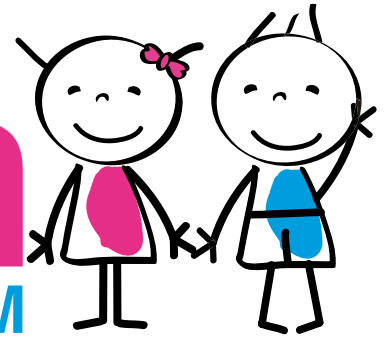


adoption

ROTHERHAM




Rotherham Council Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose 2018



www.adoptioninrotherham.org.uk
(01709) 254005

 Rotherham Adoption Agency
 @rmbcadoption

Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council 



Forward by Councillor Gordon Watson

As Corporate Parents, all Councillors are part of the team around the child in Rotherham. It is our aim to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people. Our Adoption Service is a key factor in achieving this aim through support for Adopters and permanence for children and young people.

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Rotherham MBC Adoption Service, Riverside House, Main Street, ROTHERHAM, S60 1AE
Telephone: 01709 254005

The information in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in other languages, in large print, Braille or on audio tape. Please telephone 01709 254005. If you need any of these or to access Rotherham's services.

1. Introduction

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Adoption service provides a fully comprehensive service for both adoption services and adoption support services. This Statement of Purpose covers both areas of service delivery.

This statement can be used as a guide to the Adoption Services provided. It is available to all members of staff, children, adopters and birth parents and is also available on our website.

This document is produced in compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003; Local Authority Adoption Services (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005; Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005; Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005; Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations, Regulations 2005 and the Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013.

The Adoption Service is committed to ensuring children are safe, their needs are identified and met and they are provided with security and stability in order to help them achieve their full potential.

Every effort is made to support children to remain with their birth family. However where this is not possible, adoption is considered to be a positive option in providing permanence and security for children.

We recognise that the Adoption journey is lifelong and provide adoption support services to maintain relationships throughout childhood and beyond, including support for adopters and birth family members to promote the child's identity needs.

The Adoption Service has direct access to Therapeutic Services via the Rotherham Therapeutic team. The team provides consultation, assessments and direct work from an early stage in the permanence planning for children. It also provides guidance, support and training for prospective adopters and adoptive parents. This approach supports the agency to identify a child's therapeutic needs, match appropriately to adopters who can understand and meet their needs and provide preparation and early intervention.

All information is correct as of 1st April 2018 and has been approved as required.

This document will be revised annually.

The Adoption Service is registered with OFSTED, who can be contacted as follows:

OFSTED

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

MANCHESTER

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



2. Priority Outcomes of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Children and Young People's Plan

The principles upon which we work together with our customers and partners are underpinned with the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017 – 2021, and the Right Child Right Care Plan. These makes clear our strategic priorities and ambitions to meet the needs of children, young people and their families across Rotherham.

Our Vision, Values and Principles

Our Key Outcomes will be:

- Children and Young people are healthy and safe from harm.
- Children and young people start school ready to learn for life.
- Children and young people and their families are ready for the world of work.





3. Values and Principles of the Adoption Service

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council will ensure that children are placed in a timely manner without delay with prospective adopters who can meet their identified needs.
- Treat prospective adopters and adopters with openness, fairness and respect.
- Provide a welcoming and helpful approach to prospective adopters at first point of contact.
- Take an encouraging and supportive approach to adopter recruitment.
- Recruit prospective adopters who can meet all the needs of children and young people with an Adoption Plan locally, regionally and nationally,
- Explain to prospective adopters the needs and profiles of the children and young people waiting to be adopted.
- Ensure preparation and training, the assessment and approval processes are timely and flexible.
- Pro-active matching with prospective adopters, including referral to National Adoption Register.
- Provide adopters and prospective adopters with information, training, counselling and support throughout the adoption journey and beyond.
- Provide prospective adopters with information about the Independent Review Mechanism.

Adoptive Parents must:

- Be aware that adoption often brings challenges, as well as rewards and be realistic about the needs of children and young people awaiting adoption. Support and training is available to assist them with this.
- Make the most of opportunities to develop their parenting skills and seek support when needed at the earliest stage. Be prepared to undertake additional training as necessary.
- Do all they can to provide a stable and secure family home where the child feels loved and has a sense of belonging.

4. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Council in providing care for children Looked After by the Local Authority is to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people. The provision of an Adoption Agency is a key factor in the strategy of achieving this aim.

The Adoption Agency's primary aims are to work towards and achieve:

- Safe, secure, high quality adoptive placements for children who cannot be raised by their own family.
- Comprehensive support for adopters, adopted children and adults and birth families.
- To make decisions about whether adoption is a suitable plan for a child in a timely manner, being mindful of the child's development
- To achieve partnerships with other Agencies, including health and education, to ensure that comprehensive support packages can be made available.
- Every effort will be made to match children with adopters who reflect their ethnic origins, cultural background, religion and language but placements will not be delayed if the prospective adopter does not match the child's ethnicity but is able to meet all the child's other needs.
- Children are prepared, have their wishes and feelings considered and that they are listened to and their feedback informs the service's continuous recruitment and approval of adopters.
- Provide a positive and welcoming approach to prospective adopters, treating them fairly and with respect. The Agency welcomes enquiries from all sectors of the community and does not discriminate on the grounds of age, marital status, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Close working with all sections of the Children and Young People's Service to ensure that the best interests of the children are paramount at all times,
- To provide appropriate training, advice, encouragement and support for adopters.
- Contribute to the development and continuous improvement in the delivery of a child care service within the Authority.
- To advise on welfare benefits and entitlements in relation to adoptive families.

Outcomes

As a service, we have shown improvement in our performance and the Adoption Annual Report 2017–2018 reflects this. In 2017–2018 the adoption service approved 14 adoptive families, and 27 looked after children were adopted. Placement Orders were made in respect of 56 children compared with 31 placement Orders made in the previous year. This increase reflects the current national position.

Rotherham has implemented the changes brought about by the Adoption Reform Agenda. The changes are now embedded in practice and include:

- Referral to National Adoption Register (Adoption Match) for children with an Adoption plan and approved adopters.
- A two stage adoption process.
- A fast track process for second time adopters and foster carers adopting a child in their care.
- Early Permanence planning.
- Approved adopters have access to Link Maker, so they can seek out their own matches with children waiting to be adopted.

5. Rotherham Aims of 2018–2019

To encourage more people to adopt and in particular, to consider early permanence placements and sibling groups.

To continue to reduce the time it takes for children to be placed with an adoptive family.

To provide bespoke packages of adoption support.

We will do the above by ensuring:

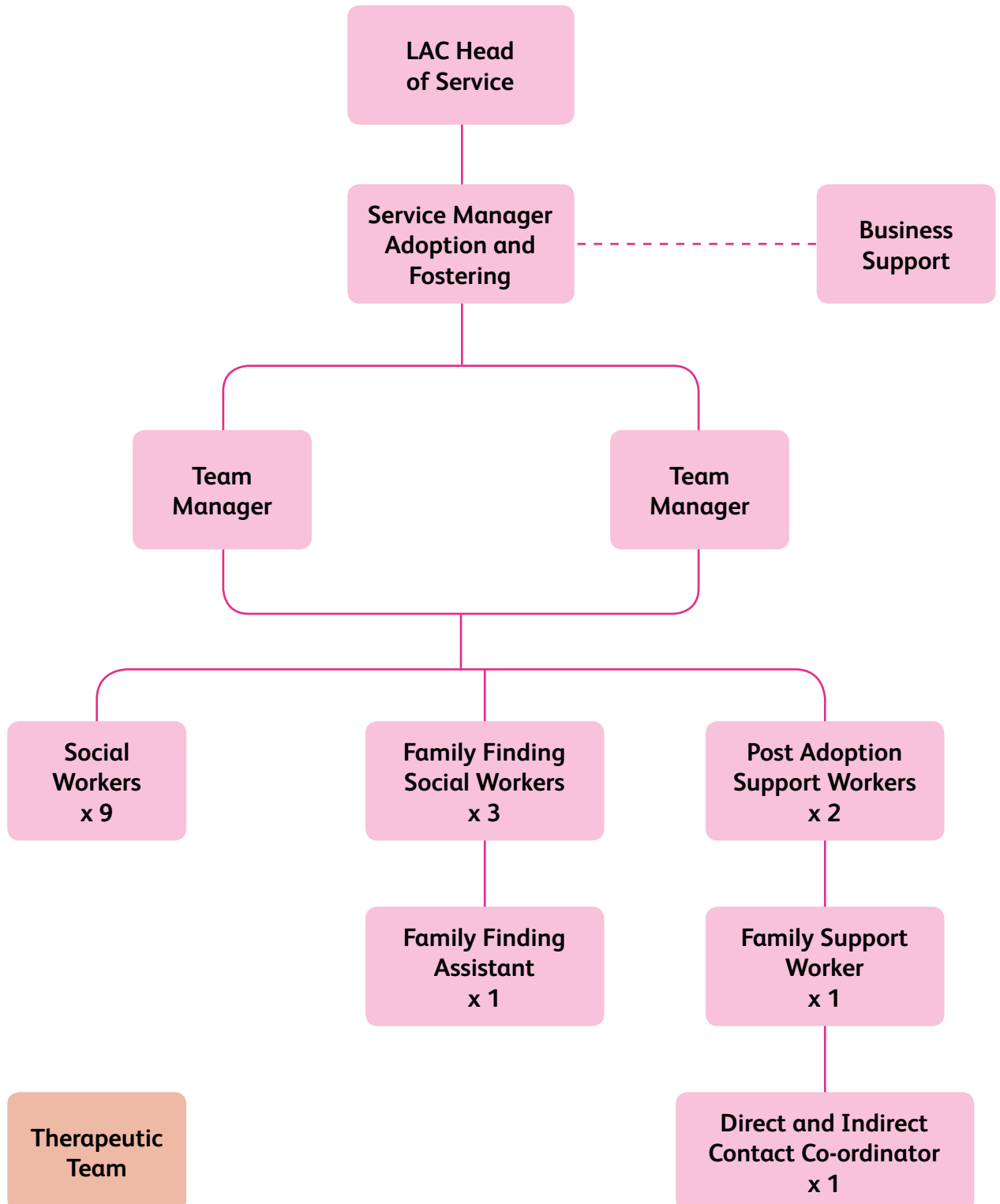
- The recruitment campaign and branding is refreshed. The campaign will focus on social media, Facebook and website. Monthly drop in sessions are advertised on Radio.
- The Early Permanence Champion will provide information at an early stage and additional training for adopters willing to consider this.
- Work closely with prospective adopters and approved adopters to help them understand the profiles of those children who are waiting for an adoptive family. The Family Finders work alongside the assessing social workers to provide information on Harder to Place children.
- A procedure is in place for early identification of children for whom Early Permanence is an option.
- Rotherham's Therapeutic team provide support to children, pre and post adoption including consultation, therapy and narrative work. They undertake assessments and referrals to the Adoption Support Fund.
- Continue to work closely with our neighbouring authorities and to participate in regionalisation of adoption services.



6. Staff and Organisation Structure

The Adoption Team maintains good links with the Locality Teams and is accessible to all sections of the service and in particular has developed good working relationships with the Looked After Children's Team. Social Workers and Managers within the service are all experienced in adoption work and are committed to maintaining the child at the centre of the service. Retention of staff is excellent, providing consistency for adopters and children.

The current staffing of the Adoption Team is as follows:



The team is supported and managed through the Children and Young People's Services line management structure. The Service Manager for Adoption and Fostering is responsible for the Adoption Service and supervises the Team Managers. The Head of Service for Looked After children is the Registered Manager.

All social workers and the Managers within the Team have a social work qualification (either CSS, CQSW or Dip SW) and hold a degree level qualification. All social work staff have at least 3 years' post qualifying experience and experience of adoption. All are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Administrative support is primarily delivered by the Adoption and Fostering Business Support Team. The Business Support team works in partnership to support the Adoption Agency.

The Agency Decision Makers for Rotherham are the Assistant Strategic Director and the Head of Safeguarding.

The Family Finding Social Worker role was introduced to improve the timeliness of adoption placements for children by offering experienced support and guidance to the child's social worker and to co-work the Family finding, matching and transition process.

The post adoption support workers are based in the Therapeutic team and managed by the Clinical Psychologist.

All staff are subject to the Council's policy on recruitment, staffing, equal opportunities and discipline. All staff are subject to enhanced DBS checks, including Business Support staff.



7. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Service

The service is regularly monitored by reports being presented to the Strategic Director, Assistant Strategic Director and Elected members. These reports detail the activity and progress of the Adoption Team.

In addition, the quality of work is monitored by regular file audits, customer satisfaction surveys and regular supervision and Individual Performance Development Reviews carried out with staff by the Team Managers. Adopters are listened to and their feedback is used to develop the service. The feedback has highlighted many positive examples of good practice and any areas of improvement are carefully considered and appropriate changes made.

The number and content of complaints within the Adoption Service are reported in a six monthly Service report which is also presented to the Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families, Strategic Director and Cabinet Members.

The methods we use to monitor and evaluate the service are as follows:

Adoption Panel

- Panel reports are quality assured by the Adoption Team Managers in their role as Panel Advisor.
- Panel comments on the quality of reports and this is recorded in Panel minutes. Feedback is provided to social workers.
- An annual summary report is presented to the Panel with managerial comments on performance.
- Quality issues raised at Panel are fed back via the Panel Advisor to the relevant social work team and follow up is reported to subsequent Panel meetings where required.
- Reports to the Adoption Service are completed by the Adoption Panel Chair incorporating Panel Members feedback. The feedback given includes comments on the quality of reports; the meeting of standard timescales and the meeting of the requirements of the Regulations on the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005. This information is used to identify service quality issues and to inform the annual review of the Panel Chair.
- Quarterly information on the Agencies performance in respect of timeliness for children is provided to Adoption Panel.



Service User Consultation

The feedback we receive as a service is important and we use this feedback to develop our services.

Feedback includes:

- Verbal feedback via support groups and social events that we hold.
- Adoptive parents give written comments about their assessment and preparation and the quality of their prospective adopters report within body of the Prospective Adoption Report (PAR).
- Adoptive parents and their social workers who attend the Adoption Panel are invited to complete a questionnaire about their experience of attending the Panel.
- Preparation Groups and training events are evaluated using feedback forms completed after each training event.
- Prospective Adopters are consulted following approval to provide feedback on their experiences to date.
- Service users accessing PAC-UK are asked to complete a service user form by PAC-UK.
- Annual Adopter Forum.
- Annual Celebration Event. Feedback from adopters and children is requested.
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a formal comments and complaints procedure and it is available to those who may wish to comment or complain about an aspect of the service.
- Invitation to attend and be involved in workshops to provide the adopter voice in relation to developing a Regional Adoption Agency.

Lessons to be learned are identified at the point of feedback being received. Ways to improve performance are shared.

Supervision and Management

- Staff supervision takes place on a monthly basis.
- Staff training and professional development is monitored through the Annual Performance Development Reviews.
- Case files are audited on a monthly basis. Actions arising are followed up and lessons for improvement are shared with the social worker teams.
- CPRs are Quality Assured by the Quality Assurance Group (QAG) and support and guidance on completing CPRs and permanence planning is provided by the Adoption Team Managers.
- The performance for children and prospective adopters is monitored through fortnightly performance meetings chaired by the Head of Service for Looked After Children.
- The Adoption Managers monitor progress on a monthly basis with the Team Managers for Children with an Adoption Plan.
- The Adoption Performance Report and Adoption Panel reports are provided and presented to senior managers and Corporate Parenting Panel.

8. Complaints

- The Adoption Agency operates within the framework of the RMBC Complaints Policy. All adopters, children and young people and all other persons have access to this procedure.
- An emphasis is placed on resolving complaints at an immediate local level, ie. Stage 1, Informal Problem Solving and these are dealt with by the Team Manager. Stage 2 complaints are those where resolution at Stage 1 level has not been possible or where a complainant has elected to invoke Stage 2 of the procedure.
- Children and Young People's Services has a Children's Rights Service (Rotherham's Right to Rights Service which develop links with children and young people who are, or who have ever been looked after. They are able to raise issues on behalf of young people and to support and advocate for them as appropriate.
- Further details can be obtained from the Complaints Service.

There have been no formal complaints received via the Council's formal complaints procedure during 2017–18. These have been resolved at Stage 1.



9. Recruitment Strategy

The Adoption Service Recruitment Strategy for 2016–2017 has been updated in collaboration with the Corporate Communication Team. The recruitment strategy is based around understanding the profile of children who are likely to require an adoptive placement both locally and nationally.

A timetable of recruitment events across the year includes attending local community events and advertising. Monthly information events are held where those interested in adoption can come along and find out more.

The branding and Logo has been refreshed and events are advertised on radio and social media.

Increased use of Social Media and the Website to promote Adoption Recruitment. 2017–2018 will see the regionalisation of adoption agencies in Yorkshire and Humberside and a recruitment campaign is currently being designed.

10. Procedures for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supporting and Reviewing Carers

- Upon receiving an enquiry from potential adopters, the service provides written information, including information on the monthly drop in sessions. An initial visit is provided to all prospective adopters within ten working days of them requesting further information.
- An initial discussion will then take place in the home of the prospective adopter(s) with an Adoption Social Worker. The Registration of Interest form is provided.
- The Team Manager decides, with the Adoption Social Worker, whether to accept a ROI giving reasons. This takes place within five working days of receipt of the Registration of Interest form. (ROI).
- If the prospective adopters are accepted on to Stage 1 of the adoption process, they are asked to complete a workbook and attend a one-day initial training course. Support and guidance is available during Stage 1 from an allocated social worker.
- References are obtained from:
 - Disclosure and Barring Service
 - The Local Authority in which the prospective adopters live and where they have lived previously within the last two years.
- Enhanced DBS checks are obtained on all members of the household aged 18 years and over and other regular adult visitors.
- The prospective Adopter is required to have a medical examination completed by their GP and the report is made available to the Agency's Medical Adviser for comments about the prospective adopters' health.
- The prospective adopters are asked to identify at least three personal referees, (one of which can be a family member reference) who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. Employment references are also taken up as well as previous partners, if they have parented a child together.
- Once all checks are completed, a decision is considered about suitability to be assessed as adopters and a Manager's Decision Meeting is held. If unsuitable at the end of Stage 1, then the prospective adopters are informed in writing of the reasons why. Stage 2 commences on receipt of application. Up to 6-months break may be taken before an application is submitted, if required.
- Upon receipt of the prospective adopter application to commence Stage 2, the assessment stage begins and is to be completed within four months'. Prospective adopters are asked to attend four days preparation training. The information gathered and the social workers analysis of this forms the basis of the Prospective Adopter report (PAR). The report is quality assured by the Adoption Team Manager and signed before presentation to the Adoption Panel. The report is shared with the prospective adopter prior to Panel and an opportunity to discuss with the assessing social worker and include comments.
- Adopters are invited to attend Adoption Panel and are supported at Panel by the assessing social worker and the support worker based in the Adoption Team.
- The Panel Chair meets the prospective adopters before Panel and provides the questions Panel members have for them.

- Prospective Adopters are informed verbally by the Panel Chair of the Panel's recommendation and reasons.
- Prospective Adopters are informed verbally on the day of Agency Decision maker's decision.
- Prospective Adopters are informed in writing of the Agency Decision with reasons within five working days.
- Second time adopters and foster carers are immediately progressed to Stage 2.



11. Training provided to Adopters

Training is provided to:

- Help adopters develop skills and have a better understanding of the adoption task.
- Improve knowledge and assist the prospective adopter in promoting the physical, social and emotional development of children and young people.
- Establish an explicit, positive framework of values which promotes equality of opportunity.
- Understand the impact that past experiences have on a child's emotional wellbeing and attachment style and behaviour.

12. Support Services

- All potential and approved adopters are allocated a social worker in the Adoption Team who will assess, support and match appropriate children with them.
- Support is available to adopters and to the child to ensure stability, security and permanence.
- Monthly support groups are held for adopters facilitated by Adoption Team and Therapeutic team
- A fortnightly Toddler Group for adopters and their children is facilitated by the Adoption Team.
- A duty system is in operation via the Adoption Team to provide advice and information and signpost to other Agencies if appropriate.
- An Out of Hours Service will support and advise adopters on request.
- A fortnightly play and stay group for adopters and children aged up to 11 years.
- Specialised staff within the therapeutic team offer an in-depth support service including Therapeutic parenting training and a wide range of workshops.

13. Inter-Country Adoption

A regional inter country Adoption Service has been established via the Yorkshire and Humber Consortium provided by Yorkshire Adoption Agency. Enquiries regarding Inter-County Adoption are signposted to this Agency.



14. Foster Carers who wish to adopt their fostered child

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

Where foster carers are accepted as potentially suitable to adopt a child in their care, they can be expected to be assessed in the same way as other prospective adopters. The assessment request will be fast tracked to Stage 2. The assessment will focus on the specific long term needs of the child in question and will consider the following:

- The quality of the attachment between the child and the Foster Carers.
- The wishes and feelings of the child.
- The assessed ability of the foster carers to provide permanent care for the child through adoption.
- The impact on the child now and for the rest of their lives, of being adopted by these particular carers.

15. Early Permanence Planning

The Agency has developed a successful Early Permanence Planning procedure and has placed 33 children in early permanence placements to date.

Early permanence allows a child to be placed under Fostering regulations with approved adopters who are temporarily approved as foster carers for the child.

Additional training and support is provided for prospective adopters who have the skills and guidance to provide an Early Permanence Placement.



16. Adoption Support – General

After the making of the Adoption Order, support may also be provided if a support plan is in operation or it is decided to provide services as a result of an assessment of needs. Rotherham retains responsibility for any Rotherham child for three years following the making of the Adoption Order. A child placed in Rotherham from another area remains the placing Authority's responsibility for three years following the making of the Adoption Order. After 3 years it is the Local Authority in which the child lives who has responsibilities for assessing adoption support needs and providing services.

Adoptive parents, adopted children or any member of the household, including any other children of the adopters are entitled at any time to request an assessment of their needs for Adoption Support Services under the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.

Adoption support services are accessed via a formal assessment of need where the request will involve on-going provision of services. Where one off support is the likely outcome, this will be provided without a formal assessment.

A significant amount of therapeutic support to adoptive families is provided in house via the Rotherham Therapeutic Team. The Manager of the Therapeutic Team is a Clinical Psychologist with an excellent understanding of the support needs of adopted children and their adopters.

Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was launched nationally on 1 May 2015. The aim of the fund is to reduce the gap between adoptive children needing therapeutic services and receiving them (ultimately to improve outcomes for young people and families).

The fund is available for children up to and including the age of 21. The fund will support Therapeutic Services after the Adoption Order.

Rotherham has been successful in achieving funding for Therapeutic packages of support for 72 adopted children and their adoptive families equating in 2017 – 2018.

PAC-UK

We commission PAC-UK to provide services to birth families and adopted adults, including birth records counselling.

Post Adoption Contact

Rotherham manages the post adoption contact arrangements for children placed in their adoptive placement and following the making of the Adoption Order.

Post Adoption Contact is facilitated via the dedicated Contact Co-ordinator.

The co-ordinator facilitates the direct and indirect contact between children, adoptive families and birth families throughout the adopted child's childhood.

The contact co-ordinator provides guidance and support to birth family members and adopters including:

- Intermediary work
- Support to write letters
- Supporting direct contact arrangements

Financial Support

Adopters can be assessed for a means tested allowance based on the needs of the child placed and this is reviewed annually.

A start up grant of £300 is paid to facilitate the placement of every child. A means tested Adoption Allowance is available for children with a disability, are BME, aged over five and/or in sibling groups.

Services for Birth Families

Rotherham Council recognises that adoption is a life-long process for all those involved and will provide support to birth families at all stages of the process, both during adoption and afterwards.

Counselling and support for birth families is available from PAC-UK with whom Rotherham has a Service Level Agreement.

Intermediary Services and Vetoes

Adopted adults who were adopted before 30 December 2005 are able to request that there is an absolute or qualified veto placed on their records and on the Adoption Contact Register should they wish for no contact or no contact with specified people.

Adopted adults can request Intermediary services to provide for mediated contact with birth relatives. This service is provided by PAC-UK.

17. Signatories

Signed: _____

Cllr Gordon Watson
Cabinet Member

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Jon Stonehouse
Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Service

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Ian Walker
Head of Service, Children in Care

Date: _____

www.adoptioninrotherham.org.uk

or call 01709 254005

 **Rotherham Adoption Agency**

 **@rmbcadoption**