

NORTH WALES ADOPTION SERVICE

1.1

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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1. Introduction

The North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) became operational on 1st April 2010 and has been set up to provide a regional adoption service on behalf of the local authority areas of Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn. Since April 2014 the service has become integrated into the National Adoption Service. The services provided will fully comply with adoption legislation, regulations, guidance and national minimum standards and in accordance with the policy and procedures of the service, within the resources allocated.

Under the terms of a Partnership Agreement, each individual adoption agency is a member of the North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) and, as such, is committed to the uniform development of adoption services on a regional basis in order to increase the range and choice of adopters for children requiring adoptive placements. Wherever practicable and desirable, children requiring adoptive parents will be placed within the NWAS area.

2. Statement of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose (SP) has been developed in accordance with Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in Wales 2007 and Regulation 3 and Schedule 1 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and satisfies the information requirements contained therein.

These statutory instruments require adoption agencies to produce a Statement of Purpose setting out the aims and objectives of the local authority's adoption service and how the local authority ensures it meets those aims and objectives.

The authority must supply a copy of the SP to the National Assembly and must make a copy of it available, upon request to:

- Any person working for the purposes of the adoption service;
- Children who may be adopted;
- Parents and guardians of children who may be adopted;
- Persons wishing to adopt a child;
- Birth parents and former guardians of persons who have been adopted;
- Adopted persons;
- Adoptive parents;
- Any person seeking adoption support services.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated at least annually. The National Assembly will be notified of any revision within 28 days.

3. Children's Guide

The Children's Guide has been developed in accordance with Standard 2 of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in Wales 2007 and Regulation 4 and Schedule 2 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2007.

The Children's Guide is available in various formats in order to ensure that it is suitable for all children for whom there is an adoption plan.

The Children's Guide contains all the information required in accordance with Schedule 2 and Standard 2 of the National Minimum Standards.

The authority must provide a copy to:

- The National Assembly
- Every prospective adopter with whom the authority has placed a child for adoption; and
- Every child (subject to the age and understanding of that child), who may be or has been placed for adoption by the authority.

The Children's Guide will be reviewed and updated at least annually. The National Assembly will be notified of any revision within 28 days.

4. Mission Statement

'Children who cannot be cared for by their own families should be offered adoption as an option to achieve safe, well-supported and secure homes to care for them into adulthood. A child's individual need for a loving home which respects their identity and offers them a positive sense of well-being is at the core of the activity of the individual agency within the North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS)

5. Aims, Objectives and Functions

1. Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 each individual local authority within NWAS is an adoption agency approved and subject to the:
 - Access to Information (Post-Commencement Adoptions) (Wales) Regulations 2002;
 - Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) (Wales) Regulations 2005
 - Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005,
 - Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005
 - Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2007,
 - National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in Wales 2007,

- Adoption Agency's (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012
 - Adoption Agency's (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014
 - Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014
2. The service aims to offer a comprehensive adoption service in accordance with the above statutes, regulations and national minimum standards and as described within its documented policies and procedures.
 3. NWAS currently maintains joint adoption panels on behalf of Flintshire/Wrexham; Conwy/Denbighshire and Gwynedd/Anglesey. Each panel makes recommendations to the agency on the following matters:
 - (a) Whether a relinquished child should be placed for adoption
 - (b) Whether applicants are suitable to adopt
 - (d) Whether a child should be placed with a particular adopter/s
 4. The service aims to provide a range of services either directly or in co-operation with other suitable agencies to identify children who need adoptive homes, to recruit, train and assess prospective adopters and carefully match children with adopters who will meet the child's needs.
 5. The service is committed to applying similar values and quality standards across all types of adoption: domestic, adoptions with a foreign element, and partner of parent.
 6. The service aims to provide a range of services to support adopters and their children following placement.
 7. The service will also enable birth families to access appropriate support and/or counselling.
 8. The service aims to provide counselling, access to records and Intermediary Service to adult adoptees.
 9. The service has a range of information leaflets relating to its services and these are available to all those affected by adoption.

6. Values

The service policies and procedures are founded upon the following values:

- 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 will be 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 will be avoided wherever possible.
- Children's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language will be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made.
- The particular needs of disabled children will 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 will 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 of those affected by adoption.

7. Status and Constitution

Each individual adoption agency within the North Wales Adoption Service is part of its respective county council. Elected members ratify policies and procedures relating to the individual adoption agency.

8. Adoption Agency Partnerships

- National Adoption Service
- Adoption UK
- After Adoption
- Adoption Matters
- Link Maker
- AFA Cymru
- Coram/BAAF
- North Wales Adoption Service
- Child and Mental Health Service
- Children and Young Peoples Framework Partnership

9. Monitoring and Review

In accordance with R. 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service for Wales Regulations 2007 the service has made suitable arrangements for annual review of, and continuous monitoring of the quality of adoption services provided.

In this regard the service takes the views of service users and staff into consideration.

Within 28 working days of conducting the review the service will prepare a report of that review and make a copy available when requested by the National Assembly; service users and their representatives and staff.

In addition the service has made the following arrangements to monitor the quality and effectiveness of its services:

Monitoring

- (a) The adoption service is subject to the National Adoption Service and all County Council systems of monitoring and review. Internal audit processes are used as well as management audits and the staff supervision policy. Each Council's policies on financial audit, human resources and budgetary matters apply to the adoption service.
- (b) All members of staff working in the adoption service have a supervision contract and receive supervision on at least a monthly basis.
- (c) The Head of Children's Services/Chief Safeguarding and Support Officer or counterpart will commission regular reports in relation to the operation of the service and review the reports with other members of the Departmental Management Team and the North Wales adoption service Partnership Board.
- (d) An annual report on the adoption service is provided to elected members and adoption panel members, which details the outcomes achieved and proposals for new developments in services.
- (e) Performance data is collected and returned to the National Adoption Service and Welsh Assembly Government as part of the whole service reporting on performance indicators.
- (f) An annual report is presented and monitored on a quarterly basis by the Operational Management Team consisting of a service manager from each authority within NWAS. This report is also provided to the Scrutiny Board of each local authority, panel members and the Judiciary Board.

Quality Services

- (a) Providing good quality services is central to the adoption process and the policy and procedures of the service emphasise this aim.
- (b) Any adoption services that are commissioned or contracted out are subject to the Host Authority (Wrexham) Council's commissioning or contracting procedures and service level agreements.

Policies and Procedures

- (a) The policies and procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting adopters are reviewed regularly as new legislation and regulations are introduced.
- (b) All members of the public enquiring about becoming potential adopters are provided with written information outlining the process.

- (c) Adoption panel procedures are issued to all panel members.
- (d) Adoption support policies and practice are reviewed regularly as new legislation and regulations are introduced.

10. Services for Children

Each local authority within NWAS remains responsible for the work required in preparing children for adoption. Children whose 'should be adopted' status has been ratified by an Agency Decision Maker will be referred to NWAS for matching purposes. Child care social workers and adoption social workers within NWAS will work together to identify suitable adoptive parents and support the introductory process.

Preparation of the Child for Adoption

Each individual agency within the NWAS recognises the importance of preparing a child for adoption. The process includes the child's social worker, the adoption social worker, foster carers, health service professionals, teachers and birth family members who may all work directly or indirectly or have contact with the child during the preparation period. The service will support the work of all parties involved in planning and preparation through:

- (a) Allocating a suitably qualified and experienced social worker.
- (b) Minimising delays when adoption has been identified as the child's permanence plan
- (c) Assessing the need for adoption support services for both the child and adoptive family

The individual agency within the NWAS will assist a child to understand the reasons for becoming looked after and why he/she cannot return to live within his or her birth family. All children for whom adoption is the permanence plan are provided with relevant literature and a copy of the children's guide relevant to their age group.

The information is designed to inform children in easy to understand language about the adoption process from start to finish.

Where appropriate, children may be given information about prospective adopters who have been identified for them. This information may take the form of photographs or DVD recordings.

For children of sufficient age and understanding counselling will be provided in a form and language that enables them to clearly understand the information provided and to discuss any issues arising. The counselling will be particularly sensitive to the child's ethnicity and religious beliefs.

All children of sufficient age and understanding are encouraged to attend and share their views and opinions at the looked after review meetings. Their wishes and feelings are also included within the Child's Assessment Report for Adoption that is presented to the adoption panel.

Life history information is provided to the child through life story books, which reinforce the child's sense of identity and understanding of their heritage as they grow up.

Family Finding and Matching

Children referred for adoption or subject to twin tracking are allocated an adoption social worker within NWAS who will undertake the role of family finder.

The Family Finding and Matching Procedure is as follows:

- (a) The service will be informed of any child likely to be adopted immediately following the looked after child review that endorses a plan for adoption.
- (b) Once the 'should be adopted' decision' is confirmed the childcare social worker will make a referral to the NWAS and a search of the database of approved adopters will be undertaken in order to identify any potential adopters.
- (c) An adoption social worker will be allocated by the NWAS to undertake family finding activities.
- (d) The child's social worker and the adoption social worker will work together to identify the families to be considered for the child and undertake joint visits to the potential adopters
- (e) One family is selected as a match for the child at a matching meeting.
- (f) A match with suitable adoptive parents will be identified and approved by the panel within 6 months of the agency agreeing that the child should be placed for adoption, providing this timescale is not subject to external factors such as court proceedings or complex issues in matching.
- (g) All children will be referred to the Wales Adoption Register within 3 months after the panel has recommended and the agency has approved their adoption plan, if they have not been placed or if no local match is being pursued. In some cases children will be referred immediately dependent on the child/ren's specific needs.

The adoption social worker has a number of key responsibilities:

- (a) To work jointly with the child care social worker to develop a clear picture of the specific needs of the child so that an appropriate family can be sought.
- (b) To be pro-active in identifying as many potential suitable matches as possible.

- (c) To work jointly with the child's social worker in presenting any proposed match to the adoption panel.

Where it is in the child's best interest, the individual agency within the NWAS will look to place children with adoptive families within the North Wales area. However, some children may need placing away from their original community for their welfare and protection.

All children will be registered with the Wales Adoption Register and will be referred if a local or regional match cannot be found after 3 months.

Safeguarding the Child

Child protection is not distinct or separate from family placement including adoptive placements.

"Children living away from home must be afforded the same level of protection as children living within their family."

(All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2007 4.2 p.277).

Children placed for adoption may be especially vulnerable and they have the same safeguarding needs and rights as all other children. This highlights the importance of the safeguarding, visiting and reviewing requirements.

It is vital that children placed for adoption are safeguarded, monitored and reviewed and that they and their prospective adopters have access to advice and support.

Provision of Adoption Support Services

Post Adoption Order and depending upon assessed needs, a child may receive indirect information on their birth family via the service's Letterbox contact system. All Letterbox arrangements entered into are child focused and must be in their best interests. Adopters and birth parents are encouraged to understand that when an older child indicates that he or she does not wish the information exchange to continue their wishes should be respected. NWAS oversees the system and information is passed between birth family members (including siblings) and children or adopters acting on behalf of children. The details of the type of information to be exchanged, together with the frequency of exchange are set out in a written agreement which all parties sign and are expected to adhere to.

Birth family members are given assistance to write letters to place on an adopted child's file. If the birth parent does not wish for a local authority social worker to undertake this task with them, a referral will be made to the contracted adoption support services providers.

The individual agencies within the NWAS provide adoption support in line with the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005 and Statutory Guidance 2006. The child's needs for adoption support services are assessed at different stages of the adoption process. These are as follows:

- When the individual agency within the NWAS considers whether the child 'should be placed for adoption.'
- When it is proposed that a child be placed with particular prospective adopters
- When a child's adoption placement is being reviewed.

If adoption support services are to be provided on more than one occasion and are not limited to the provision of advice and information an adoption support plan will be produced.

Where appropriate, this will be done in consultation with services such as education or health.

The primary goal of the provision of adoption support services is to promote the success of adoptive placements. In the event of adoption placements threatening to disrupt, a meeting will be held as early as possible to review the support being provided to the placement, with the aim of preventing a placement breakdown. If the placement does break down, a disruption meeting will be held in order to understand the factors affecting the outcome and to help plan for a future placement.

11. Recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing adopters.

Recruitment

- NWAS is aware of the changing demographic nature of the local area and welcomes applications to become adoptive parents regardless of gender, sexuality, marital status, race, religion, disability, and culture or employment status. In meeting the needs of individual children, NWAS recognises the need to provide a diverse range and choice of adoptive parents.
- NWAS will develop a range of recruitment materials and organise local promotional events as well as participate in national campaigns on a regional basis.
- Applications are welcome from anyone over 21 years of age and each enquirer receives a personalised response from a dedicated recruitment officer. Wherever possible, an information leaflet and response form is sent out within 5 days (usually within 24 hours where possible) and further contact made on receipt of the completed response form between 7 and 14 days.
- Following receipt of the response form, the recruitment officer or an adoption social worker will arrange an initial visit to the prospective adopter/s. The visit is designed to provide the prospective adopters and their family with further information on what adoption involves, to conduct an initial interview and to answer any questions that the potential adopter may have at this stage.

- Further information on becoming an adoptive parent, including a step-by-step guide can be found on www.northwalesadopts.gov.uk/ **Free phone North Wales Adoption Service: 0800 783 0618**

Assessment and Approval

The assessment to become an approved adopter undertaken by NWAS adoption social workers involves 3 stages:

1. Safeguarding checks

- Applicants are required to complete an application for enhanced enquiries to be made with the Disclosure and Barring Service. In addition, written consent is sought to allow a number of checks with other agencies, including the NSPCC, the Probation Service, Local Authorities, Health Services, CSSIW and any other statutory agency relevant to the particular family.
- Birth certificates, marriage and divorce certificates will be viewed in addition to any passport or driving licence in order to verify the applicant's identity
- Verification of the applicant's employment history is undertaken.
- The names and addresses of 6 personal referees are required who will be asked to provide written references. 4 of these referees will also be visited.
- If the Applicant(s) has / have children of pre-school or school age, contact will be made with the relevant Health Visitor or Head teacher
- If the Applicant(s) is / are in employment, references will be obtained from their employer
- If the Applicant(s) has / have been in a previous relationship, contact will be made with previous partners

2. Preparatory Training

Applicants will be required to attend a preparatory training course. If couples apply both partners are expected to attend. NWAS uses the Preparing to Adopt training programme recommended by the British Association for Adoption & Fostering. Preparatory training groups take place across the agencies at least six times a year. Training takes place over four days and the main subjects covered are as follows:

- The adoption agency's procedures in relation to assessment of prospective adopters and placement of a child for adoption
- The adoption and approval process including the legal procedure in relation to placement for adoption
- The significance and legal implications of adoption for a child and his / her family
- Contact between the child and birth parents or relatives
- The children needing adoption including age range, gender and likely needs and background.
- Safeguarding the child.

- Identity and contact matters
- The skills needed to be an adoptive parent
- Adoption support services
- Understanding of attachment and resilience
- Inter Country aspects, if applicable.
- The role of the Independent Review Panel

An adoptive parent and representatives from partner agencies attend in order to assist those undergoing training and assessment in order to answer the prospective adoptive parents' questions.

Further Training Provided by NWAS

- Family and Friends
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- Attachment Trauma & Neuroscience
- Parenting Programme

3. Home Study

Using the Prospective Adopter Report format, the social worker undertaking the assessment will explore the applicants' motivation and understanding of adoption, their attitudes, expectations and lifestyle, leisure activities and interests, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and understanding of issues of discrimination. Consideration will also be given to the community facilities and the accessibility of Education and Health services.

Applicants will also be expected to complete a portfolio of evidence which will be presented to panel at the approval stage.

Approval

Following the successful completion of the three stages of the assessment process, a report will be presented to the adoption panel for a recommendation as to 'suitability to adopt' of the prospective adopters. Applicants will have been given the opportunity to read and comment on the completed report prior to panel, and are invited to attend the panel in person.

The majority of adoption panel members, including the Chair are independent of the adoption agencies and NWAS and act in a quality assurance role to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained.

Following a recommendation by the adoption panel, the final decision on approval is considered by the relevant agency decision-maker, the Chief Safeguarding and Support Officer in Wrexham (or counterpart in the individual agencies within the NWAS). The decision is then communicated both verbally and in writing to the prospective adopters in accordance with the prescribed timescales.

Adopters are approved on a generic basis; however the assessment should reflect the adopters' strengths, circumstances, commitments and the accommodation available. This may be amended to reflect any change in circumstances and experience at an annual review.

The right of complaint or appeal procedures apply to anyone who feels that they have not been treated fairly or that they have been misrepresented within the process of assessment or approval. Applicants are also informed about the Independent Review of Determinations process.

Review of approval

All approved adoptive parents awaiting placements will undergo a review of their approval at least every two years, in accordance with the regulatory requirements under R.30 Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005. The main aim of the review is to determine whether the prospective adopters remain 'suitable to adopt', and to take into account any change in circumstances.

The adoption panel should consider the review report and make recommendations to the agency decision-maker.

Adoption Support Services

Approved adopters will be supported from the point that the child is introduced to them through to the making of an Adoption Order and beyond as necessary. An assessment of the family's support needs will be completed by the placing authority and they will be offered support services to meet those assessed needs which will be subject to review.

Visits by the childcare social worker to adopters with a child in placement will take place weekly until the first review and then in accordance with the recommendations of the review, and at least 6 weekly, thereafter until the Adoption Order is made. Where adopters are awaiting placement, visits should take place at a minimum of six times a year. Additional visits will be undertaken when adopters are being considered for children or undergoing the matching procedure.

Once a child has been in an adoptive placement for ten weeks, an application for an Adoption Order can be made. Arrangements will be made by the court for a First Directions' Hearing at which all relevant actions are detailed and the adoption social workers will support adopters through this process.

In accordance with regulatory requirements the each agency has a nominated Adoption Support Services Adviser.

12. The Adoption Panel

The composition, terms of reference and functions of adoption panels of the individual agencies within the NWAS are set out in the:

- Adoption Agency's (Wales) Regulations 2005 and Statutory Guidance 2006
- Adoption Agency's (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012
- Adoption Agency's (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014

The adoption panel is a body of people who are empowered to consider and recommend to the agency whether:

- A relinquished child should be placed for adoption
- A prospective adopter is suitable to be an adoptive parent
- A prospective adopter would be a suitable parent for a particular child

This includes the adoption of children from overseas.

The recommendation of the panel is referred to the agency decision-maker who will decide whether or not to endorse the panel's recommendation. The agency decision maker should make a decision on the recommendations of the panel within 7 working days of the panel meeting. The agency is required to notify in writing the relevant person(s) (birth parent or guardian in respect of a proposed plan for adoption of a child; prospective adopter in respect of a suitable to adopt consideration; birth parent or guardian of a child and prospective adopter in respect of a matching recommendation). The child's social worker will share the information with the child in an age – related way.

Single agency panels consist of no more than 10 members, (joint panel no more than 11 members) including:

- Two social workers in the employment of each agency, each with at least three years relevant post-qualifying experience in child care social work, including direct experience of adoption work
- The Independent Chairperson
- An elected councillor of the council of each agency (as good practice).
- The person nominated as the Medical Adviser to each agency. The Medical Adviser may nominate a deputy in his or her absence who will also be a voting panel member.
- At least three other independent persons, not being employed by the agency. This may include at least 2 individuals with personal experience of adoption e.g. an adopter and an adopted person over the age of 18 years, and specialists in education or child and adolescent mental health.
- Other members might include a birth parent of a child placed for adoption

A legal adviser and the agency's adviser to the panel also attend panel meetings.

All members are subject to DBS Checks. The individual agencies within the NWS have in place guidance around potential conflict of interest (both personal and professional) to ensure fair treatment of applicants. Where applicants are personally known to panel members or vice versa, panel members can be informed in advance to ensure that contingency arrangements are made which includes the panel member standing down during the discussion of that assessment.

Panel members are provided with quarterly reports on the adoption activities of the agency. They also regularly receive relevant papers and information to enable them to contribute to the formulation of policy and practice in relation to adoption. Practice issues arising from panel discussions are considered and actions agreed to promote better practice.

13. Adoptions with a Foreign Element

The service provided will be compatible with statutory requirements and nationally recognised standards and codes of practice.

NWS will provide initial counselling and advice which will enable prospective applicants to understand the process of adopting a child from overseas and reach an informed decision as to whether to proceed with an application. Prospective adopters and staff members will be given access to IAC (Intercountry Adoption Centre) in order to receive training and additional information and guidance on the process for the individual countries..

Should the prospective adopter request to be assessed by NWS the service will complete the home study report as required for the approval of the prospective adopters, including an assessment of their adoption support needs,

Prospective adopters for inter-country adoption undergo the same preparation training as domestic adopters, although additional information is given regarding cultural issues and the legislative framework surrounding inter-country adoption via IAC. Variable costs will be incurred by the adopters depending on the country involved. Prospective adopters are also informed about the specific criteria or procedures applicable in different countries.

Before applicants can proceed to having a child placed with them, they have to be approved as suitable to be adoptive parent(s). They also require notification from the Welsh Assembly Government confirming that they have been assessed and approved and that the child will be authorised to reside permanently in the British Isles if entry clearance is granted and an Adoption Order is made.

When the local authority is notified of the child's arrival in the UK and of the prospective adopters' intention to apply for an adoption order, a social worker for the child and a supervising social worker for the prospective adopters will be appointed to undertake statutory visiting and reviewing requirements.

14. Foster Carers who wish to Adopt

Foster carers who make a formal application to adopt children in their care are entitled to the same information and preparation as other prospective adopters.

Where the child has lived with foster carers for less than twelve months they will be assessed in the same way as any other prospective adopters. However, the assessment will focus on the specific long-term needs of the child in question. Some of the primary considerations to be taken into consideration are:

- The quality of the attachment between the child and the foster carers.
- The wishes and feelings of the child.
- The actual or likely availability of other adopters for the child.

Where a child has been placed with foster carers for 12 months or more they can make a private application direct to the court and will be assessed within four months in line with the timescales of the Adoption Standards for Wales.

15. Partner of Parent

Where a birth parent is in a new partnership and their partner wishes to adopt the birth parent's child, the adoption agency will counsel the family about the process and whether an alternative legal order might be more appropriate. After 3 months' notice to NWAS a direct application to the court can be made by the Partner of Parent and a report will be completed by NWAS in line with the timescales of the Adoption Standards for Wales.

16. Services for Birth Families

The individual agencies within the NWAS are committed to ensuring that birth parents are fully consulted about the care plans for their children. As part of their commitment to including birth parents in the adoption process all birth parents will be invited to reviews on their children. If the plan is for adoption they will be given written information about what adoption means. Birth parents will also be given the opportunity to read what is written about them within the Child's Assessment Report for Adoption and are encouraged to express their views about the plan for adoption.

Birth family members are encouraged to provide information that the adopted child will need. This should include information about the adopted child's birth and early life, family history, the birth family's views about adoption and contact and up to date information about themselves and their situation. Open letters from the birth family will also be kept on the child's adoption file for the adopted child to access if they so wish.

Birth Parent Counselling

The birth parents of any child being adopted through an agency within NWAS will be offered independent support and counselling via After Adoption.

This is provided under a contractual agreement between NWAS and After Adoption.

Support is also offered to birth family members regarding contact arrangements via the NWAS Contact Co-ordinator.

Services for Birth Family Members

- Counselling advice and information in relation to the adoption
- Assistance in relation to contact with the adopted child
- Intermediary Services

Relinquished Babies

There are occasions when parents voluntarily opt to give a child up for adoption. The individual agencies within the NWAS recognise that such situations must be handled with great sensitivity. Giving up a child for adoption is not easy for either birth mothers or birth fathers.

An initial assessment will be undertaken by the relevant childcare team who will explore all options available, in conjunction with an adoption social worker from the NWAS.

It is expected that a match with suitable adoptive parents will be identified and approved by panel within three months of the agency agreeing that the child should be placed for adoption.

17. Intermediary Services

The 2002 Adoption and Children Act recognises the needs of adopted adults, birth parents and relatives who want the opportunity to seek further information or make contact with their birth family or adopted child or let them know of their wish for contact.

Birth relatives do not have the right to have any identifying information that might identify the adopted adult. However, birth relatives now have the legal right to ask for an 'intermediary service' to provide services including counselling, support and advice, information and searching.

An intermediary is a person or an organisation that acts as a go-between for two or more people. In adoption the person acting as an intermediary may approach the adopted person on behalf of the birth relative.

This service is provided by After Adoption under a contractual agreement with NWAS.

18. Adoption Support Services

In accordance with regulatory requirements the agency has nominated an Adoption Support Services Adviser. Local authorities are required by law to provide a range of adoption support services to meet the needs of people affected by adoption. These people may include:

- adopted children or children placed for adoption
- adopted adults
- prospective Adopter(s) and adoptive parents of children under the age of 18
- step-children or birth children of adoptive parents; and
- birth parents or relatives, including siblings (full or half) of the adopted child or other people with whom the adopted child has an important relationship, in respect of their need for assistance to support contact arrangements.

A request for an assessment of adoption support needs can be made at any time by contacting the Adoption Agency.

The adoption support services may include:

- financial support in order to support the Adoptive Placement
- services to enable groups of adopted children, adoptive parents and birth parents or former guardians of an adopted child to discuss matters relating to adoption
- Respite / short breaks
- assistance, including mediation services, in relation to contact between an adopted child and a birth parent, birth sibling, former guardian or a relative such as an aunt, uncle or grandparent, of the adopted child (whether of full-blood, half-blood or by marriage)
- therapeutic services for adopted children assistance for the purpose of ensuring the continuance of the relationship between an adoptive child and his adoptive parent, including training for adoptive parents to meet any special needs of the child; and respite care
- assistance where disruption of an adoptive placement or adoption arrangement following the making of an adoption order has occurred, or is in danger of occurring, making arrangements for the provision of mediation services and organising and running meetings to discuss disruptions; and
- counselling, advice and information.

Letterbox and Contact Arrangements:

NWAS employs a Post Adoption Contact Co coordinator who has the responsibility for the management of Post Adoption Contact within the six local authorities of North Wales. This involves:

- the processing of new cases,
- the screening of all mail received,
- the management of record keeping and letterbox files
- Liaison with all parties including children/young people, birth relatives, adopters and professionals;
- Signposting individuals to other services if additional support is required which is not relating to post adoption contact.
- Individual support is also provided to birth relatives and adopters with letter writing if required, home visits are arranged.
- Involvement in birth parent support groups
- Liaison and supervision of direct contacts with birth relatives for children who are adopted

Services for Adopted Adults

The individual agencies within the NWAS provide a service to adopted adults as follows:

Pre-Commencement Adoptions

People who were adopted before 12th November 1975 are required to see a counsellor before they can be given access to their birth records.

People, who were adopted after 11th November 1975, may choose whether or not they would like to see a counsellor before they are given the information that will lead them to their birth record.

After counselling (if provided), adopted adults will be assisted to obtain information on their birth records.

The purpose of the counselling is to ensure that the adopted person has considered the possible effect of any enquiries, both on himself/herself and on others. It is important that the information sought, and to which the adopted person has a legal right, is provided in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

This service is provided by After Adoption under a contractual agreement with NWAS.

Post Commencement Adoptions

On reaching 18 years the adopted person has the right to receive from the adoption agency:

- A copy of their birth certificate

- The information originally contained in the Child's Assessment Report for Adoption prepared for the adoption panel.
 - A copy of court documents relating to the adoption which do not contain protected information e.g. application form, the Adoption Order, guardian and local authority reports
- Written information will be provided to the adopted person about the availability of counselling but there is no legal requirement to receive it before being given the requested information.

This service is provided by After Adoption under a contractual agreement with NNAS.

19. Representation and Complaints

NNAS has adopted the Wrexham County Borough Council Representation and Complaints Procedure that places emphasis on resolving complaints at an early stage. If any complaint cannot be resolved quickly and to the satisfaction of the complainant, a formal "second stage" process can be evoked, involving investigation by an independent person. If still not satisfied, a "third stage" appeal can be made.

All complaints regarding NNAS are monitored by the Customer Services Manager in Wrexham who can be contacted by telephoning (free) 0800 587 6708 who will liaise with their counterpart in other member agencies.

20. Independent Review of Determination

Where the agency considers that the prospective adopter(s) is / are not suitable to adopt a child, the agency is required to send them written notification stating that the agency does not propose to approve them. This is a "qualifying determination". This notification provides 20 days within which to respond by either submitting any representations to the agency or by application to the Independent Review Panel, which is co-ordinated by the Welsh Assembly Government.

21. Role of Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

The role of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales (CSSIW) in relation to adoption agencies is outlined in the Care Standards Act 2000. The Act provides a regulatory framework covering amongst other matters; the management, staff, premises and conduct of social care agencies. The Inspectorate will monitor the performance of local authorities in the discharge of their functions under the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The local office of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales is:

CSSIW North Wales Region,
Government Buildings,
Sarn Mynach,
Llandudno Junction
LL31 9RZ

Tel: 0300 062 5609 **Fax:** 0300 062 5030 **Email:** CSSIW.North@wales.gsi.gov.uk

22. CONTACT DETAILS

North Wales Adoption Service, 3rd Floor, Lambpit Street, , Wrexham. LL11 1AR
Telephone: 01978 295311 or Freephone Telephone Number: 0800 085 0774
Visit our website: northwalesadopts.gov.uk

Contact details of Member Adoption Agencies of the North Wales Adoption Service

(a) **Wrexham County Borough Council:-**

Head of Children's Services,
Lambpit Street, Wrexham, LL11 1AR

Telephone Number: 01978 292000

(b) **Flintshire County Council:-**

Head of Children's Services
County Offices, Chapel Street, Flint. Flintshire.CH6 5BD

Telephone Number: 01352 702121

(c) **Denbighshire County Council:-**

Head of Children & Family Services
Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl. LL18 3DP.

Telephone Number: 01824 706000

(d) **Conwy County Borough Council:-**

Head of Children's Services,
Civic Annexe, Abergele Road, Conwy. LL29 8AR

Telephone Number: 01492 574000

(e) **Gwynedd County Council:-**

Head of Children's Services,
Council Offices, Shire Hall Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. LL55 1SH

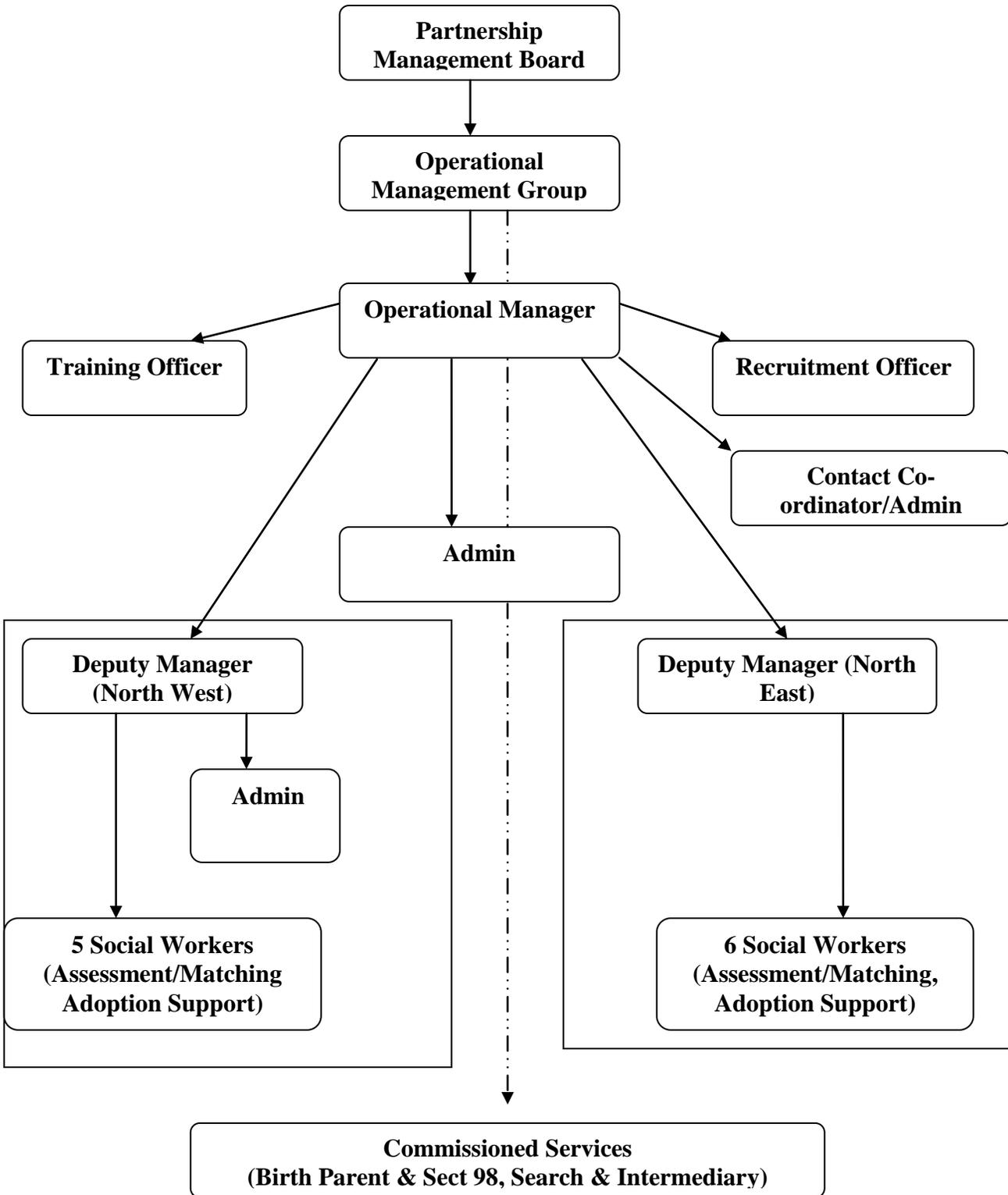
Telephone Number: 01286 672255

(f) **Isle of Anglesey County Council:-**

Head of Children's Services,
County Council Offices, Llangefni, Anglesey, LL77 7TW

Telephone Number: 01248 750057

23. Organisational Structure



24. Staff

The following staff members are employed or seconded to the North Wales Adoption Service.

Operational Manager	1
Deputy Managers	2
Social Workers	11
Finance & administration support	0.1
Recruitment Officer	1
Training Officer	1
Contact Co-ordinator	0.5
Administrators	3.25
IT Support	0.5

As with all other social work staff, the manager has a professional qualification in social work, and extensive experience in local authority work. All social workers are expected to undertake post-qualifying training and are encouraged to achieve the Post Qualifying award in Social Work, including Practice Teaching.

Finance and administrative staff are experienced in a range of IT systems and all have a minimum of NVQ Level 2 awards, with some possessing HNC Business qualifications.

Wrexham County Borough Council is an Investor in People and all its employees are expected to undertake relevant training resulting from annual developmental reviews.

All staff with access to children are required to have an enhanced disclosure by the Disclosure and Barring Service and are subject to identity and employment checks in addition to personal references when appointed. Social workers working for the NWAS will understand the key legislation, conventions and policies relating to children and adoption. Social workers experienced in adoption work will assess potential adoptive parents for children and produce adoption reports. Those with less than 3 years post qualifying experience will be supervised by the Senior Practitioner or Team Manager. Student social workers will be closely supervised by qualified adoption social workers. Birth records counselling not undertaken by After Adoption will only be undertaken by qualified social workers trained and experienced in this type of counselling and with extensive knowledge of the legislation surrounding access to birth records and the impact of reunion on all parties.

Host Authority – Management Structure for North Wales Adoption Service

Susan Evans - Chief Safeguarding and Support Officer

Audrey Somerton-Edwards - Head of Service - Corporate Parenting
(Adoption Support Services Advisor)

Responsible for monitoring and controlling Fostering and Adoption Services, Chair of the North Wales Fostering Managers Group. CQSW qualified with extensive experience of managing services to Children and Families.

North Wales Adoption Staff Qualifications and Experience

Mandy Humphries- Operational Manager

Manager of North Wales Adoption Service. Responsible for the management and development of the Service. B.Ed. DipSW. Diploma in Multiple Disability. ILM Certificate Level 3 in Management. Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care. Previous experience in residential, disability, fostering and adoption children's services over the past 25 years.

Trish Welsh – Deputy team Manager (East)

Seconded by Conwy County Borough Council. CSS Qualified (1993) Practice Teacher's Award. NVQ Assessors Award D32, D33. NEBS Management Introductory Award. Six years previous experience as a Senior Practitioner in Adoption Team, Child Care Social Work and Residential Manager. Responsibility for deputising for the Operational Manager in her absence.

Stevie Thomas – Deputy team Manager (West)

Seconded by Gwynedd County Council, Deputy Team Manager for NWAS West (Gwynedd, Ynys Mon and Conwy). Together with the Deputy Team Manager East deputises for the Operational Manager in her absence.

Qualifications/ Experience-

Qualified as a social worker in 2001 and gained my practice teaching award in 2005.

Between 2001 and 2005 I completed PQSW 1,2,3,4,5, and 6 before going on to complete Level 5 in management. I have a Diploma in Neuro Linguistic Practice and have completed coaching training. I have experience of working within a child protection team, Looked After Children Team and Fostering Team prior to my secondment to North Wales Adoption Team in March 2016. During the course of the last 15 years I have worked within the statutory and private sector. I have 12 years' experience as a social work manager and whilst employed with a private fostering agency was the registered manager with CSSIW.

I have completed and hold IOSH registered approval.

Lesley Davies

Social Worker employed by Wrexham County Borough Council. Specialises in adoption. Facilitates both direct and indirect contact arrangements.

Extensive experience within children's services, including child health and disability. CQSW qualified.

Helen Kinney

Social Worker – Employed by Wrexham County Borough Council. Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finds for Wrexham children. DipSW qualified. Experienced Child Care Social Worker, including Child Protection, Looked After Children, Children in Need and Court. NEBS Introductory Management Certificate. Diploma in Extend.

Lisa Jenkins

Social Worker – Employed by Conwy County Borough Council seconded to NWAS Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding for children referred to the service. Qualified social worker, gaining a BA (HONS) Social Work in 2012 at Glyndwr University and is registered with the Care Council for Wales. Gained the Post Qualification Award for Social Workers in 2014. Employed by Denbighshire County Council from September 2012 until January 2017 within the Intake and Intervention Service. My principle accountabilities was to form and develop working relationship with children, young people and their families to ensure positive outcomes for the children as the focus of the intervention provided. This included ensuring that vulnerable children are appropriately safeguarded, live within permanent, stable, secure and loving families.

Greta Jones

Social Worker – Employed by Conwy County Borough Council seconded to NWAS Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding for children referred to the service. Has a degree in Sociology and Social Policy from Bangor University and a Diploma in Social work also from Bangor University. Has been a qualified social worker since 1996, and is registered with the Care Council for Wales. She was awarded Post qualification award (PQ1) in 2008. She has worked with Barnardo's for 16 years assessing and supporting families, delivering parenting programmes and supporting families with a variety of different issues.

Hazel Davies

Social Worker – Employed by Denbighshire County Council. Seconded to NWAS. Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding for children referred to the service. I have been a qualified Social Worker since 2011 and have completed the Post Qualifying Award in Social Work. Prior to joining NWAS I was a Social Worker in Denbighshire Children and Families Intake and Interface Service for 4 years. during this time I worked with complex families for all aspects of statutory Social Work: child in need; child protection; children with additional needs; looked after children and public law work.

Tracy Roberts

Social Worker (Seconded by Denbighshire County Borough Council). Undertakes assessments and training of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding children. DipSW qualified, and PQ1. Experienced Child Care Social Worker specifically Duty and Assessment Team social work. Three years Education Social Worker, 7 years fostering service as a Supervisory Social Worker. Also have D32, D33 NVQ assessor award. Level 1 DDP.

Nicola Kernighan

Social Worker, Full-time (Seconded by Flintshire County Council). Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, partner of parent assessments, family finding for Flintshire children, and offers adoption support. Bachelor's degree, Cum Laude, in Social Work (1997) from Florida Atlantic University. Twenty years social work experience within Barnardo's, NSPCC & Local Authority includes working with severely disabled children, children with a mental health diagnosis, children & young people affected by domestic violence, education welfare, and Looked After Children. Registered with both the Care Council for Wales and the Health and Care Professions Council.

Samantha Humphreys - Social Worker – Employed by Flintshire County Council seconded to NWAS. Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding for children referred to the service.

Qualifications/Experience – BA(Hons) Primary Education with qualified teacher status, PGDip Social Work. Samantha has worked with children and families over the last thirteen years in a variety of roles including family support, transition support worker (adults), young carers project worker, early years worker, meetings co-coordinator and adoption social worker.

Sara Williams

Social Worker adopters - Seconded by Gwynedd County Council, full-time. Undertakes assessments of prospective, offers adoption support and family finding for children.

Experience: Sara has 12 years' experience working within Gwynedd's Children and Families Service. Qualification: BA (hons) Social Work at Bangor University 2009

Carolyn Jones

Seconded by Ynys Môn County Council, full-time. Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding for children. DipSW qualified and PQ 1. Experienced Child Care Social Worker specifically Family Assessment Team social work.

Lydia Murphy

Seconded full-time by Ynys Môn County Council. Undertakes assessments of prospective adopters, offers adoption support and family finding for children. Dip SW qualified and PQ 1. Experienced Child Care Social Worker specifically Duty and Assessment Team social work, including Child Protection and Court work having qualified in 2005.

Wendy Thomas

Recruitment Officer – responsible for publicity and recruitment materials for the North Wales Adoption Service. First point of contact for anyone enquiring about becoming an adopter.

Denise Roberts

As the North Wales Adoption Service Training Officer I am responsible for identifying, organising, facilitating and evaluating training related to adoption across the six North Wales Authorities. This includes the training needs of NWAS Social Workers, Adoption Panel Members, Child Care Social Workers and Prospective and Approved Adopters. I am a qualified Social Worker with 15-years experience, having practiced in Fostering and Adoption for the past 10-years. Level 1 DDP.

Frances Williams

Post Adoption Contact Co coordinator- Responsibility for the management of Post Adoption Contact within the six local authorities of North Wales.

Qualifications/Experience-

Over 20 years' experience in working with children and families. Gained NNEB diploma and worked within a variety of childcare settings. This has included working with children with behavioural difficulties and running parenting programs on a one to one basis and through group work. Qualified as a registered social worker 10 years ago and have experience of working in Child Protection , Fostering and Adoption.

Gained PQ1 Award. Gained Training Assessment Quality Assurance (TAQA) award. This has enabled me to be a Practice teacher and I have assessed several students. Volunteered feeding the homeless for over 10 years and gained further experience of working with vulnerable adults.

Claire Pearce

Contact Coordinator admin support. Responsible for the day to day management and coordination of post box contact arrangements, input of agreements on CHARMS database. Overseen by Adoption Support Social Worker.

Qualifications and experience - NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration, NVQ Level 2 in Customer Services and RSA III qualifications.

Carole Langford

Business Support Manager – responsible for payment of financial support arrangements to adopters and foster carers. Carole supervises the other administrative staff within the service and provides guidance to adopters on issues relating to benefit entitlement. NVQ4, RSA3, HNC (Business) with extensive experience in both public and private sector.

Larry Groom

Administrative Assistant primarily responsible for the management of the CHARMS database IT system, also responsible for collation of data for management reports. Distribution of reports to the Adoption Panels and the dissemination of information resulting from the Panel's work. NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration. RSA3, CLAIT II, Microsoft Office Suite (less Front Page) and CHARMS.

Sarah Picken

Primarily responsible for the distribution of reports to the Adoption Panels and the dissemination of information resulting from the Panel work. Also responsible for collation of data for management report. NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration.

Manon Roberts

Part-time Administrative Assistant, primarily responsible for the collation and distribution of reports for the Adoption Panel and the dissemination of information resulting from the Panel's work; collation of data from management reports. Also responsible for Local Authority records checks and carrying out Birth Enquiry searches. Administrative support to the Adoption Service in Gwynedd.

Qualifications/Experience. A level in IT and an AS level in NVQ level 2 Business Administration, including; Word Processing; Text Production; Store, retrieve and archive information; Produce documents; Key Skills in Working with others. Experience: worked for 2 years (part time) as a clerk for the children and families team.

Jon Allen

Employed as a Temporary System Administration Assistant, responsible for assisting with reporting from CHARMS database system, also implementation, general maintenance and administration;

Qualifications/Experience - English Literature **BA (Hons) Degree**; 2 years - as a data analyst

1 year 4 months - as a SQL database manager / systems administrator

Sessional Social Workers

Pat Fairclough DisSW

Morwenna Berry DipSw

Where there are additional staffing shortfalls and where finance permits the service will employ staff from a reputable agency where staff have full DBS and reference checks and relevant experience in adoption.