

# **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

## **WILTSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE**

November 2016

**Adoption**  
**Statement of Purpose**  
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## **1. Introduction**

### **Why does Wiltshire Council provide a Statement of Purpose?**

The National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014 set out the requirement for adoption agencies to compile a statement detailing what services are provided, the governing principles and who manages and provides the services. The Statement of Purpose is for:

Children and young people  
Birth relatives  
Prospective and approved adoptive families  
Social workers working within Wiltshire and in other authorities  
Councillors  
Adoption Panel members  
Office for Standards in Children's Services  
Education and Skills (Ofsted)  
Members of the public

*The Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of Standard 18 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014, Regulation 2 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003, Adoption support agencies (England) and adoption agencies regulations 2005 and the Adoption & Children Act 2002.*

Wiltshire Adoption Service statement of purpose is reviewed annually.

The statement of purpose is endorsed by the Children's Services Senior Leadership Team.

Copies of the statement of purpose are given to those working in the adoption service, childcare team managers and social workers involved with the adoption process. A copy is given to all prospective adopters and adopters in Wiltshire and all birth parents, guardians and of children placed for adoption.

It is available on the Wiltshire Council website.

### **Mission Statement**

Wiltshire's Adoption Service is committed to providing high quality standards of care to looked after and adopted children in order to maximise their life chances and ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve best outcomes.

The Adoption Service aims to:

- Provide a range of safe, secure and enduring adoptive placements to meet the assessed needs of children waiting to be adopted in order to promote and safeguard their welfare.
- Ensure that adoptive placements promote stability and positive outcomes for children by working in partnership with adopted children, adoptive parents, birth families and other professionals in the adoption and adoption support processes.
- Fully develop the role of the Local Authority as a 'Corporate Parent' in achieving positive outcomes for children needing permanent placements in line with the council's objectives.

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

**The overall aim is to help children and young people who are adopted to attain the highest possible standards of health, development and educational attainment. The Service will:**

- Ensure that the safety needs, wishes and welfare of the child are kept at the centre of the adoption process at all times.
- Ensure that where it is not possible for children to live safely with their birth families they are provided with a permanent, stable, alternative family through adoption or special guardianship.
- Ensure that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents, including those wishing to adopt a child from overseas, couples whether married or not, transgender, gay or lesbian and single people, from any ethnic background are welcomed without prejudice. They will be responded to promptly and given clear information about recruitment, assessment, approval and support services.
- Ensure that birth families are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process and have access to independent counselling and adoption support services.
- Ensure that the timescales set out in Regulations are met, and where it is not possible the reasons must be clearly recorded.
- Monitor performance against the achievement of these timescales.

## **3. Objectives of the Adoption Service**

- To increase the number of children adopted from the care system, in line with local and government targets.
- To recruit a sufficient pool of prospective adopters to offer placement choice in order to meet the assessed needs of the children requiring adoptive families.
- To develop a range of adoption support services, including practical, financial and therapeutic services, in partnership with other relevant agencies, in order to support adoptive placements and avoid placement breakdowns.
- To ensure that the adoption agency employs staff with appropriate and sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the adoption service.

- To ensure that applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.
- The adoption team will work in close partnership with colleagues across Children's Social Care and other organisations to ensure that delays in achieving permanence are avoided.
- To ensure that the lifelong implications of adoption are recognised and it is acknowledged that they may require a range of services to meet the needs of individuals at different stages of the process
- To ensure that adoptive parents will be supported and valued through the process of recruitment, matching, placement and beyond, based on assessed need.
- To ensure that birth families wishing to seek information about an adopted relative are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

#### **4. Policies & Procedures**

The procedures cover all of the agency's activities for children, adopters, birth relatives, step-parent adopters and inter-country adopters and their children and are updated annually to reflect developments in practice.

#### **5. Safeguarding & Promoting Welfare**

The Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board provides the procedural framework for safeguarding children in Wiltshire and the adoption agency ensures that staff and managers attend child protection training and comply with good practice and guidance. Safeguarding issues are also part of training for Adoption Panel members.

#### **6. Principles of the Service**

##### The Child

- The child's welfare is paramount in all decisions about their future.
- The child's wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken into consideration, according to their age and understanding.
- Every child is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, which should meet all the needs of the child in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, physical, social and emotional development and that promotes a supportive lifelong relationship.
- Children and young people should not be in public care throughout their childhood.
- A child's birth heritage, religious, cultural and linguistic background are all important factors to consider in finding a new family. The adoptive family should reflect this, if this can be found without unnecessary delay. No child should be denied loving adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and parents do not share the same racial or cultural background.
- All children who have adoption as their plan receive a copy of the children's guide to adoption.
- All children placed for adoption receive a copy of the children's guide to

adoption support “Children’s guide to adoption”.

### The Birth Family

- The local authority will work in partnership with birth families to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented for their child.
- Every child is entitled to information about their birth family in order to promote their sense of identity.
- There will be arrangements for ongoing contact, direct or indirect, between the child and birth family unless this would not be in the child’s best interest.
- The birth family’s wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken into consideration at all stages in the process.

### The Adopters

- All prospective adopters will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.
- Priority for undertaking assessments will be given to those with the skills and experience to meet the needs of the children requiring adoption.
- Every effort will be made to find adoptive homes where brothers and sisters can live together, unless this will not meet their individually assessed needs. Where this is not possible, the reasons for the decision to separate them will be clearly recorded on the child’s file.
- Adoptive parents and prospective adopters should be consulted with, provided with information, and have their views sought and taken into account throughout their involvement with the Service.
- Adoption support services should be provided, as appropriate, to promote the stability of placements and ensure good outcomes for children.

### General

- The local authority will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that the needs of all parties in the adoption process are met.
- All the parties to the adoption process are entitled to an assessment of their need for adoption support services, including financial support.
- All the parties to the adoption process will have access to the Council’s Complaints Procedure.

## **7. Management Structure in Wiltshire**

All the managers in the Adoption Service are suitably qualified and experienced in line with the requirements of the Adoption & Children Act 2002.

The Associate Director of Children & Families has overall responsibility for the Adoption Service in Wiltshire. The Associate Director and Heads of Service are the Adoption Agency Decision Makers and the Service Manager – Placement Services is the Adoption Agency advisor.

The Adoption Service is located within the Department for Children and Education. The Head of Service - Children in Care has management responsibility for the Adoption Service.

The Adoption Team Manager has line-management responsibility for the Adoption Assistant Team Manager, Adoption Support Social Workers, Adoption Social Workers, differently qualified staff and day-to-day responsibility for the operational working and development of the Adoption Service.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
<b>Carolyn Godfrey</b>	<b>Corporate Director</b>
<b>Terence Herbert</b>	<b>Associate Director, Children's Social Care</b>
<b>Martin Davis</b>	<b>Head of Service - Children in Care</b>
<b>Matthew Turner</b>	<b>Service Manager - Placements</b>
<b>Alison Lewis</b>	<b>Adoption Team Manager</b>
<b>Owen Evans</b>	<b>Assistant Team Manager Adoption</b>
<b>Denise O'Connor</b> <b>Isobel Mills</b> <b>Jackie Brown</b> <b>Donna Gladding</b>	<b>Qualified Social Workers</b>  <b>Adoption Support Social Workers</b>
<b>Charlotte Gilbertson</b> <b>Jane Priborsky</b> <b>Katie Dunne</b> <b>Pauline Fairman</b> <b>Shelley Vanderpas</b> <b>Julie Medin-Perez</b>	<b>Adoption Social Workers</b>
<b>Catherine Bull</b> <b>Ann Mazzotta</b>	<b>Adoption Support Workers</b>

All Managers and Adoption Social Workers hold the minimum social work qualification and have a minimum of 2 years' experience in children & families social work or related field.

The Adoption Team Manager has been a qualified social worker for over ten years and has worked within both statutory and voluntary settings and is experienced in child protection work and a number of other aspects of children's social work.

The Agency Decision Maker role in Wiltshire is shared between the Associate Director for Children's Social Care and Heads of Service.

## **8. Operational Functions**

The centrally based countywide Adoption Team delivers all of the adoption services for Wiltshire.

Within the team there is a dedicated Adoption Support Service that is responsible for providing and developing adoption support services in Wiltshire, including for Special Guardianship.

The Independent Reviewing Service has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of children's adoption plans, conducting the Looked After Children's reviews until the Adoption Order is made and ensuring the timescales are adhered to.

The Permanency Planning Meeting for a child oversees the home finding process, tracks the progress of individual children and adopters in order to expedite placements and to review the effectiveness of the Home finding process. The meeting is chaired and attended by those who need to be involved in planning for the child and who can make appropriate decisions.

The Homefinder booklet is produced every two months with stop press releases in between to avoid delay in matching and placement. Other mechanisms are also employed to identify potential adoptive families for children.

Wiltshire provides a comprehensive set of adoption procedures for staff to assist them in their adoption work. The procedures are available on the intranet, which means they can be easily and regularly updated in line with changes in legislation and practice.

The Adoption Agency provides adoption support services to birth families, adopted adults and adoptive families.

The Agency is a member of Adoption UK and purchases targeted services as specific needs are identified, such as training for social workers and adopters. The Agency pays for the first year's membership to Adoption UK for adopters once approved.

The Agency provides inter-country adoption services, including assessment, training, reviewing and adoption support.



Members of staff are provided with an induction programme and support from experienced managers to promote these values and to work within the Council's equal opportunities policies.

Staff are also provided with the Council's whistle blowing policy as part of their induction and this makes clear the responsibility for all staff to report areas of poor practice.

## **9. Strategic and Developmental Function**

Wiltshire is a member of the South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC), which is a consortium of local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Support Agencies (VASAs) and is used to share resources to increase the range of placement possibilities for children and adopters, and for the sharing of good practice. They produce the 'e-Link book', which features children needing adoption placements. The Adoption Team Manager is the link person with the Consortium and attends quarterly and other regional meetings.

SWAC also has regular regional group meetings for Panel Chairs, Panel Advisers and Adoption Support staff. Wiltshire has representation on all of these groups, to share issues, good practice and disseminate relevant information.

Wiltshire is a member of the Coram/British Association for Adoption and Fostering (Coram/BAAF). It provides a quarterly information pack, including details of training events, publications and practice notes. It provides licenses for the printing and use of nationally recognised adoption forms. It publishes a bi-monthly newspaper 'Be My Parent' and has a Be My Parent Online Service, which feature the more difficult to place children needing adoptive placements.

There are local Trainer/Consultants who are available to provide training, advice and guidance on specific issues. The Adoption Team Manager is the link person with Coram/BAAF and attends quarterly and other regional meetings.

Wiltshire subscribes to Adoption UK and receives quarterly journals and a 'Children Who Wait' magazine featuring children needing placements for adoption.

Wiltshire joins all newly approved gay and lesbian adopters to New Family Social as part of the support package.

## **10. The Adoption Panel and Central list**

The Adoption Panel central list consists of:-

- An Independent Chair
- A vice chair
- Social workers (level 3, 4 and above) with at least 3 years relevant experience in child care social work and knowledge of adoption work.
- Elected members of the authority, from the corporate parenting group.
- The Agency's Medical Advisers
- Independent members (all with a personal or professional experience of adoption or related areas).

Panel member's annual appraisals ensure that the diversity, flexibility and knowledge base of the panel is promoted and developed.

The Independent Chair is independent from the day to day management of the adoption service.

The Agency has a Legal Adviser to the Adoption Panel who provides written legal advice if required and may attend if requested to do so but is not a member of the Panel.

There is also an Agency Adviser to the Panel who is not a Panel member but should attend Panel meetings as its adviser. They contribute to Panel meetings by raising issues and providing advice, for example about the Agency's procedures and practices.

The Adoption Panel Administrator is responsible for taking the minutes of the meetings and undertaking the other administrative aspects of the Panel's work.

The Agency provides an annual training day for Panel members and Adoption Agency staff. Panel members are also offered opportunities to attend other relevant internal and external training events.

## **11. Adoption Panel Function**

The Adoption Panel in Wiltshire currently meets twice per month these meetings are provisionally booked a year in advance, extra panel meetings are arranged as required.

The Panel's main function is to make recommendations to the Agency's Decision Maker who makes the Agency decision on the following matters:-

- Whether a child should be placed for adoption (relinquished children only)
- Whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child
- Whether a child should be placed for adoption with a particular prospective adopter.

The Panel must also consider and may give advice to the Agency on:

- The Agency's proposals for the provision of adoption support services to the adoptive family
- The arrangement the Agency proposes to make for allowing any person contact with the child
- Whether the parental responsibility of any parent or guardian or the prospective adopter should be restricted and if so the extent of the restriction.

In considering the recommendation to make, the Panel must bear in mind that the **welfare of the child is the paramount consideration** and:-

- Shall take into account and give consideration to all reports and information passed to the Panel
- Shall request any further information that the Panel considers necessary
- Shall obtain legal and medical advice on each case presented to Panel
- Should consider whether all other possible options for care of the child have been explored and discounted.

The Panel is required to keep minutes of its meetings and a written record of any recommendations it makes and the reasons for them. The independent chair is responsible for these.

From time to time, the panel considers the reviews of children in care where the plan is adoption in order to understand practice and related issues within the authority.

As part of its monitoring function, the Panel may consider a brief report detailing the position of all the children and adopters currently in the adoption process.

Through liaison meetings, the Adoption Panel chair and agency adviser feedback to the agency at 6 monthly intervals regarding the quality of adoption practice seen by the panel.

## **12. The Agency Decision**

In line with regulations, prospective adopters, birth parents and the child must be notified of the agency decision verbally within 2 days and in writing within 7 working days of the Agency Decision Maker receiving a copy of the final minutes.

## **13. Adoption Panel**

There is an annual training day for the Adoption Panel, which helps to ensure Panel members are kept up-to-date with current issues in adoption. In meeting the requirements of the National Minimum Adoption Standards, part of this day involves a session with the Agency's adoption managers and staff.

The Agency Decision Maker meets with the Adoption Panel chair and managers regularly and at minimum twice per year and will pick up on any issues of concern raised by Panel members, including developmental matters, quality control and any other issues of relevance.

All Panel members are required to undergo an annual appraisal of their performance.

The Agency Adviser may meet periodically with the agency medical advisers and the legal adviser to discuss issues arising from panel business and shared processes.

The Adoption Panel has a system for receiving feedback from applicants who attend Panel, children's Social Workers and Adoption Social Workers, which are discussed at subsequent Panels and suggestions for improvements to Panel's practice are considered.

#### **14. Services Provided**

**As an Adoption Agency, Wiltshire provides a range of adoption services to children needing adoption, prospective adopters, adoptive parents, birth parents, birth families, adopted adults and the general public. These services include:**

- The Adoption Team recruit, train, assess and provide support to prospective adoptive parents.
- The Adoption Team provides a counselling service for adopted adults who wish to find out information about their adoption.
- The Adoption Team, through the contract with a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), provides an intermediary service for birth relatives and adopted adults who wish to trace each other.
- The Adoption Team allocates an Adoption Social Worker to act as the 'nominated home-finder' for children needing adoptive placements.
- The Adoption Team provides a consultation service to the childcare teams on matters relating to adoption placements.
- The Adoption Team offers a service to step-parents who want to adopt.
- The Adoption Team offers a range of services to inter-country adopters including adoption support.

Childcare teams are responsible for ensuring that the child's Life-story Work and Later Life Letter are completed by the time of the Adoption Order.

Childcare teams are responsible for managing direct contact arrangements between children and their birth families pre Adoption Order and the Adoption Support Team assumes responsibility post order.

## **15. Adoption Website**

Wiltshire Council has an adoption website [www.wiltshireadoption.org.uk](http://www.wiltshireadoption.org.uk) to provide information on the adoption service, including:

- Services for children who need adoption
- Becoming an adoptive parent (including an online enquiry form)
- The Adoption Support Service
- Accessing your adoption records (adopted adults)
- Tracing an adopted person (intermediary service for birth relatives)
- Tracing your birth relatives (intermediary service for adopted adults)
- Special Guardianship
- Inter-country adoption
- Step-parent Adoption

## **16. Adoption Support Service**

The Adoption Support service has a range of services in place to support adoptive families and their children including counselling, advice and information, workshops/support groups, family days and events, an annual conference, a newsletter, financial support and links with Wiltshire's Virtual School team and CAMHS.

Contact is promoted as a positive experience for the child and as maintaining an important connection with the child's past for their future identity. An allocated adoption social worker provides support to birth relatives and Adoption Support provides this for adopters. An independent social worker specialising in birth relative support is offered to birth parents or other relatives who are losing a child/ren to adoption.. Birth parents, siblings and grandparents are offered individual and occasionally group work.

Wiltshire Council supports ongoing contact arrangements as required. There is a designated worker within the adoption team who manages direct contact arrangements post-adoption. The adoption support co-ordinators manage indirect contact arrangements.

The Adoption Support Service facilitates both direct and indirect contact (through the post-box service) between birth families, children and significant others.

The adoption service provides post adoption counselling and support for adopted people living in Wiltshire. Learning from this informs current practice development.

The Adoption Service provides an intermediary service for adopted Wiltshire residents, and an intermediary service for birth relatives who are care leavers and have an adopted sibling. If required, individual and some group work is offered for young people affected by adoption.

The Adoption Support service has developed Life Story work practice and provided workshops for staff, adopters and birth family to ensure that all adopters have a high quality life story book for their child and all adopted children have their life history recorded in an accessible, high quality and flexible format.

The Adoption Support Service undertakes assessments of need for adoption support, including financial support. The Adoption Support Service also undertakes assessments of need for Special Guardianship support services.

The Adoption Support Service is also responsible for:

- Developing a range of adoption support services to meet the needs of adopted children and adoptive families e.g. support groups, newsletters and training for adopters and staff
- Preparing Adoption Support Plans for children and reviewing the plans at regular intervals, including financial support, as required
- Accessing specialist therapeutic help for children
- Accessing counselling and advice for adoptive parents
- Managing the post-box service (to enable adopted children to maintain indirect contact with their birth families)
- Reviewing direct contact arrangements
- Enabling the access to universal services and benefits for those involved in adoption.
- Organising training events and conferences for adopters and staff
- Providing practical help and support to adoptive families
- Preparing Special Guardianship support plans and reviewing them as required.
- Providing support to birth relatives acting as a single point of contact to provide information and advice to adopters, adopted young people, birth relatives and special guardians.

## **17. Systems for monitoring and evaluating adoption services.**

An annual report is provided to Cabinet and a 6 monthly performance report is presented to the senior management group and Elected Members, detailing the performance of the Adoption Agency.

The supervision and annual appraisal system for all staff assures the monitoring of individual performance and identification of training needs to compensate for any gaps in knowledge.

A File Audit system is in place for managers to check on the quality of children's adoption records, adopters' files, adoption support modules and home finding files, to ensure that all departmental policies and procedures are being followed.

Training on adoption issues is part of the 'training pathway' for staff involved in adoption work and staff complete post-training evaluation forms, which feed into reports produced by the Staff Development Team.

An Adoption Recruitment Strategy is in place to identify and inform recruitment needs for adoptive parents, based on the profile of the children needing adoption. This is reviewed and updated annually and is used to inform priorities when assessing applicants.

The Adoption Team routinely review and evaluate the quality of the Adoption and Permanence training courses for adoptive applicants, including seeking and collating feedback from applicants.

Where required, contracts with external providers are reviewed 6 monthly and statistics provided quarterly to monitor performance, quality of service and ensure value for money.

A Feedback system is in place for adopters attending training session's pre and post approval.

A regular Homefinding meeting tracks and monitors the children and adopters currently in the adoption process, with particular focus on those without an identified placement.

Adoption service targets are reviewed annually.

## **18. The Service to Prospective Adopters**

**The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters are set out in detail in the Adoption Agency procedures, which are available within the Children's Services Practice Guidance material available on the council intranet**

**In brief the process is as follows:**

All enquiries regarding adoption are welcome; the adoption team operates an open and inclusive enquiry process. All enquirers speak with a specialist adoption worker. There is access to information about adoption and to the adoption team via an enquiry line, via the website or via direct office number.

Within 10 working days of their enquiry, all enquirers are sent an information pack about adoption, which includes:

- An information leaflet for prospective adopters
- The policy with regard to smoking
- The criteria for prioritising assessments
- Information about the complaints procedure
- The statement of purpose
- Information about the Independent Reviewing Mechanism

All applicants have to meet the standard requirements set out in the regulations, there are no automatic exclusions. The needs of children awaiting adoption may necessitate priority being given to applicants who:

- are interested and able to offer an adoptive placement to children aged three years old or older
- wish to be considered for a sibling group of two or more children.
- are open to direct contact with birth families
- would consider parenting a child with complex needs or disability
- could offer a Fostering for Adoption placement

Those interested in progressing their interest are requested to complete and return an Adoption Enquiry slip and their case is progressed to the pre-assessment stage and an Initial Assessment will be completed.

Following an Initial Assessment the agency will confirm whether to accept a Registration of Interest and if so, will progress the case to Stage 1 (adopter led) of the assessment process during which Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other checks, references and a full medicals will be obtained.

Applicants will be invited to attend a one day Preparation Course during Stage 1 which will provide detailed information in respect of the national adoption trends as well as the needs of the agency locally, which should assist to people decide whether adoption is right for them. The applicants are also asked to complete a Portfolio of Learning during stage 1 which augments the formal information and training provided.

The aim is to complete Stage 1 within 2 months; on receipt of all statutory checks

a decision is made whether or not to progress the case to Stage 2. Stage 2 (agency led) facilitates the completion of the Prospective Adopter's Report and takes approximately 4 months. A further 3 day's preparation training is



scheduled during Stage 2 which encompasses the views of adopted children, the perspective of birth parents and the experience of other adoptive parents.

The assessment must be completed, presented to the Adoption Panel and signed off by the Agency Decision Maker within 6 months of receiving the Registration of Interest (8 months in exceptional circumstances).

Applicants receive a copy of their completed assessment report and are entitled to 5 days to consider and comment on its contents.

Applicants are invited to attend Adoption Panel when their approval is being considered. Their Adoption Social Worker will help to prepare them for attendance and will provide them with a leaflet about the Adoption Panel.

The Panel will make a recommendation as to whether the applicants are suitable to be approved as adopters. The Panel must consider and may give matching advice to the Agency about the number of children, age range, gender, likely needs and background that the prospective adopters may be suitable to adopt.

The Agency Decision Maker has 7 working days from receipt of the final panel minutes to make a decision. Once the decision has been made prospective adopters must be notified of this verbally within 2 days and confirmed in writing within 5 working days.

Should the applicants be deemed unsuitable (qualifying determination), they will be able to either make representation to the agency within 30 days or alternatively make an application for their case to be reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Mechanism. A letter detailing the reasons for the Agency's decision will be sent to the applicants.

Following their approval, the prospective adopters' Adoption Social Worker keeps in touch with them and ensures they have access to information about the children needing placements locally through the "Homefinder" publication, regionally through the South West Adoption Consortium and nationally via the Adoption Register and Adoption Link

If no child has been placed with them within a year of their approval, there must be a review of their circumstances to confirm their continued suitability to adopt. After the review the prospective adopters must be informed in writing whether they remain suitable to adopt.

When a 'link' with a child is identified, an assessment of Adoption Support needs is completed and formulated into an Adoption Support Plan which will be presented at Panel with supporting documentation when the 'match' will be formally considered.

Adopters can also request an assessment for Adoption Support Services at any future point following the making of an Adoption Order. The assessment will be conducted by an Adoption Support social worker and the Department has the discretion to decide whether to provide adoption support services.

Wiltshire Adoption Service fully subscribes to the Adopters Charter.

## **19. The Complaints Procedure**

In seeking to constantly improve the quality of the adoption service, the Department for Children and Education welcomes and encourages feedback from service users, providers and partners.

The Department recognises that children, their birth parents, adoptive parents and prospective adopters are best placed to identify the strengths and deficiencies of the Adoption Service and, therefore, to inform the changes and developments needed to ensure continuing improvement.

There is a clear, robust framework in place for responding to, and ensuring that, the views of the parties to the adoption process are heard and the Children's Guide provides information to children about how to make a complaint.

In most adoption situations, areas of potential tension or conflict can be minimised through careful planning, open communication and early discussion and negotiation involving the child's Social Worker, the adopters' Social Worker, the Adoption Support Co-ordinator and others, as appropriate.

Any of the parties to the adoption process can use the Children Act Complaints Procedure if they are dissatisfied or are concerned with the service provided. This includes a complaint by:

- Any child who has been placed for adoption by Wiltshire Council (including adults who were formerly adopted)
- A birth parent of a child who has been or is being adopted
- Adoptive parents
- Prospective adoptive parents during the preparation or assessment process and after approval whilst awaiting a placement
- One person on behalf of another e.g. an adoptive parent on behalf of an adopted child.

Advice on making a complaint can be sought from the **Customer Complaints Manager at Wiltshire Council** who can be contacted on **Tel: 01225 718446 / 713020**.

**There is a leaflet available for children and young people, which explains the complaints process and how to make a complaint. Information regarding complaints, comments and seeking advice is contained in the children's guide to adoption and the children's guide to adoption support.**

## **20. The Registration Authority**

Ofsted is an independent non-governmental public body responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services, under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. Their aim is to “inspect and regulate to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages”.

The address of the local Ofsted area office is:

**Ofsted South Regional Centre  
Freshford House  
Redcliffe Way Bristol  
BS1 6NL**

The national Ofsted address is:

**Ofsted  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann’s Square  
Manchester M2 7LA**

**Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)**

**Tel:**

**08456 404045** about education, adult skills, or local authority children’s services

**08456 404040** about anything else

**Minicom /TTD: 0161 618 8524**