



Adoption

Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council
Social Services

**The Vale Fostering and Adoption resource Centre,
14, Albert Crescent,
Penarth. CF64 1DA**

ADOPTION SERVICE

Statement of Purpose

November 2006

Adoption Service

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of *The Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005*, and fulfils the Agencies duties and responsibilities as set out in Standard 1 of the accompanying National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services for Wales, issued by the Welsh Assembly under section 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000.








The functions of Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council -'The Local Authority' - as an approved adoption agency are governed by:

- ✚ Adoption Act 1976,
- ✚ Children Act 1989,
- ✚ Adoption and Children Act 2002,
- ✚ Adoption Agency Regulations 1983,
- ✚ Revised Adoption Agencies Regulations
- ✚ CSIW National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services and associated Regulations,
- ✚ National Adoption Standards.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Vale of Glamorgan Council, in its work with Children and Families, seeks to ensure that all children grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their needs for security; stability and quality care throughout childhood and into adulthood. Where children are unable, for whatever reason, to live within their own birth family, a range of services and resources will be provided, designed to assist families in resuming the care of their children. Where that is not possible, the Council aims through its Adoption Service to find permanent alternative families who will promote the child's best interest, well-being and development by providing the highest possible standards of care according to the child's individual assessed needs.










The specific objectives of the Adoption Service are:

-  To ensure that the needs, wishes, welfare, safety and diversity of the child are the centre of the adoption process
-  To ensure that adoption is considered as an option for all children requiring permanent alternative care away from their own birth family.
-  To ensure that decision-making in respect of permanence plans for children takes place within prescribed time-scales where this is consistent with the needs and interests of the child.
-  To recruit and maintain sufficient numbers and diversity of prospective adopters, which includes ethnicity, culture, religion and language.
-  To provide an efficient and effective service to prospective adopters, to include those interested in Inter-Country Adoption.
 -  To offer an assessment of need, and development of Post Adoption Support Services to adopters, adopted children, and their birth families, in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance.
-  To ensure that staff involved in adoption work have the necessary qualifications, knowledge, skills, and training to deliver an effective service.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The work of Vale of Glamorgan Council's Adoption Agency is underpinned by the following values and beliefs:

A) CHILDREN

-  In all planning for children and young people, the child's welfare, safety and rights will be of paramount consideration.
-  A child and young persons wishes and feelings should always be sought and taken into account in the decision-making process according to the child's age of understanding.
-  Every child and young person is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, that meets their needs in terms of stability, security, and the promotion of their physical, social and emotional development.
-  Where those needs cannot be met within a child's own birth family; adoption may offer the best alternative.
-  Children have the right to be treated with respect; and diversity and difference should be valued and promoted.
-  A child's sense of identity and self-respect needs to be actively promoted through particular awareness of issues of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, ability and sexual orientation.
-  Children should only be separated from their siblings where clear evidence supports doing so on the basis of the children's individual assessed needs.
-  Every child is entitled to information about his/her birth family in order to promote his/her sense of identity.
-  On-going contact with birth relatives should be encouraged if compatible with the child's need for physical safety and emotional security.

B) ADOPTERS

- ✚ The Adoption Services primary concern is to work in best interest of the child and find suitable families, for children in need of adoption.
- ✚ All potential adopters have the right to request an assessment of their suitability to adopt.
- ✚ The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child will be valued and respected.
- ✚ All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process. No applicant will be discriminated against on grounds of Ethnicity, culture, language, sexuality, gender, financial or marital status.
- ✚ All applicants are entitled to know what issues will be taken into account in their assessment, including age, health, relationships, and family history.
- ✚ Applicants will be regarded as partners in the assessment process, and will be kept fully informed of their progress, and of any concerns identified in the assessment.

C) BIRTH FAMILIES

- ✚ Wherever possible, the Adoption Service will work in partnership with the birth parents and other family members to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented in the best interest of the child.
- ✚ Birth families and their relationship with the child will be treated at all times with respect, sensitivity and in an open, honest and fair manner.
- ✚ Birth families will be kept fully informed of the adoption process, the legal implications and their rights
- ✚ Birth families will be given as much information as is compatible with the child and adopted parents safety and security.
- ✚ Birth families will be offered information and advice in respect of support and counseling.

Agency Management, Staffing and Organisational Structure.

MANAGEMENT OF THE SERVICE

Arrangements for the management of the Adoption Service is delegated through the Director of Community Services to the Head of Children and Family Services, who is also the "Agency Decision-Maker". Responsibility for the operational management and strategic direction of the Adoption Service as a whole is exercised through two operational managers, the post-holders being directly accountable to the Head of Children and Family Services.

The Operational Manager (Fieldwork) supervises the managers of the fieldwork teams who are responsible for case planning in respect of individual children. The Operational Manager (Adoption, Fostering and Leaving Care) supervises the Adoption Team Manager who is responsible for the management of the recruitment, assessment, training and support of adopters and for identifying potential matches between prospective adopters and children for whom Adoption has been agreed is in their Best Interests. The selection of suitable 'matches' to be presented to the Adoption Panel for consideration is the joint responsibility of the Fieldwork Team and The Adoption team.

The appointed Manager of Vale of Glamorgan's Adoption Service, (*as required under Regulation S (1)*) is:

Name: Jean letton

Date of Appointment: - November 2004

Qualifications:

BSc.econ. (Social Policy Hons.)
CQSW.

Relevant Experience:

Child care experience since 1985 in both voluntary and Local Authority settings, as a Social Worker, Child Protection Officer, Senior Social Worker, Senior Practitioner, Children's Advocate and Team manager.

Organisational Structure

ADOPTION TEAM

The team is based at The Vale of Glamorgan Fostering and Adoption Resource Centre, 14, Albert Crescent, Penarth

The service is staffed with a Team Manager, Assistant Team manager, Four Social Workers and a Senior Administration Officer. This team has a responsibility to those children for whom adoption is the plan, which involves the matching of the child's needs, wishes feelings and diversity with the skills, abilities, and approval terms of the Agency adopters. Where a suitable local match cannot be identified for the child the team will initiate a wider search, utilising regional and national resources such as the South Wales Adoption Consortium (of which Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council is a subscribing member), the National Adoption Register, the BAAF 'Be My Parent' publication and other avenues as necessary. The recruitment, assessment, training and support of adopters and prospective adopters is undertaken by the Adoption Team, The Adoption Team currently holds responsibility for the management of the agency's 'letterbox' service, providing for the exchange of written information between adopted children and their birth families. The Service delivers the agency's statutory responsibilities for providing Counselling, and assistance to adopted adults seeking information about, and access to, their birth records The assessment of Adoption support services for adults and children affected by adoption is also the responsibilities of the Adoption service.

STAFFING

Director of Community Care Services:
Operational Manager:

Mark Wheeler
Joe Frearson

Team Manager:
Assistant Team Manager:
Social Worker:
Social Worker
Social Worker
Social worker.
Administration

Jean Letton
Christine Williams
Andrea Beckett
Hilary Coombes
Christopher Holmquist
Liz Thomas
Jennifer Hanlon

Qualifications and Experience of staff

A Team manager has responsibility for the management of the Adoption Agency. The authorised establishment of the Team consists of an Assistant Team Manager and 4 Social workers.

Ms Jean Letton -Team Manager

Qualifications B.Sc.Econ (Social Policy: Hons). CQSW

Experience: Child care experience since 1985 in both voluntary and Local Authority settings as a Social Worker, Child Protection Officer, Senior Social Worker, Senior Practitioner, Children's Advocate and Team Manager.

Ms Christine Williams - Assistant Team Manager

Qualification:- CSS. PQ1.

Experience: - Child Care experience as a Social Worker and Officer in Charge in Residential settings for children since 1974. A social worker in both fieldwork and Leaving Care and young homeless teams for 7 years. Adoption and Fostering experience since 1996 as both a Social Worker and Assistant team Manager.

Mrs Andrea Beckett - Social Worker

Qualifications: BA Hons OU General Studies: Dipsw: Msc Applied social studies:

Experience: Childcare social worker since 1994, Experience as a social worker for the Adoption and Fostering Service for the past 9 years.

Mrs Hilary Coombes - Social Worker

Qualifications - Joint Degree (Botany and Zoology: Hons) CQSW

Experience: Childcare social worker for the past 27 years, Experience for the past 14 years as a social worker for the Adoption and Fostering Service, which includes Inter country Adoption.

Mr. Christopher Holmquist - Social Worker

Qualification: B.Sc. Hons. Biochemistry: M.Sc. Biochemistry: PGCE: DipSW. PQ1

Experience: Social Worker for both the Fostering and Adoption service since 2002

Ms Liz Thomas – Social Worker

Qualifications: Bsc. Social Welfare. MA Social Work. Dipsw.

Experience: Local authority Child care since 2004, including Child protection and LAC

THE ADOPTION PANEL

The Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council has its own independently-chaired Adoption Panel, constituted in accordance with current regulations. The chief functions of the panel are:

- ✚ To recommend whether adoption is in the best interests of the child (and if so whether an application to court should be made for a placement Order).
- ✚ To recommend whether or not applicants should be approved as prospective adopters.
- ✚ To recommend whether a proposed match between a child and prospective adopters is a suitable one.
- ✚ To consider the adoption support needs of children and their adoptive families.
- ✚ The panel will make recommendations based on detailed written reports. From either the child's Social worker and / or Adoption officer.

The Panel's considered recommendations are referred to the *Agency Decision Maker* for a final decision; The Vale of Glamorgan decision maker role is held by the Head of Children & Family Services, Mr Tony Young.

The present composition of the panel is as below

ADOPTION PANEL MEMBERS	
DESIGNATION	NAME
Independent Chairperson	Ruth Forrester
Medical Adviser	Dr Carolyn Sampeys
Legal Adviser	John Lewis
Panel Advisor and Adoption Assistant Team Manager	Christine Williams
Service Manager, Children with Disabilities.	Ceri Spence
Independent Panel Member	Sally Anstey
Independent Panel Member	Mr John Page
Independent Panel Member	Councilor Janice Birch
Independent Panel Member	Councilor Maureen Kelly-Owen
Independent Panel Member	Paula Holmes
Assistant Team manager, Fostering	Glenda Sloan

PROCEDURE FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING, APPROVING AND SUPPORTING PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS.

Recruitment activity takes a number of forms, and includes advertising in and beyond the immediate Vale of Glamorgan area into the neighboring authorities in South Wales.

Enquiries may be accepted from outside of the Vale of Glamorgan ~ due to its geographical size, a significant proportion of Vale of Glamorgan children and young people awaiting adoption need placements outside of the town boundaries.

Enquiries are welcomed via letter, personal visit, E-mail or telephone calls.

All enquirers are offered the opportunity of an information pack and a visit from an Adoption social worker that will inform them of the process and procedure for adoption.

They will be informed of the following: -

- ✚ That the full assessment may take up to six to eight months and includes:
- ✚ Enhanced CRB checks and checks of social services and local agency records.
- ✚ Preparation Training, which is covered over four sessions and considers the child's journey through the adoption process.
- ✚ Social work interviews - individual and whole family. and possibly previous partners and children.
- ✚ Medical reports based on a full examination by the applicants' GP and reviewed by the agency medical advisor. (Costs to be covered by the applicant)
- ✚ Three personal references (including employers and a family reference) to include a personal interview.
- ✚ Checks on gaps in CV and personal history.
- ✚ Assessment report following British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering "Form F" requirements.

All prospective adopter assessments, including those of applicants interested in Inter-Country Adoption, are undertaken by social workers in the Adoption Team. The Agency's Adoption panel considers the application on completion of the Assessment report. (See above).

Applicants are invited to attend the panel in person, and are provided in advance with an information leaflet explaining the purpose of the meeting and the panel procedures. Applicants will have had prior sight of the assessment report, and opportunity to comment on it in writing if they wish. They also have the opportunity to address any issues at the meeting.

When arriving at recommendations about individual applications the Panel is guided by the panel advisor. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that recommendations are consistent with statutory requirements, national standards, research evidence and County Council policy. In the event of disagreement, the Panel may make a request through the Chairperson for further expert advice or additional information. The Panel has immediate access to expert Legal and Medical advice. If consensus cannot be reached, individual members of the Panel can have their views clearly recorded in the Panel minutes.

The Panel's recommendations about approval are fully minuted by the Panel Clerk and passed, through the Panel Chair, to the Head of Children and Family Services who will make the final decision on behalf of the Local Authority. Where there has been lack of consensus about the recommendation or particular difficulties about reaching a recommendation this is drawn to the attention of the Head of Children and Family Services by the Chair.

Where an application for approval is not recommended by the panel, the applicants may make a written submission requesting that the recommendation be reviewed via the National Assembly for Wales who have the power to establish a panel for the Independent review of adoption agency determinations.

Following approval, the adopters will continue to be supported by an allocated Adoption Officer whose task is to assist them in identifying a suitable match with a child / children awaiting adoption. The Adoption Officer will also assist in assessing any adoption support needs arising from a proposed match, and identifying how these will be met.

Approved Adopters will be offered opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of adoption through access to on-going support and training groups, both before and after a placement has been made.

The Adoption Officer will remain allocated to the family until an Adoption Order has been made, and beyond if necessary, subject to any other adoption support services being provided.

[Adoption Support Services](#)

The Adoption Service is committed to ensuring as far as possible that appropriate support is offered at all stages of the adoption process to enable the prospects of a successful outcome for the child.

The Service recognises that all parties to the process - the child, his/her birth family, and the adopters - are entitled to support before, during and after adoption. In addition to the support functions implicit in the core responsibilities of the Adoption Officers and field social workers, the following services are available.

The requirement of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 places a duty on Local authorities to provide an Assessment of need for all parties affected by adoption.

Birth Parents

All birth parents have the right to information and counseling from our Adoption workers, and if in the best interest of the child ongoing support from the Child Care Social Workers.

Letterbox contact.

The Adoption agency provides a Letterbox service. This service provides the opportunity for Birth Parents and Adopters who have local authority approval to share information about the child. Annual letters and cards can be sent to the Adoption Agency for forwarding. The young person on reaching the age of 18 years can access this information from the agency.

Adoption Support Group

The Agency offers support groups for potential and approved adopters. This involves information sharing, peer support and training. The training may be delivered either 'in-house' or externally acquired.

Adoption U.K.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council offers a one-year subscription to the above organisation to all approved adopters.

Adoption UK offers regular mailings and support and the ability to participate in Support Groups organised regionally. Adoption UK can also provide individual support to adopters, accessed through their regional co-ordinator, herself an experienced adopter.

Financial Support

The responsibility of the Local authority under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 is to provide an assessment of financial need in respect of either the adopters or the child as deemed appropriately.

Web site

The Vale of Glamorgan has a Web site that can be easily accessed. This site gives information relevant to adoption. The future plans are for this site to be available in the form of a `Chat Room' where adopters can access support from their peers.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Service Provision.

- ✚ All childcare social workers and Adoption Social Workers hold a professional Qualification.
- ✚ There are established agency policies and procedures providing for regular Supervision and Performance Development Reviews.
- ✚ Practice guidance and procedures for the auditing of case files
- ✚ All case planning concerning looked after children requires the involvement of the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager;
- ✚ Children for whom adoption is the plan remain `looked after' children until such time as the Adoption Order is made, and therefore subject to statutory review at the prescribed intervals as set out in the *Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991*.
- ✚ Statutory Reviews are chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers managed within the Department's Independent Reviewing and Chairing Team.
- ✚ Regular management reports are produced which relay quantitative information in respect of timescales, numbers of young people awaiting adoption, prospective adopters awaiting approval, and adoption matches.
- ✚ The Team Managers and Assistant Team Manager play a significant role in ensuring that information prepared for the Adoption Panel relating to children and adopters is factual and accurate and that the reports are of appropriate standard.
- ✚ Adoption Chair and Panel members to complete qualitative information on each report presented to panel.
- ✚ In line with the Adoption regulations (Wales) the chair and panel members are to be reviewed annually against performance objectives.

- ✚ The Adoption Panel has regular business meetings to address and update current information relating to specific cases and more general Adoption Service issues.

- ✚ The Adoption Service and the Adoption Panel members receive regular training and information sharing.

- ✚ The Decision Maker considers all Panel recommendations. This provides a further opportunity to consider the quality of information presented and also the appropriateness of Panel recommendations.

- ✚ Questionnaires to be available to inform future planning and resources:
 - for the child who has been through the adoption process.
 - Potential Adopters who have completed the Adoption awareness training
 - Adopters who have completed the process.

- ✚ The introduction of the CSIW inspection of Adoption Services will provide an opportunity for adoption services to be scrutinised on an external basis and against a set of agreed national minimum standards.
 The address for the Care Standards in Wales is as follows:
 - CSIW,
 - Vale and Valleys Regional Office,
 - Units 4/5 Charnwood Court,
 - Heol Billingsley,
 - Parc Nantgarw,
 - Nantgarw
 - CF15 7QZ
 - Tel No. 01443 848527/28/29

- ✚ The Vale of Glamorgan has both a Corporate and Children's Complaints and Compliments Officer. All parties to the Adoption process are informed of their Right to complain.

Out of Hours Support

Emergency Duty Service

The Vale of Glamorgan Council Emergency Duty service is provided in conjunction with Cardiff County Council and has a team of social workers available outside office hours to offer emergency Social Work support and telephone advice to all client groups.

Access to files

All parties to the adoption process have the right to access to their files (Subject to restrictions as per Data protection and Adoption and Children Act 2002. A leaflet outlying the procedure is available on request.

Complaints Procedure

All adult parties to the Adoption Process (Adopters and Birth Families) have access to the agency's established complaints procedures, about which written information is available on request.

A complaint can be made verbally or in writing to the worker, the manager or directly to the Complaints Officer.

The leaflet includes the address of the The Chairperson of the Social Services Committee and the Senior Designated Complaints Officer.

All children and young people looked after by the Vale of Glamorgan, have the right to make a complaint, a copy of the Children's Complaints leaflet is available on request. This includes the format for complaint along with the telephone and address of the Children's complaints officer, South Wales Children's Rights and Advocacy Network, Child line and Connect. Contact may also be made to the Children's Commissioner.

Children's Advocacy Service

To be accessed through the Children's complaints officer

Any complaint or concern about a child involving possible injury or harm will be investigated under existing Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures.

**JEAN LETTON
TEAM MANAGER
ADOPTION**

November 2006