



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

October 2022

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with underpinning legislation.

- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014
- Care Planning Regulations 2010
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Local Authority Regulations 2005
- Adoption Agencies & Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- Adoption Agencies (Panel & Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- Care Planning, placement and Case and fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Standards Act 2000

1.3 Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens, Councils collaborated to establish the Together for Adoption shared adoption service in 2017. Together for Adoption is hosted by Wigan Council and has two dedicated social work teams that provide the recruitment, assessment and approval of adopter's service and an adoption support service to the communities of the five local authorities.

1.4 Together for Adoption is based at

1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

1.5 Together for Adoption is part of the wider Children's Social Care Service in all five local authorities and reflects each Council's commitment to 'Best Practice' in the provision of an Adoption Agency.

Wigan, Warrington, St Helens, Cheshire West and Chester and Halton Councils believe that children should experience permanence and security throughout their childhood and that it is best for a child to live within their birth family, if it is safe to do so. Where this is not possible, all five Councils aim to provide, in conjunction with Together for Adoption, permanent alternative

families who will promote the child's well-being and development by providing the highest possible standards of care to meet their individual assessed needs.

2. Vision for the Service

In *Children's social care reform: a vision for change (2016)* the government outlined its overarching vision for transforming the quality of children's social care services by 2020. In respect of adoption, the government's vision is for an adoption system where:

- Decisions about placements are always made in children's best interests.
- Service delivery has at its heart innovation and practice excellence.
- Social Workers are highly skilled professionals who make high quality, evidence-based decisions and do not tolerate damaging delay for children in their care.
- Matches are made without unnecessary delay.
- Every adoptive family has access to an ongoing package of appropriate support with a right to a high quality, specialist assessment of need.
- The voice of adopters and their children is at the heart of national and local policy decision making and delivery of services.

The vision of Together for Adoption is to;

Provide all children who need an adoptive placement with a family that is the best possible match, and provides the highest standards of care, safety, protection and an enduring loving relationship.

- Ensure that those affected by adoption receive the information, support and advice that they need to understand their adoption journey.
- Ensure that RAA families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption.

3. Aims

- 3.1 The main aim of Together for Adoption is to provide a child focused and efficient service: which will be demonstrated by increased numbers of adopters being recruited, through timely assessment and the provision of training and support, which

prepares adopters well and enables children to achieve permanence in loving and nurturing families.

- 3.2 To provide an effective, flexible shared adoption agency where the needs of individual children can be met within the legal security of adoption as appropriate.
- 3.3 To ensure that adoption is considered as an option for all children requiring permanent alternative care away from their birth family.
- 3.4 To provide a proactive and professional family finding service which seeks to match individual children with prospective adoptive families that have been assessed as able to meet their needs.
- 3.5 To ensure that the recruitment, preparation, training and support given to prospective adopters is a comprehensive service and meets their needs so that they can be successful adopters.
- 3.6 To provide a responsive and comprehensive adoption support service to children, their birth families and adoptive families living in Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens who as a result of adoption require advice, counselling, practical or emotional support. In addition, to provide adoption support services to children and their adoptive families placed by Together for Adoption outside of the boundary of all five Local Authorities.
- 3.7 To provide a signposting service for any person requesting an Adoption Intermediary Service. This is not provided by Together for Adoption.
- 3.8 To signpost prospective adopters who are interested in Inter-Country Adoption to the relevant Adoption Agency.
- 3.9 To provide a counselling service for adopted adults who wish to access their files or trace their birth family. To support adults who access their files, to provide them with a copy of all the relevant information about their birth family and also the reasons why they were adopted.
- 3.10 To provide the Adoption Panel Advisor role and Adoption Support Service Advisor role to ensure that the quality of the shared service is supported and developed across the five boroughs.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 To ensure that the needs, wishes, welfare and safety of the child are at the centre of the adoption process.
- 4.2 To recruit and maintain sufficient numbers of prospective and approved adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children of Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens who need adoptive placements. This recruitment should whenever possible reflect the ethnicity, culture, religion and language needs of the children.
- 4.3 To provide an efficient and effective service for prospective adopters. This service to include, information, preparation, assessment and ongoing support.
- 4.4 To offer a service to birth parents who wish to relinquish children for adoption.
- 4.5 To develop and deliver a range of adoption support services to adopters, adopted children and their birth families in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance.
- 4.6 To provide a signposting service for adopted adults searching for their birth family and for birth family members who are searching for an adopted adult.
- 4.7 To provide organisation and management of the post adoption letter box contact scheme.
- 4.8 To ensure that staff working in the shared adoption service have the necessary qualifications, knowledge, skills and training to deliver an effective service.
- 4.15 To provide information and advice to those seeking to adopt from overseas. This service is being provided by a service level agreement with the Inter Country Adoption Centre.

5. Principles and Values

- 5.1 The work of Together for Adoption is underpinned by the following values and beliefs.

(a) Children

- Every child is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, which should meet all their needs in terms of stability, safety and security, that promotes their physical, social and emotional development and that offers a supportive lifelong relationship.
- Where a child's needs cannot be met within their birth family, adoption may offer the best alternative to meet their needs.
- In all planning for children, the child's welfare is paramount, and their wishes and feelings should always be sought and taken into account in decision making, in accordance to their age and understanding.
- Children are entitled to be treated with respect; diversity and difference should be valued and enjoyed. A child's sense of identity and self-respect needs to be actively promoted, particularly awareness of issues of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender and ability.
- Children should only be separated from their siblings where clear evidence supports doing so based on the child's assessed needs.
- Every child is entitled to information about his/her birth family in order to promote his/her sense of identity.
- Contact (direct or indirect) should be encouraged if compatible with the child's needs.

(b) Adopters

- The role of the adoptive parent in offering a permanent family to a child will be valued and respected.
- All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process. No applicant will be discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, culture, disability, sexuality, gender, age, financial status or marital status.
- All applicants are entitled to know what issues will be taken into account in their assessment, including age, health, relationships and family history.

- Applicants will be regarded as partners in the assessment process and will be kept fully informed of their progress, and of any concerns identified in the assessment.

(c) Birth Families

- Wherever possible, Together for Adoption will work in partnership with birth families to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented for children.
- Birth families will be treated fairly, openly and with respect, and their relationship with their child will be acknowledged.
- Birth families will be kept fully informed of the adoption process, the legal implications and their rights.
- Birth families will be given such information about their child's adoptive parents as is compatible with the child's and the adoptive family's safety and security.
- Birth families will have access to independent counselling and advice if required. This service is commissioned from an independent Voluntary Adoption Agency.

6. Diversity

- 6.1 Each Council has a Corporate Diversity and Equalities Strategy and Together for Adoption will work towards achieving their stated objectives. These can be accessed via each Council's internet sites.
- 6.2 Together for Adoption has a key role to play through the provision of placements that are able to meet a diverse range of individual needs.
- 6.3 Together for Adoption will ensure it provides services in a way which appropriately meets the needs of all individuals, and that its structure policies and procedures do not discriminate against disadvantaged groups.

7. Service Manager

- 7.1 The host Authority for Together for Adoption is Wigan.
- 7.2 The Manager of Together for Adoption is **Cathy Sowden**.

Qualifications – **Cathy** is a qualified social worker and is registered with Social Work England. She holds a Diploma in Social Work, obtained in 1994 and a BA (Hons) in Social Work and Community Studies obtained in 1995. Cathy has 27 years post qualifying experience in children's social work and has specialised in fostering and adoption since 1998 including two periods of working in specialist Concurrent Planning Services. Cathy is an experienced manager, having managed teams across fostering and adoption since 1999. She also holds a Masters in Child Care and Family Services (2002), the Advanced Award in Social Work (2003) and a level 5 National Vocational Qualification in Leadership and Management for Health and Social Care in Children and Young People's Services obtained in 2014.

Contact Details: Cathy.Sowden@wigan.gov.uk

Address:

1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

Telephone:

01942 487272

8. Structure of the Service

- 8.1 Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens have collaborated to establish Together for Adoption. This shared adoption service is hosted by Wigan and has two dedicated social work teams – Recruitment and Assessment and Adoption Support - that provide a range of adoption services to the communities of five local authorities.
- 8.2 The Service Manager of Together for Adoption is responsible for the day to day running of the service.
- 8.3 The Service Manager is supported by two Principal Managers, an Administration Manager and a Panel Adviser. These managers are in turn supported by four Practice Managers

Together for Adoption has six named agency decision makers, (ADM's.) One ADM is the service Lead in Together for Adoption, who makes all the decisions regarding Adopter Approvals. There is a decision maker in each Local Authority who makes decisions regarding cases referred to the Adoption Panel. Including whether a child should be placed for Adoption when relinquished and matches for children from their respective Local Authority.

Together for Adoption – Approvals – Cathy Sowden

Service Manager
1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

Cheshire West and Chester – Helen Brackenbury

Director of Children's Social Care,
HQ, 1st Floor
58 Nicholas Street
Chester
CH1 2NP

Halton – Peter Murphy

Operational Director Children's Social Care
People Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QF

St Helens – Fiona Woods

Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption, St Helen's Council
Atlas House
Corporation Street
St Helens
WA9 1LD

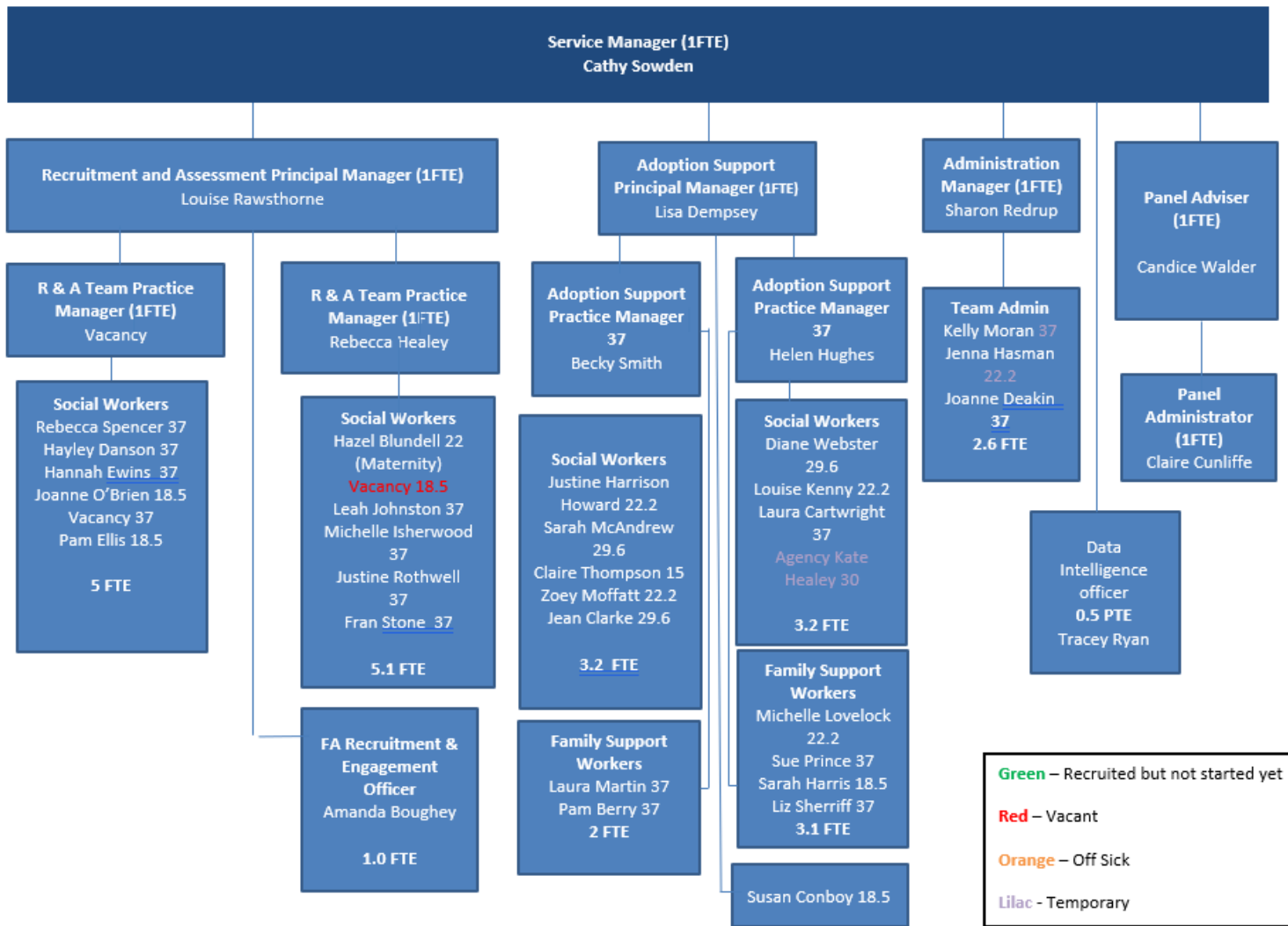
Warrington - Amanda Amesbury

Operational Director – Deputy DCS
Children's Social Care
Families and Wellbeing
Warrington Borough Council
1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

Wigan – Sandie Hayes

Director of Children's Services
Wigan Council
Life Centre South (South Site)
College Avenue
Wigan
WN1 1NJ

Together for Adoption Structure



8. Staff: Names, Role Qualifications, Experience

Agency Decision Makers

Name	Role	Qualification/Experience
Sandie Hayes	Practice Director and Agency Decision Maker	DIPSW 2001 Leadership and Management -02017 21 years experience in social work
Peter Murphy	Operations Director of Children's Services Agency Decision Maker - Halton	BA (Hons) Social Policy (1996) Diploma in Social Work (1998) and Masters in Social Work Studies Experience of working in statutory safeguardings services for 24 years, including almost 10 years as the Agency Decision Maker for Adoption.
Amanda Amesbury	Assistant Director and Agency Decision Maker - Warrington	BA (Hons) 1995 DIPSW 1995. MA social Work 1999. NVQ Management 2004. National Accreditation Scheme, Practice Leader 2019. 20 years' experience in social work.
Helen Brackenbury	Director of Children's Services Agency Decision Maker – Cheshire West & Chester	Director of Childrens Services Cheshire West and Chester Council NNEB - 990 NQICL - 2005 Post Graduate Certificate in Strategic Leadership- 2011 Senior Leader / Director in Children's Services for 8 Years and previously front line practitioner and manager of front line services in Early help and family support services for local government for 18 years
Paula Swindlehurst	Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption – St Helens	2009 MA Process Consultancy Manchester University. 2000 Post Qualifying Child Care Award Salford University. 1997 BA (hons) Social Work Studies Salford University. 1995 Diploma in Social Work Salford University Professional Development. 2011 Leading Children's Social Care (Pilot Programme) Manchester University

Manager and Agency Decision Maker on Approvals

Name:	Role	Qualification/Experience
Cathy Sowden	Service Manager 37 hours	<p>Qualified social worker and is registered with Social Work England. Diploma in Social Work, obtained in 1994.</p> <p>BA (Hons) in Social Work and Community Studies obtained in 1995. 27 years post qualifying experience in children's social work</p> <p>Specialised in fostering and adoption since 1998 including two periods of working in specialist Concurrent Planning Services.</p> <p>Experienced manager, having managed teams across fostering and adoption since 1999.</p> <p>Holds a Masters in Child Care and Family Services (2002), as well as the Advanced Award in Social Work (2003) and a level 5 National</p> <p>Vocational Qualification in Leadership and Management for Health and Social Care in Children and Young People's Services obtained in 2014.</p>

Principal Managers

<p>Louise Rawsthorne</p>	<p>Principal Manager, Recruitment and assessment</p> <p>37 hrs</p>	<p>NNEB qualified. HND in Social Care. Diploma in social work in 2003.</p> <p>Louise has 22 years' experience including being a Nursery Nurse, Youth Worker, Residential Worker, Family Support Worker, Education Social Worker, Adoption Panel member and Childcare Social Worker in Adoption and Permanency.</p> <p>Louise has 10 years' experience in adoption work 5 of these in a management post. Louise has been an Adoption Panel Advisor.</p> <p>Louise is a Practice Educator for student Social Workers.</p>
<p>Lisa Dempsey</p>	<p>Principal Manager Adoption Support</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>Currently undertaking Level 5 ILM Diploma BA Social Work 2009 NEBS Supervisory Management 1998 GNVQ Advanced Health and Social Care 1997 Lisa has social work experience of working with adults in a community mental health team, in Wigan Adoption service since May 2010, which became WWISH in 2011 and TFA in 2017.</p>

Practice Managers

<p>Rebecca Healey</p>	<p>Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>BA (Hons) Social Work 2013.</p> <p>Rebecca has 6 years' experience as a Social Worker specialising in the field of adoption, working with birth parents, adoptive parents and adopted children. Rebecca has a range of experience in adoption, delivering training to adoptive families and is Theraplay Level 1 and 2 trained.</p> <p>Rebecca joined the St Helens adoption service in 2015.</p>
<p>Joanne O'Brien</p>	<p>Practice Manager Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>37 hours</p>	<p>NNEB Qualified in 1992 at Preston College. In 2006 Dip SW from Preston University.</p> <p>Since 1994, Joanne has been employed within Children's Social Care field for a Local Authority. Working at various Day Nurseries and Family Centres, and as a Senior Nursery Nurse and Assistant Manager at a Family Centre</p> <p>Joanne has worked within Adoption service since 2006; and subsequently Adoption & Fostering from 2014.</p> <p>Joining Together for Adoption in February 2019 and moved to Practice Manager position in September 2022.</p>

Helen Hughes	Practice Manager – Adoption Support 37hours	<p>July 2003, DipSW in Social Work at Liverpool Community College, Level 4 PQ Childcare Award March 2007, July 2008 BA (Hons) in Post Qualifying Studies in Health and Social Welfare.</p> <p>Qualified practice educator.</p> <p>Helen was employed by NCH as a Residential Social Worker for 10 years working with children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.</p> <p>In April 2004, Helen was employed by Halton Borough Council. Firstly, as a Social Worker based in the Young People’s Team, where she worked for three years, before moving to the Adoption Service in September 2007.</p> <p>In December 2018, Helen accepted the position as 0.5 Adoption Support Practice Manager.</p>
Becky Smith	Practice Manager – Adoption Support 37 hours	<p>Master’s in social work 2006 PQ Consolidation 2010</p> <p>Worked within various children's social care settings since 2006 Employed within WWiSH then Together for Adoption, since July 2013.</p>

Panel Adviser

Candice Walder	Panel Adviser 37 hours	<p>BA (Hons) Social Work 2010 Post qualifying awards 2012 Adopt facilitators course 2015 Practice Educator 2016</p> <p>Qualified as a nursery nurse in 2006, working within a variety of Surestart settings</p>
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		<p>and then as a private nanny. Worked as a healthcare assistant within the Priory, with both adults and adolescents. Completed social work training in 2010 and have been employed as a social worker since. Began an interest in adoption whilst studying, and so the focus of my career has been on fostering and adoption. Panel advisor since 2018.</p>
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Social Workers – Recruitment and Assessment

Pam Ellis	<p>Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>18.5 hours</p>	<p>MA in social work 2009. 2009 – 2017 worked as a child protection social worker. 2017 – 2020 – adoption childcare social worker. Previous to being, a qualified social worker, worked on the child protection and court team as a family support officer.</p>
Vacancy	<p>Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>18.5 hours</p>	
Hayley Danson	<p>Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment</p>	<p>Qualified as a social worker in April 2019 with a postgraduate diploma in social work.</p> <p>Social worker on the Child Protection Team, Salford April 2019 – 10th April 2022.</p>

	37 hours	Together for Adoption as a social worker on the assessment and recruitment team from 11/04/2022.
Francesca Stone	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 37 hours	BA Hons Social Work 2001. Fran has over 16 years' experience as a Social Worker working within a Court Assessment Team, family placement team, a Child Sexual Exploitation Team, Permanency Team and a childcare Generic Team. Fran joined Wigan's adoption service in 2015.
Vacancy (Hazel)	Social Worker. Adoption Recruitment and Assessment 22 hours	
Michelle Isherwood	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 37 hours	Qualified as a social worker in June 2019 with a BA hons in Social work. Supervising social worker with Perpetual fostering on the 01/07/2019 until 23/11/2020, Together for Adoption as a social worker on the assessment and recruitment team.
Rebecca Spencer	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 37 hours	MA in Social Work from Lancaster University.
Vacancy (is this Holly?)	Recruitment & Assessment	

	Social Worker 37 hours	
Hannah Gray	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 37 hours	<p>MA in Childhood Studies graduating in 2014 before gaining an MA in Social Work in 2016.</p> <p>Hannah trained within a statutory fostering team and gained employment working within the voluntary sector supporting young people with their mental health.</p> <p>Hannah then worked as a Statutory Social Worker in a Child Protection team in Warrington for 2 years before moving to Together for Adoption in December 2018.</p>
Vacancy	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker	
Leah Johnston	Recruitment & Assessment Social Worker 37 hours	<p>BA Early childhood & Education studies 2010 MA Social work 2013</p> <p>10 years experience in Adoption and Fostering, working in various local authorities as a social worker. Leah joined Together for Adoption in 2021 as a recruitment and assessment social worker.</p>
Justine Rothwell	Recruitment and Assessment Worker 18.5 hours	<p>BA (hons) Degree in Social Ethics and Youth & community Studies -1995 Diploma in Social work 1997 Best interest Assessor 2013 Supported students in various job roles Senior practitioner on two different teams</p>

		Qualified Social worker for 24 years working in a variety of settings with Children, families and adults - Education, Young People's drug & Alcohol Team, Hospital Social work, Fostering teams including for a charity, moved to the Adoption Team in June 2021.
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Recruitment and Engagement Officer

Vacancy	Recruitment and Engagement Officer	
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Social Workers - Adoption Support

Jean Clark	Social Worker- Adoption Adoption Support 14.2 hours	CQSW 1988 Degree in Applied Social Studies 1988 Previous experience in Community Social work. Member of the Adoption Service in Wigan since November 2005. Has been employed with in WWiSH and then Together for Adoption since 2011.
Justine Harrison Howard	Social Worker Adoption Support 18.5 Hours	BSC health, PGCE post compulsory teacher training, MA Social work. Worked in the health sector with children and families, particularly in the areas of Mental health in both CAMHS and public health team since 2003, before qualifying as a Health and social care teacher in FE alongside her role. Completed MA Social work after working in health sector in 2014. Employed within WWiSH and Together for Adoption since 2015.

Diane Webster	Social Worker. Adoption Support 29 hours	NNEB 1989, Dip SW in 2001. P.Q. 1, Twenty years' experience in Child Care prior to qualification. Member of Adoption Service in Wigan since 2002. Seconded into WWiSH then Together for Adoption since October 2011.
Sarah McAndrew	Adoption Support Social Worker 29.6 hours	MA Social work in 2013 Theraplay Level Currently studying for a Diploma in Therapeutic Lifestory work. Worked as primary school teacher working across the age range from 3 – 11 years since 1993, leading in literacy, maths and SEN. Sarah has also worked in further education on BTEC childhood studies and training teaching assistants with young people aged 16 plus. Worked in adoption across all teams; assessment and recruitment, family finding and adoption support.
Claire Thompson	Adoption Support Social Worker 18.5 hours	Qualified as a Social Worker in 1999 following obtaining a BA Honours Social Work Degree and Social Work Diploma at Humberside and Lincolnshire University. Began her social work career as a children and family's Social Worker in 1999. Firstly, with Wigan, followed by Wirral Borough Council before being employed by Cheshire County Council In 2001, transferring to Cheshire West and Chester when the Council separated. Embarked on current role in March 2017 as an Adoption Social Worker, transferring to Together for Adoption in Sept 17.

<p><i>Claire cont'd</i></p>	<p>Adoption Support Social Worker</p> <p>22.2 hours</p>	<p>Therapeutic Social Worker BA(HONS) DIPSW. Certified Nurtured Heart Approach Trainer, Foundation Level Theraplay Practitioner.</p> <p>Qualified Social Worker for 9 years. Experience of working in a statutory safeguarding team prior to moving to Adoption Support 5 years ago.</p> <p>Experience of working with children from a variety of different backgrounds in both formal and informal settings. Her main area of practise is around attachment, supporting families with histories of relational trauma. Libby is currently taking part in a professional development program to clinically assess the needs of children and young people.</p>
<p>Zoey Moffatt</p>	<p>Adoption Support Social Worker</p> <p>22.2 hours</p>	<p>Bsc Social Science 2005. MA social Work 2009. Worked as a social worker on the Looked After Children's Team in Bolton for 10 years.</p> <p>Been employed by Together for Adoption as a Social Worker on the Adoption Support team since January 2021.</p>
<p>Louise Kenny</p>	<p>Adoption Support Social Worker</p> <p>22 hours</p>	<p>I qualified as a Social worker in November 2014 with an MA in Social Work. Following this I worked in the Looked after Children's Team at St Helens Council until 2017 when I moved to work in an assessment team also at St Helens.</p> <p>Prior to gaining my social work qualification I was a family support worker for 9 years. I am a trained Triple P parenting practitioner.</p>
<p>Kate Healey Agency Social Worker</p>	<p>Adoption Support Social Worker</p>	<p>Qualified as a social worker in June 2010 with a BA Hons in Social Work. Duty and Assessment Social worker with Rochdale council from June 2010 until August 2015.</p>

Kate Healey cont'd	37 hours	Adoption recruitment Social Worker with Rochdale Council and then Adoption Now from July 2016 until Feb 2019 SGO/Step parent adoption Social worker from Feb 2019 until October 2019 Together for Adoption social worker in post adoption from October 2019 until present
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Family Support Workers

Pamela Berry	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1999. Worked with children and families in various settings since 1999 Employed by WWiSH and subsequently Together for Adoption since September 2013.
Liz Sheriff	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1999. Since qualifying as a nursery nurse, Liz has worked in Education (special school; nursery and primary school), Health (Community nursery nurse), and Social Care (Early intervention and prevention / Fostering team). She has worked in Adoption since 2007 and joined WWiSH and subsequently Together for Adoption Service in 2011.
Sue Prince	Adoption Support Worker 37 hours	NNEB 1985. NVQ 4 Business Management 2007. An adopter. Sue has worked in Social Care for 32 years. Manager of Family Centre and Children's Centre for 13 years. Joined Cheshire West Adoption Service July 2009.

Susan Conboy	Adoption Support Worker 18.5 hours	BTEC National – Distinction in caring services (nursery nursing) NVQ 3- Caring for children and young people. Theraplay Level 1. Susan has worked for Cheshire West and Chester for 19 years as a family support worker and within the adoption support team since 2010.
Michelle Lovelock	Adoption Support Worker 22.2 hours	Preliminary certificate in social care 1989. NVQ3 Early Years and Education 1998. D32 & 33 IV vocational training 2002. Foundation certificate in teacher training and development 2002. BA Hons Early Childhood Studies 2009. Early Years Professional Status 2010. Theraplay level 1 & 2 trained including group Theraplay. 2015/16. Michelle has worked with Children and Families for 30 years, in residential care and school settings, has managed pre-school provision and worked as a 1:1 support for children Whilst working for Cheshire West and Chester for the last 15 years Michelle has had the following roles: 6 years Family support worker (FSW) in early intervention 3 years Childminder network coordinator 2 years FSW fostering Joining the Adoption Support Team as a FSW in July 2013.
Laura Martin	Adoption Support Worker 18.5 hours	NNEB. Theraplay level 2 trained including group Theraplay. Laura was a Nursery nurse for 7 years. Residential Support Worker in a Children's home for 2.5 years. Family support Worker for Children in Need Team for a year and then Adoption Support worker Cheshire West for around 7 years.

Sarah Harris	Adoption Social Worker 18.5 hrs	<p>BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work and Theology 2008. Msc Social Work 2012.</p> <p>Worked as a social worker in the Adoption Team in Hertfordshire for 6 years. Previously worked in youth offending and fostering teams, as well as being a foster carer.</p> <p>Employed by Together for Adoption as a Support Worker in the Adoption Support team since June 2022.</p>
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Administration Staff

Sharon Redrup	Administration Manager 37 hours	Sharon has worked in administration within the Local Authority Children's Services Department for Cheshire West and Chester Council/Cheshire County Council since 1996. And has been based with the Adoption Team since 2008, undertaking the role of Panel Administrator, Business Support, and more recently Administration Manager at Together for Adoption (since 2017).
Kelly Moran	Business Support 37 hrs	Kelly has worked for the adoption service since 2016. Prior to working for the adoption service Kelly worked in an admin/sales role for 14 years with an outside organisation.
Jenna Hasman	Business Support 22.2 hrs	BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (2006). 10 year working in Business support within the travel industry. A further 3 years working in the NHS providing admin support for the Trafford health visiting team.
Joanne Deakin	Business Support 37 hrs	12 years of professional experience in an administrative capacity, working in various different sectors such as international haulage and on behalf of solicitors. Now working within the adoption team

Claire Cunliffe	Panel Administrator 37 hrs	Claire is new to the Local Authority, having previously undertaken the role as an agency staff member for several months. Claire has worked in adoption for 8 years, with 3 years as an administrator for a voluntary adoption agency and 5 years as a social work assistant with the same organisation. She also has personal experience of adoption within her family.
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Data Analyst

Tracey Ryan	Data Analyst	10 years' experience as a Personal Assistant /Office Manager for Women's Aid, followed by 10 years' experience working for the adoption team. Initially working as a Panel Administrator for St. Helens, before moving with the service in 2011, to WWISH, in an administrative role and then onto Together for Adoption in the same role, until appointed to the Data Analyst role.
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9. Services Provided to Children

- 9.1 The Adoption Service provides services to children requiring an adoptive placement. These children have an identified care plan of adoption or are relinquished children.
- 9.2 Children with a plan for adoption which requires no application for a Placement Order (children whose mother has requested they be placed for adoption) can be considered by the Adoption Panel in respect of the agency decision that they should be placed for adoption.
- 9.3 In all other cases when an adoption plan is considered, there is an alternative process in place concluding with the decision of the Agency Decision Maker as to whether the plan should be adoption or not and this decision being presented to court.
- 9.4 The Adoption Child Care worker in each Local Authority attend early planning meetings for children whose plan may be adoption and in this way are informed of the children that may eventually have a plan for adoption. Information about these children is then shared with Together for Adoption via Early Permanence Tracking meetings and monthly family linking meetings. This enables family finding to commence at the earliest point and the sufficiency of adopters to be monitored.
- 9.5 Profiling meetings are held for children when the plan for adoption is clear. All involved professionals and carers are invited to this meeting to share all known information about each child in order to gain a full picture of their needs.
- 9.6 The search for an adoptive family for a child pursues all avenues available to ensure that any delay is minimised.
- 9.7 Children and adopter profiles are uploaded to Link Maker in all cases where matches have not been identified prior to approval or a Placement Order being granted. Children will also be featured at Adoption Exchange Days. Consideration is also given to Activity days and profiling the child/ren in certain publications if family finding is proving to be extremely difficult.
- 9.8 When a prospective adoptive family is identified, the relevant paperwork is prepared, and the case is presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation. The Agency Decision Maker then approves the match if s/he agrees with the recommendation.

- 9.9 Once the match is agreed by the Agency Decision Maker a series of introductions take place, if these are successful the child is then placed with the adoptive family.
- 9.10 The child's Social Worker supports the placement together with the adoptive family's Social Worker until the Adoption Order is granted.
- 9.11 Foster to Adopt, and concurrent placements are also actively recruited to ensure, where appropriate, a child can be placed with their potential adopters at the earliest opportunity to minimise the amount of moves they experience and establish security as soon as possible.

10 Recruitment, Preparation, Assessment, Support and Approval of Adoptive Parents.

- 10.1 Together for Adoption has an annual recruitment strategy and runs regular recruitment campaigns to capture the interest of prospective adopters. A variety of media is used during the campaigns which are focused around the needs of children waiting and those who are likely to be referred to the service.
- 10.2 Prospective adopters who make contact with the service, either by telephone or website will be contacted by a recruitment and assessment duty social worker for an initial conversation about adoption. If the prospective adopter wishes to proceed at that stage, then an expression of interest form will be completed, and a more detailed conversation will take place on that same day. An initial home visit will then be arranged. If during the initial conversation it is established that the prospective adopter only requires basic information, then an information pack will be provided along with an expression of interest form.
- 10.3 If an information pack has been provided then on receipt of this expression of interest form, a recruitment and assessing duty social worker will telephone the prospective adopter within **10 working days** and provide them with further information. If the prospective adopters wish to proceed an initial visit will be arranged. This visit will inform the decision making and if the prospective adopter wishes to progress to Stage 1.
- 10.4 Following the receipt of a 'Registration of Interest' the adoption agency is required to acknowledge receipt of the form and decide if they will accept or decline the application within **5 working days**.

- 10.5 If Together for Adoption accepts the Registration of Interest this is the start of **Stage 1**. The Service must at the start of this stage complete a stage 1 plan with the applicant/s setting out the responsibilities of the Agency and the prospective adopter/s. This stage is **61 days** in length, and adopters are required to complete their own research and portfolio of evidence. Together for Adoption will complete Statutory Checks, references, Health and Safety Assessment and provide Preparation for Adoption Training for applicants at this stage.
- 10.6 At the end of **Stage 1** there will be a meeting held with the prospective adopter/s and the adoption agency must decide and inform the applicant/s if they are in the position to progress to **Stage 2** or if they need to complete further work. If the decision is that the applicant/s can progress the application form and stage 2 plan are completed.
- 10.7 Following this, adopters are allocated a social worker from the Recruitment and Assessment Team who will work with them to complete the assessment. **Stage 2** of the process must be completed within **121 days** in order to meet the stipulated timescales within the Statutory Guidance. Timescales for assessments are in accordance with regulations and National Minimum Standards
- 10.8 Once completed the assessment and related documents are presented to the Together for Adoption Panel for their recommendation. The applicants are fully involved in their assessment which is an open process. Applicants are invited and encouraged to attend the panel.
- 10.9 If applicants are not approved and wish to appeal this decision, they will be given information about the **Independent Review Mechanism**. This is a review body, operated by the Coram Children's Legal Centre on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Independent Review Mechanism can advise the Adoption Agency to reconsider the decision but does not have the authority to overturn the decision made originally by the Adoption Agency.

11. Post Placement and Post Adoption Support

Together for Adoption provides the full range of Services as required under Adoption Support Regulations 2005.

11.1 Financial Support

Assessments for financial support are carried out by the child's relevant adoption child care team, not Together for Adoption, and where financial support is awarded, this is reviewed annually.

11.2 **Assistance with Contact**

The Adoption Service maintains the indirect contact – Letterbox - service on behalf of all adopted children in all five local authorities. The Support Workers will also assist birth families to write their letters if this service is required.

11.3 **Post Approval Training and Workshops**

Parenting courses and workshops are provided post approval for adoptive families on a variety of topics for example, attachment issues, talking to your child about adoption, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and the issues that may arise due to this.

11.4 **Counselling for Birth Parents**

Together for Adoption commissions an independent Adoption Agency to provide counselling for birth parents, and birth family members that have had a child adopted. This service provides independent information and individual support to birth families.

11.5 **Post placement and Post Adoption Support to adoptive families**

Both children placed for adoption and the prospective adopters retain the support of a Social Worker until the making of an Adoption Order. Following this they also retain the services of the adoption support team staff where required. These staff will undertake both practical support, advice about behaviour or relationships, and will work with other professionals and the carers to provide the necessary support to the adoptive family.

Where there is pre-adoption order disruption there are processes in place for undertaking independently chaired disruption meetings. Findings from any such disruptions are used to change practice or procedure if any failures or lessons are learned.

11.6 **Counselling, Advice and Information**

This is provided via the post adoption workers within the team. They offer advice and support in respect of Intermediary Services for Birth Relatives, access to records and adoption counselling where appropriate.

11.7 **Assessing the Needs for Adoption Support Services – Post Adoption**

An adoptive family can ask for an assessment of need for adoption support services at any time whilst the child is under 18 years of age and up to 25 years of age where the young person has a disability. If this is within three years of the order, the placing authority will be responsible for arranging the assessment but may ask another authority to do this on its behalf.

After three years, the request for an assessment should be made to the adoption service in whose area the family is living. Within the Warrington, Wigan, St Helens, Cheshire West and Chester, and Halton areas this Adoption Service will be Together for Adoption. However, the placing authority retains responsibility for any ongoing financial commitment at the time of the child's adoption.

Where a request is received by Together for Adoption for an assessment of Adoption Support Needs, the adoption worker will undertake a comprehensive assessment of need.

The assessment will include the following elements:

- The needs of the person being assessed and how they might be met.
- The needs of the adoptive family and how they might be met.
- The needs, including developmental needs, of an adopted child and how they might be met.
- The parenting capacity of the adoptive parent.
- Wider family and environmental factors.
- The circumstances that led to the child being placed for adoption
- Any previous assessment of needs for adoption support services.

Once the assessment has been completed, the following steps will be taken:

- If the proposal is to provide services, the Adoption Service will provide an adoption support plan in writing. The Adoption Support plan will include:
 1. The services to be provided
 2. What it is expected the service will achieve
 3. How the success of the service will be measured and evaluated
 4. The timescales for providing the service; when and for how long.
 5. When and how the plan will be reviewed.

6. The named person that will monitor the provision of the services according to the plan and undertake reviews.

It should be noted that, whilst an adoption agency has a duty to assess the need for adoption support services if requested, there is no statutory obligation to provide these services even if identified as appropriate. However Together for Adoption recognises the uniqueness of the adoption relationship and the lifetime commitment involved and accepts its general responsibility to do everything possible to support adoptive families to ensure successful outcomes.

Where a support plan is agreed consideration will be given to making an application to the Adoption Support Fund.

The services provided as detailed above meet the requirements of the 'Adoption Passport' introduced as part of the Government changes to Adoption Services. Adoptive families can access the Adoption Passport support guide for adopters via the First4Adoption website.

12. Adoption Panel

12.1 Together for Adoption has a single Panel and must have 5 members to be quorate. Together for Adoption maintains a central list of around 30 suitable people, who have appropriate qualifications or relevant experience. The Adoption Panel is a body of people who consider all the relevant information presented to them in order to make a recommendation.

- To consider whether an adoptive applicant should be approved as suitable to adopt.
- To consider proposed matches between children and particular prospective adopter/s.
- To consider a relinquished child's plan for adoption where no application for a Placement order has been made.

The Together for Adoption Panel is scheduled to meet four times a month.

12.2 The key functions of the Adoption Panel are to:

- Ensure all relevant information has been provided and is of sufficient quality.
- Ensure that the agency have followed the guidance and regulations in terms of children whose plan is adoption.

- Consider all the information about each case.
- Provide the Agency with a recommendation in each case.
- Offer Advice to the agency on each case.

12.3 In order to conform to the Adoption Agencies and Independent review of Determinations Regulations 2011 the Adoption Panel must consist of an Independent Chair, or Vice Chair, a Social Worker with relevant adoption experience, as defined in Regulation 3, and three other members.

Medical advisers to the Adoption Panel, from the five LA's are included on the central list. Although their presence is not a requirement for quoracy, their attendance is helpful, and every attempt is made to have a medical adviser attend each meeting.

Legal advice is required when considering if a child's plan should be adoption; however legal advisors are not required to attend Panel, but if they do they are not Panel members. When Panel is considering approvals or matches Panel may obtain legal advice where it considers necessary.

The Agency Advisor attends Panel meetings but is not a voting Panel member.

12.4 Panel members complete relevant training on a range of topics on an ongoing basis. Panel member training is provided on an annual basis.

12.5 Panel members have an annual appraisal, conducted by the Panel Chair and Agency Advisor. The Panel Chair has an annual appraisal conducted by the Agency Decision Maker, and all Panel Members contribute to this appraisal.

12.6 Each Local Authority has appointed an Agency Decision Maker. It was agreed by Together for Adoption that each of the Agency Decision Maker's will agree/disagree the recommendations regarding the suitability of adoption applicants on a rota basis. Agency decision makers complete the decisions about the children from their own local authority.

13. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the services provided.

13.1 The service provided by Together for Adoption as an Adoption Agency will be considered by OFSTED when they are inspecting the individual Local Authorities and is subject to the requirements and recommendations made by that body.

- 13.2 Together for Adoption is hosted by Wigan as the lead local authority. A Management Board is established consisting of senior representatives from each local authority and meets every month. The Management Board has overall accountability and monitors and controls the activities of the service, setting performance objectives and targets. The Management Board provides scrutiny, challenge and strategic direction, and, approves the Together for Adoption Development Plan.
- 13.3 Each Month the Service Managers from the five Local Authorities meet with the Manager of Together for Adoption and discuss operational matters and performance targets.
- 13.4 Six monthly reports are provided to the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services in each of the five local authorities. It is the responsibility of the Board member for each respective authority to ensure that these are presented, discussed and noted: NMS Standard 25 (2014). These reports include quality assurance information provided on a six-monthly basis by the Panel Chair to the agency.

14. Complaints Procedures

- 14.1 The shared adoption service has a clear complaints procedure, based on the procedure currently in use in Wigan. This procedure deals with complaints received from service users from the five local authorities. Records of these complaints will be kept in accordance with Regulation 17 (AAR 2003) and NMS Standard 26 (2014).
- 14.2 On receipt of a complaint, the matter is, where possible, dealt with informally by the Team Manager responsible. In the event that the complaint is of sufficient concern that informal resolution is inappropriate, or cannot be resolved informally, then it will be referred to the

Children and Families Social Care Complaints Team,
Wigan Council,
Resources Directorate,
PO Box 100, WN1 3DS.
Phone: 01942 486179.

The Complaints Team will ensure the formal complaint is allocated for investigation and liaise with the complainant directly.

- 14.3 Where the complaint cannot be resolved following investigation at stage 1, the complainant has the option of requesting a stage 2

investigation, followed by a stage 3 Review Panel and ultimately a referral to the Ombudsman's Office.

It may also be appropriate to contact [Ofsted Complaints](#) Ofsted are base at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD or you can call 0300 123 1231 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

14.4 **Safeguarding**

Wigan has a Safeguarding Unit and Safeguarding Board and the procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse or neglect for children placed for adoption. These procedures will be followed by social workers within Together for Adoption. If a child has been placed with prospective adopters, a prompt referral will be made to the Local Authority where the child is placed, in order for the allegation to be investigated under that Authority's procedure. Full co-operation will be given by the shared adoption service to the Authority investigating the allegation with regard to information about the child.

- 14.5 If an allegation is made against a professional working with a child, the Local Authority that employs the professional will take responsibility for undertaking the investigation. It is unlikely that a Child Protection Conference will be needed as children to be placed for adoption are 'Looked After Children', but in this unlikely event advice would be sought from the Wigan Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as to which Local Authority should convene the Conference.

Wigan's Local Authority Designated Officer will offer assistance and advice to Together for Adoption staff. The Wigan Safeguarding Unit operates a Duty Advice line and advice will be made available to staff, when requested, of the shared adoption service.

15. **Arrangements for approval and review of Statement of Purpose**

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed by Together for Adoption on an annual basis in consultation with staff members Local Authority Partners, and Adoption Panel members. Any significant changes or proposed amendments to the Statement of Purpose will be submitted for consideration to the Together for Adoption Partnership Board and the Adoption Panel.

Changes, and factual updates to the statement of Purpose which do not impact on the provision of services, Together for Adoption's policy's or procedures can be made by the Service Manager of Together for Adoption.

16. Arrangements for distribution of Statement of Purpose

Copies of the Statement of Purpose will be given to each member of staff, Local Authority Strategic Lead from the five Local Authority Partners and each Adoption Panel member.

The Statement of Purpose will be available on Together for adoptions Website, and made available, upon request, to:

- Any person working for the purposes of the adoption service
- Any adopter or prospective adopter of the Adoption Service
- Any child placed with an adopter, by the Adoption Service
- The parent of any such child

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