another means by which children can communicate their views and feelings in the context of adoption. Their work was on display in the adoption and fostering service reception area.

The Raising Achievement of Looked After Children Team (RALAC) are able to provide additional advice and support in school to assist their transition to a new school.

The City's Children and Families Support Team is able to intervene directly, to work with children and families and continues to be highly regarded as a beneficial resource by adoptive families.

16. Services to Adopted People (Birth Records Counselling and Intermediary Services)

Adults who have been adopted can approach the Registrar General when they are 18 and ask for details from their original birth certificate. Once they have obtained this information a request can be made to the team for a Birth Records Counselling service (BRC). This involves obtaining a file from either the local store or from another adoption agency. The amount in the file can vary considerably but has to be carefully considered in terms of sharing the contents with an adopted person. This work is provided on a statutory basis.

Once this information has been obtained many people then request assistance with tracing their birth relatives and with achieving a reunion. The waiting list for Birth Records Counselling work had previously been too long and steps have been taken to address this problem. However, one measure to reduce the wait for such counselling has been to suspend our assistance with tracing and reunion, which is not a statutory service, to focus efforts on reducing the waiting time for BRC. This decision will be subject to on-going review. A new part time post was established in November 2007 to help to deal with this problem and another part-time adoption social work post has been designated to work with birth records counselling cases resulting in the waiting time now significantly reducing.

17. Services to Birth Families

A requirement of National Adoption Standards is to offer independent counselling to birth parents during care proceedings. Previously the independent counselling was carried out by PICS (Parent Independent Counselling Service) which was subject to a Service Level Agreement. Take-up of this service had been low and the service level agreement has been allowed to lapse. Access to counsellors is still available, but no longer as part of a service level agreement. Within Leicester City, independent counselling will be available via the Children and Families Support Team.

18. Contact Services

Improved management of the Post Box (indirect contact) Scheme has been achieved. The workers who are responsible for this service have improved its quality and development. Separate files for direct contact arrangements have been established, as such arrangements have increased. There are now approximately 631 active cases.

An email facility is available and popular amongst adopters for the exchange of indirect contact material.

A leaflet on the Post Box Scheme is available.

A leaflet and letter is available for young people reaching their 18th birthday, when their post box arrangement would otherwise end. This advises both adoptees and their birth families, if they wish, how they could continue contact independently. There is additionally the facility to continue the post box facility up to the age of 25 years, where there is a need.


19. Services to Children

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

20. OFSTED

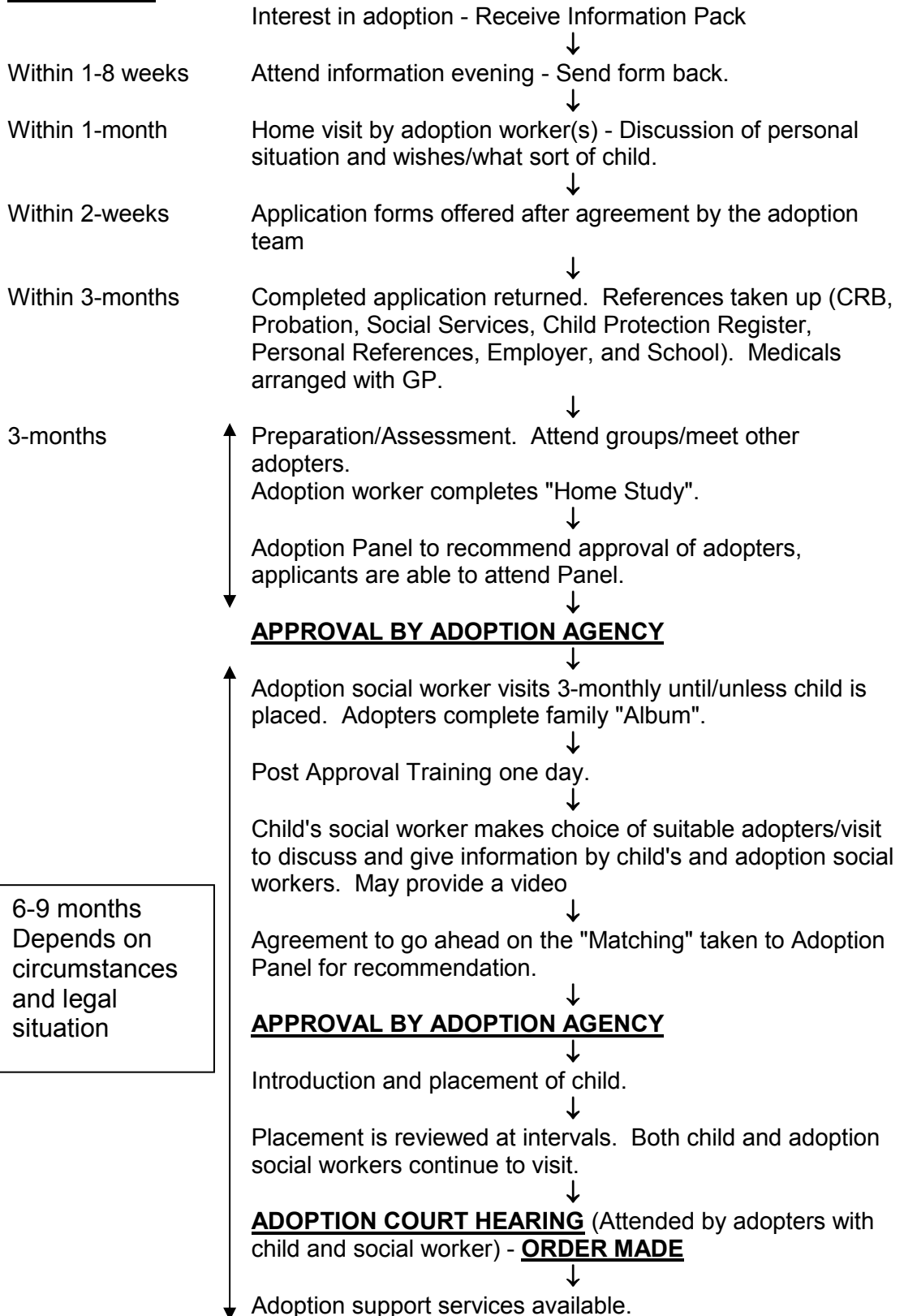
Ofsted is responsible for inspecting the Adoption Agency, usually on a three year cycle. The last inspection took place in September 2006. Ofsted will also receive and investigate any complaints about the Adoption Service. They are can be contacted at:-

National Business Unit
3rd Floor, Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Anne's Square
Manchester
M27 LA

	08456 40 40 40
Fax	08456 40 40 49
Email	enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Process for Assessment and Approval of Adopters

Target Times



6-9 months
Depends on
circumstances
and legal
situation