



BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADOPTION SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Social Services
Bridgend County Borough Council
Sunnyside
Bridgend
CF31 4AR

Tel: 642200

(Last Reviewed Jan 2010)

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Our mission is to achieve a comprehensive Adoption Service for children, providing culturally appropriate and sensitive services, within appropriate timescales, either directly or through arrangements with other agencies. The Adoption Service will also provide for the long-term needs of all those involved in adoption.

The Adoption Service will:

- ensure that adoption is considered for all children needing a permanent alternative family.
- where the plan for children is adoption, assess their placement requirements, and achieve the closest match possible with prospective adopters making all reasonable efforts to enable sibling groups to be placed together where this is in their best interests.
- recruit, prepare and approve prospective adopters, who, via the South Wales Adoption Agencies' Consortium, offer the greatest potential for the adoption of children looked after by the Authority. This will also include foster carers seeking to adopt a child in their care, if this is considered to be an appropriate plan.
- respond to the immediate and long-term needs of birth parents, siblings and other birth relatives involved in adoption.
- provide information, advice and support across the range of interests and needs of those involved in adoption, including 'non-agency' (e.g. step-parent adoption) and inter-country adoption.
- offer post placement and post adoption support to all adoptive families, including families where a child has been adopted by a step-parent or relative, or adopted from overseas.
- meet the needs of adopted adults seeking information about their adoption history, and of others seeking information about, and searching for, their relatives who have been adopted.

RANGE AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Children's Directorate has responsibility for the provision of a comprehensive adoption service for people in the area administered by Bridgend County Borough Council. Every effort is made to ensure that services comply with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards.

A consultancy service is provided to social workers working with families for whom adoption is relevant. Where appropriate, services are provided directly, or commissioned, from other adoption agencies, and include the following:

- advice and information for birth parents, adopted children, and adoptive parents.
- counselling for birth parents relinquishing their child for adoption.
- assessment, advice and support by a social worker for birth families and children subject to proceedings where a permanent alternative family will be required.

- access to practical and therapeutic services to assist with the assessment and preparation of children subject to adoption plans.
- access to support for birth parents whose children are subject to care proceedings and for whom an adoption plan is proposed.
- the recruitment, assessment, preparation and support of prospective adopters, including those who are interested in inter-country adoption.
- provision of a family finding service for children with adoption plans, by participating in the local adoption consortium and the Adoption Register for England & Wales to maximise opportunities.
- financial assistance to adoptive families to assist with costs arising from matching, introductions, placement and adoption.
- a range of financial support services to eligible applicants in line with the Adoption Allowances Regulations 1991 (for existing placements) and the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005.
- a specialist adoption support service for all new adoptive families, providing access to individual support from a named adoption worker including confidential telephone information, advice and support, support groups and special groups for children; access to information resources and other support networks and a newsletter and mailing list service.
- counselling and support for adopted people making application for original birth record information under the provisions of the Adoption & Children Act 2002. (formerly S51 Adoption Act 1976)
- information, advice and support for birth relatives of children who were placed for adoption by Bridgend County Borough.
- intermediary services for adopted people and their birth relatives, as appropriate.
- an adoption website to enable information to be accessed on-line, and a 'public' email address for general adoption enquiries and information requests.
- an adoption records archive for the safekeeping and rapid retrieval of adoption records. Records relating to adoptions before April 1974 are in the care of the Glamorgan Records Office but are readily accessible.
- assessment advice and support by a social worker to families involved in 'non-agency' adoption placements e.g. adoption by step-parent, or by a relative, and children brought into the UK to be adopted.
- an 'Adoption Mailbox Service' for the confidential exchange of information between adopted children and their birth relatives as appropriate.
- facilitation of direct contact between adopted children, their siblings and birth relatives where there is a 'direct contact' agreement.

2. THE NAME & ADDRESS OF THE MANAGER

Karen Williams – Adoption Team Manager
Sunnyside Offices, Sunnyside, Bridgend, CF31 4AR

3. THE RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE OF THE MANAGER

- (a) **Qualifications** DIPSW 1999
 FEATC 1994
 BTEC NNEB 1992
- (b) **Experience** The Manager is a qualified and registered Social Worker with 11 years' post qualifying experience as a Child Care Practitioner. In 2003 was appointed as a Senior Practitioner with specific responsibilities for Adoption Support Services, and in May 2006 was appointed as the Adoption Service Manager. Prior to qualifying had 5½ years' experience of registration and inspection of Day Care Services. In addition has worked as a further education trainer in three settings delivering to childcare workers NVQ and play work course subjects including children's rights and law. Also has ten years experience in paid and voluntary childcare settings including Nursery age provision, childminding and as a youth worker.

4. THE NUMBER, RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE OF THE STAFF EMPLOYED BY THE AUTHORITY FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE AUTHORITY'S ADOPTION SERVICE.

➤ **Senior Practitioner**

- (a) **Qualifications** BSC in Social Care Studies – 2001
 City and Guilds in Social Care Practice – 2001
 Diploma in Social Work - 2005
- (b) **Experience** Adoption Team Senior Practitioner is qualified and registered. Has 5 years' post qualifying experience and 4 years unqualified experience within children services. Previous experience of working with children with disabilities and adults with disabilities.

➤ **Social Worker 1**

- (a) **Qualifications** BSc in Sociology
 Diploma in Social Work 2001
- (b) **Experience** Adoption Team Social Worker is a qualified and registered social worker with 9 years experience. This included working with adults with learning disabilities and dual diagnosis. Has also had experience working with children with disabilities.

Fluent Welsh Speaker

➤ **Social Worker 2**

- (a) **Qualifications** BA (Hons) in Politics, History & English Literature
Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Studies – 1999
Diploma in Social Work - 1999
- (b) **Experience** Adoption Team Social Worker is a qualified and registered social worker with 11 years experience. This includes 3 years statutory experience working with children and young people with disabilities and 6 years experience in two adoption teams prior to commencing work in Bridgend.

➤ **Social Worker 3**

- (a) **Qualifications** Access to HE -2002 Psychology, sociology, Counselling
Diploma in Social Work - 2004
Certificate of Higher education in Child Protection 2008
- (b) **Experience** Registered social worker with 6 years' post qualifying experience including working with adults with physical and learning disability and dual diagnosis.

➤ **Social Worker 4**

- (a) **Qualifications** BA in Psychology 2003
Diploma in Social Work 2006
Msc Econ in Applied social studies 2009
- (b) **Experience** Adoption Team Social Worker is a qualified and registered social worker with 3 and a half years experience. This included working within a looked after children's team. Other relevant social care experience includes working with adults with learning disabilities and dual diagnosis.

➤ **Administrative Assistant Level 2**

- (a) **Qualifications** RSA Typewriting Stages I, II & III
RSA Audio Typewriting Stage II
'O' Level English Language
- (b) **Experience** 25 years secretarial and administrative experience in various private sector businesses. 2 years in Local Authority serving LAC Team, and 3 years working specifically in the Adoption Team.

Experience of working with Senior Management and customers of large international companies, including all aspects of office management.
In depth knowledge of operational procedures within the Local Authority at an administrative level.

Administrative Assistant Level 1

- (a) **Qualifications** HNC in Public Administration
OND in Business & Finance
Typing Stages I, II & III
City & Guilds Desktop Publishing Level I & II
- (b) **Experience** 22 years experience of working in the Public Sector as Senior Management PA including 10 years with Her Majesty's Court Service. Experience in Higher Education, Local Authority and the NSPCC.
- Experience of working with Senior Management and users of public sector organisations, including all aspects of office management, training and supervision.
- Fluent Welsh speaker.

5. THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Bridgend County Borough Council Social Services is organised in two Directorates, one of which is the Children's Directorate. Within the Children's Directorate services for children are provided through the Safeguarding and Family Support Service which includes assessment/care management, family support, aftercare for adolescent care leavers, fostering, (encompassing short stay provision for children with disabilities), supported lodgings for teenagers moving to independence, an adolescent and remand fostering scheme in partnership with neighbouring local Authorities, residential services and adoption.

In the latter half of 2006 the organisation of the adoption service was restructured to enable the assessments of adopters and post approval support to be joined with the adoption agency function and managed by one team manager. The childcare teams continue to have responsibility for identifying and preparing children for adoption, and working with their parents.

Although the Adoption Team occupies a satellite office, the Sunnyside Offices address is normally used for correspondence and initial contacts.

6. SYSTEM FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE ADOPTION SERVICE.

Monitoring of the adoption service is multifaceted.

- **Staff**

Social work staff receive monthly supervision.

Level one administrative staff receive six-weekly supervision, and level two staff receive monthly supervision.

In line with Directorate Policy and Procedures the Adoption Manager will also carry out annual appraisals with all staff members.

There is on-going training of staff in work-related fields. This encourages staff to participate in their individual Continuous Professional Development and in post qualifying training and development.

There is awareness through the induction and supervision process of appropriate policies and procedures relating to staff safety and conduct.

- **Policy and Procedures**

Corporate policies are implemented where applicable.

Policies and procedures are updated in line with National Minimum Standards and relevant regulations.

Effective practices already established need to be embodied in written policies and procedures, and aligned with National Minimum Standards and regulations.

When completed, these policies and procedures will be reviewed annually.

- **Partnerships**

The Group Manager (Service Provision) participates in the management of the South Wales Adoption Agencies Consortium.

There is collaborative practice as a member of the consortium, utilising shared professional expertise.

7. PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING, APPROVING AND SUPPORTING PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS

- The initial contact, at whatever point it is made with the Local Authority, is directed to the manager of adoption agency.
- The enquirer is sent written information about adoption and invited to register their interest and give basic personal information in a standard pro forma and is offered the opportunity to attend a briefing evening and if interested in proceeding an introductory interview.
- Following the briefing evening and /or the interview, and if the applicants express (in writing) a wish to proceed, a pre-assessment screening form will be sent to them which, when completed & returned, will facilitate preliminary statutory checks, and identify applicants where legal or health issues would preclude pursuing an application or successful conclusion.
- A decision is made by the Adoption Manager regarding appropriateness of proceeding.

- The application is the requested, and if received the assessment allocated to social worker according to team workload.
- If this worker is not a permanent member of the team, i.e. commissioned to complete the assessment only, a member of the team will be appointed to link with the applicants which offered continuity and an additional quality assurance role.
- Assessment then begins following the BAAF (British Association for Adoption & Fostering) Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) Form (formerly the form F) and any additional checks or enquiries initiated.
- Training is a requirement and carried out to BAAF standards before, during, or shortly after the process of assessment. We encourage “second time” adopters to attend a short course specifically designed to address the relevant issues.
- Anomalies and omissions are addressed through case worker supervision, Adoption Panel and Agency Decision maker.
- When the assessment is complete, the applicants receive a copy and have 28 days to respond with any amendments they wish to make. This done, the report is submitted to the Adoption Panel. If the application is recommended by the panel and subsequently approved by the decision maker, post approval support is offered by maintaining contact with the assessing social worker or link team member.
- The adopters are referred to the South Wales Adoption Agencies Consortium, which identifies any potential matches. The Adoption Team social worker remains involved, offering support to adopters during the process of matching, and post placement, and fulfils the requirement to complete the Annex A court report in respect of the adopters.
- The need for Adoption Support Services is considered at any stage in the plan for the child when adoption becomes a possibility. An appropriate service is thus in place by the time the Adoption Order is granted.
- Membership of the adoption consortium provides the means to recruit adopters for children in Bridgend County Borough where placements locally would be inappropriate.
- Within set timescales, an additional recruitment resource is the Adoption Register for England & Wales.

The following issue is the subject of current consideration:

- A policy to review approved applicants’ continued suitability.

8. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The complaints procedure requires staff to attempt to resolve complaints informally, whenever appropriate. However, when complaints do need to be dealt with formally there is clear policy, procedural and guidance information available. Where policies and procedures need to be amended in response to the outcome of complaints, mechanisms are in place to highlight specific areas for change.

The adoption agency fully adheres to, and complies with, Bridgend County Borough Council’s Representations and Complaints Procedure - Section 24d & 26 of the Children Act 1989 and

the Local Authority Social Services Act (Complaints Procedure) 1970. [Liaison with Complaints Officer, Ros Woods, 01656 642253]

9. ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF APPROPRIATE OFFICER FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

CSSIW
South West Wales Regional Office
Unit C, Phase 3, Tawe Business Village
Phoenix Way, Swansea Enterprise Park
Swansea
SA7 9LA

Tel. 01792 310420

10. ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES

Children's Commissioner for Wales
Oystermouth House
Phoenix Way
Llansamlet
Swansea
SA7 9FS

01792 765600