



Oldham
Council

Oldham Council

Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children

POLICY AND PROCEDURAL DOCUMENT

Statement of Purpose 2015-2016

Date of Ratification: April 2015

Date of Review: April 2016

Review by Adoption Team Manager

Oldham Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2015-2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Oldham Adoption Service undertakes the functions of an adoption agency in accordance with Government regulations and guidance.
- 1.2 This Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided by the adoption service for Oldham Council. It is made available to staff of the organisation, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents and other professionals.
- 1.3 Oldham Adoption Service is responsible for ensuring that the council meets its legal responsibilities by providing a comprehensive adoption service and by recruiting, training, assessing, approving and supporting adopters appropriate to the needs of children awaiting placement in Oldham and the North West and beyond. In order to safeguard and promote children's welfare, the assessment process of all those recruited to care for children is rigorous and thorough.
- 1.4 The Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually.

2. Values and behaviours

- 2.1 The values and behaviours of Oldham Council influence the work we do and the expectations we place on ourselves as an adoption agency.

2.2 Fairness

- 2.3 We champion fairness and equality of opportunity, and ensure working together with adopters, birth families, children and young people and other partner agencies brings mutual benefits and the greatest possible added value. We will enable everyone to be involved.

2.4 Openness

- 2.5 We will be open and honest in our actions and communications. We will take decisions in a transparent way.

2.6 Responsibility

- 2.7 We take responsibility for, and answer to our actions. We will encourage people to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. Mutual benefits go hand-in-hand with mutual obligations.

2.8 Working together

2.9 We will work together and support each other in achieving common goals

2.10 Accountability

2.11 We recognise and act upon the impact of our actions on others, and hold ourselves accountable to our service users and partner agencies.

2.12 Respect

2.13 We recognise and welcome different views and treat each other with dignity and respect.

2.14 Democracy

2.15 We believe and act within the principles of democracy, and promote these across our working relationships.

2.16 These values and behaviours underpin our work, enabling us to be compliant with the UN Convention on the Rights for the Child and Childcare Legislation, the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Adoption Agency Regulations 2011 and its associated statutory guidance as well as the National Minimum Care Standards.

3. Oldham Adoption Service: Aims and objectives

3.1 Placing children at the centre of the adoption process and act in their best interests at all times, ensuring the process is timely and avoids delay.

3.2 Striving to ensure the services we offer support families, children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being.

3.3 Actively considering fostering to adopt as an option for children throughout PLO and care proceedings.

3.4 Ensuring the councils strategy around sibling assessments is integrated into practice.

3.5 Matching and placing children with adopters who can best meet their assessed needs throughout childhood and beyond once a decision has been made that the child should be placed for adoption.

- 3.6 Preparing children prior to introduction and placement with adopters, in an age appropriate way so that children have information and an understanding of their history and the reasons for their placement for adoption.
- 3.7 Recruiting, preparing, assessing and approving adoptive applicants who can meet the needs of children needing adoption placement both locally and nationally. This includes the recruitment of adopters for older children, sibling groups, disabled children and children from diverse ethnic communities.
- 3.8 Providing a range of adoption support services. This may be directly, or through contractual arrangements with other agencies for adopted children and their adoptive families; which are accessible before and after the granting of an Adoption Order. These services include the provision of financial support where appropriate to facilitate adoption placements.
- 3.9 Providing a range of support services to adoptive families to enhance their adoptive parenting skills; enabling them to achieve the best possible outcomes for their children. This is either provided directly or through appropriate sign posting.
- 3.10 The introduction of the Adoption Support Fund on the 1st May 2015 will assist the agency in providing therapeutic services post adoption order, which do not fall within the local authority's core adoption support services. This will help achieve positive outcomes for the child and family. The fund will pay for therapeutic services which fall within their criteria. Oldham places many children outside the borough and the fund will assist in the spot purchase of therapeutic services for those families, up to 3 years from adoption order, as well as supporting local adoptive families throughout the time the children within the family are growing up. Commissioning arrangements with CAMHS and other services like the Regional Centre for Adoption Support will reviewed in light of the Adoption Support Fund.
- 3.11 Working with birth parents in order to make effective plans for their children where adoption is identified as being in their best interests. This includes the provision of information about the adoption process and access to appropriate support services. Some support services will be available through contractual arrangements with other agencies.
- 3.12 Providing a letterbox service for adopted children and members of their birth family where it is in the children's best interests to maintain indirect contact.
- 3.13 Providing counselling and information from adoption records to adopted adults.

- 3.14 Providing advice and guidance to birth family members where a child has been adopted in the past to enable them to access services in relation to adoption issues from appropriate agencies.
- 3.15 Providing an adoption service in respect of non-agency placements including partner adoption applications.

4. Shared Service

- 4.1 The creation of a shared adoption service between Oldham and Rochdale is currently in development. Consultants are working with the respective authorities to develop a strategic plan for how the two services may combine. Several functions are already provided across the two authorities and the shared service would take this further with the aim of helping both authorities improve their performance in the field of adoption.

5. Structure of Oldham Adoption Service

- Cabinet Members and Chief Executive of Oldham Council
- Executive Director, Health and Wellbeing: Maggie Kufeldt
- Director of Children: Maggie Kufeldt
- Director for Safeguarding: Kim Scragg, Agency Decision Maker
- Head of Service Provider Services: Glynis Williams, Agency Decision Maker
- Team Manager: Vicky Brooke
- Senior Practitioner: Tracey Taylor-Waite
- 10 Adoption Social Workers
- 1 Social Work Assistant
- 1.5 Business Support Officer
- 0.5 Recruitment Officer

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1 The Adoption Team Manager's qualifications include CQSW and QCF level 5 in Leadership and Management. She has 25 years experience in social care, 7 of which are in management.
- 6.2 The two agency decision makers are both Qualified Social workers with many years of experience in safeguarding, after children, children with disabilities and family placement work.
- 6.3 All the social workers are qualified to either CQSW or DipSW.

- 6.4 In addition to the social work team the department has a service level agreement with Caritas, Diocese of Salford to provide an independent support service to birth relatives. Inter country adoption is provided through a North West contract with the Intercountry Adoption Centre.
- 6.5 Safe base training for adopters with children in placement is offered through a partnership arrangement with After Adoption, Bury, Rochdale and ourselves.
- 6.6 Concurrent planning placements are commissioned from Caritas Care and Adoption Matters.

7. Services offered in respect of Oldham Adoption Service Agency

7.1 Recruitment and family finding activity.

- 7.2 Oldham Adoption Service has a comprehensive recruitment strategy that aims to recruit adopters from a wide range of backgrounds to meet the needs of the children awaiting adoption. Oldham Adoption Service does not rely on one method of recruitment but employs several approaches – ongoing recruitment throughout the year, targeted and national campaigns, and regional recruitment as a member of Adopt North West and Adoption 22.

Methods include:

- Word of mouth
- Regular adverts and articles in local newspapers and magazines
- Digital advertisements
- Events and exhibitions
- Internet and intranet pages
- Internal campaigns targeting Oldham Council staff – e-newsletter and staff events
- Posters and leaflets
- Social media – Facebook and Twitter
- Information evenings/mornings.

- 7.3 Recruiting prospective adopters is an ongoing activity and the recruitment strategy is reviewed annually. We work in partnership with Rochdale and Bury to provide a timely and efficient recruitment process
- 7.4 The adoption team has links with local community centres and networks in order to target recruitment in the ethnic minority communities of Oldham.
- 7.5 We also positively welcome interest from single people and gay or lesbian enquirers. Oldham is a member of New Family Social which offers advice and support for lesbian, gay and transgender people. We also participate in their recruitment events.

- 7.6 We are a member of the Adoption 22 consortium and also host a placement group with 5 other neighbouring local authorities to maximize the opportunities to identify early links for more traditionally easier to place children.
- 7.7 Last year, Oldham, along with 21 local authorities across the North West undertook a successful recruitment campaign called 'Adopt North West'. The campaign led to a large increase in the number of approved adopters in the region. Due to its success, a second phase of the Adopt North West campaign will start in summer 2015. The new campaign will be more targeted and will focus on the recruitment of adopters for harder to place children. Oldham will actively participate in this campaign.
- 7.8 Where adopters cannot be found within the Adoption 22 consortium, full use is made of national profiling publications published by BAAF and Adoption UK. Children's profiles are routinely sent to other local authority and voluntary adoption agencies.
- 7.9 Children are also referred to the Adoption Register to seek an appropriate match. Oldham adoption service participates in both regional and national adoption exchange days. Additionally we are members of Adoptionlink.
- 7.10 We participate in most exchange days held across the country.
- 7.11 We also hold adoption activity days and intend to continue to hold these in partnership with other agencies
- 7.12 A shared service with Rochdale would include a shared recruitment strategy which would widen the pool of adopters for the children needing adoptive families in both authorities.

8. Prospective Adopters Enquiries:

- 8.1 Oldham Adoption Service has a high level of awareness of the sensitive nature of adoption work.
When an enquiry is received regarding adoption, it will be responded to in a caring, sensitive manner.
Most enquiries are made via our website but enquirers who contact us via our duty service will be sent an information pack the same day, that includes a 'Request a visit form' to be returned should they wish to proceed further with their enquiry.
- 8.2 On receipt of either a web based enquiry or the form from the information pack, a social worker from Oldham Adoption Service will be allocated and a visit will be arranged within 10 working days to meet the adopters to provide information and discuss their particular interest in adoption.

- 8.3 Following this visit prospective adopters decide if they wish to continue further and if so they will complete a 'Registration of Interest'. Once received Oldham Adoption Service decides within 5 working days if to accept or decline the prospective adopters for the first stage (pre-qualification). During this stage prospective adopters will enter into a 'Prospective Adopter Stage 1 Agreement' with the agency.
- 8.4 They will be invited to attend preparation training and will be able to access online and other training materials to develop their understanding of adoption and reflect upon what they have to offer before progressing with their application. Statutory checks will also be completed during this stage. Once this first stage is completed and Oldham Adoption Service has decided to invite them to stage 2 of the assessment process, the prospective adopters have up to 6 months to decide if they wish to progress to stage 2 (the full assessment phase).
- 8.5 The full assessment stage will consist of more intensive preparation and further training/e-learning (available later this year), as well as the assessment process. We will sign up to a 'Prospective Adopter Assessment Plan' with adopters, setting out what will be involved and what the timetable will be.
- 8.6 There will be a fast track process for people who have adopted before or who are already approved foster carers who wish to adopt a child in their care, but the majority of prospective adopters will complete the two stage process. Stage 1 (pre-qualification) will be completed in 2 months and the second (full assessment) within 4 months of receiving the adopters notification to proceed to stage 2.
- 8.7 Oldham's Adoption Service has eligibility criteria for adoption (Please refer to the Policy for Eligibility Criteria for Prospective Adopters in appendix A). Oldham Adoption Service will prioritise applications according to the needs of the children waiting to be placed for adoption in Oldham and Adoption 22.

9. Preparation Groups

- 9.1 As part of stage 1 (the pre-qualification stage) all prospective adopters will be required to attend preparation groups. Prior to attending they will be given dates of forthcoming groups and confirmation of their intention to attend will be given in writing. Oldham Adoption Service runs these groups in conjunction with Rochdale and Bury Adoption Teams to allow us to run them frequently enough to meet the timescales of stage 1.
- 9.2 Explanatory written information will be given regarding the course: its purpose and aims.

- 9.3 During the preparation groups applicants will have the opportunity to gain knowledge and information in the following areas:
- Introduction to adoption and child development
 - Parenting skills and strategies
 - Abuse and children's.
 - Attachment issues
 - Contact and adoption support
 - E safety and safe care
 - Fostering to adopt
- 9.4 All attendees of the preparation groups will be invited to complete an evaluation form regarding the effectiveness of the group. The group facilitators provide information about the adopter's participation in the group to the adopter's agency. There will be further training built into stage 2.

10. Assessment

- 10.1 Once a decision has being made to proceed with the application at the end of stage 1 and prospective adopters have notified Oldham Adoption Service that they wish to proceed to Stage 2, a social worker will be allocated to commence the assessment at the earliest opportunity. A 'Prospective Adopter Assessment Plan' will be agreed between the agency and the prospective adopters setting out what will be involved and what the timetable will be. Oldham Adoption Service aims to complete the assessment process from receipt of the adopter's notification to proceed to stage 2 to approval within 4 months.
- 10.2 Assessment of prospective adopters will be undertaken using the BAAF PAR and will be comprehensive in its content and analysis of evidence of applicants potential parenting capacity to meet the needs of children awaiting placement. Further training will be offered during this stage including workshops on matching and introductions, fostering to adopt and concurrent planning.
- 10.3 The process of assessment will be rigorous in order to promote and safeguard children's welfare.
- 10.4 Prospective adopters are asked to consider whether they would wish to be considered for approval as fostering to adopt carers during the assessment.
- 10.5 Applicants will be given the opportunity to provide written contribution to the assessment document should they wish to do so.
- 10.6 Prospective adopters will be kept informed of progress throughout, should at any stage it was felt inappropriate not to continue with the assessment process, clear

explanation would be given to the reasons, why, which would also be provided in writing. Applicants will also be advised of the Independent Review Mechanism and Oldham's representations and appeals process.

- 10.7 On completion of the home study assessment applicants will receive a copy of the assessment documents and have the opportunity to comment upon its content and provide signature agreeing with its presentation to Oldham's Adoption Panel.

11. Approval

- 11.1 Prospective adopter's assessment will be considered for recommendation by Oldham Adoption Panel; this should be within four months of the commencement of the assessment stage.
- 11.2 Prospective adopters will have the opportunity to attend the panel where their application is to be heard if they wish. Should applicants not wish to attend this will not affect in anyway consideration of the application.
- 11.3 Panel recommendations will be conveyed orally within 24 hours.
- 11.4 The agency decision maker will make the decision within seven working days. This decision will be conveyed orally within 24 hours and in writing within seven working days.
- 11.5 Should Oldham Adoption Panel and agency decision-maker not agree to approve a prospective adopter's assessment, they will be provided with information regarding the process of appeal and the department's complaints procedure and they will be advised and informed about the Independent Review Mechanism.

12. Support

- 12.1 Once approved, prospective adopters enter into a written agreement which sets out a number of considerations including information regarding Adoption 22, Adoptionlink, New Family Social, the placement group and the Adoption Register, and consent sought for their details and approval status to be submitted to these organisations.
- 12.2 All approved adopters will have a social worker from the Oldham's Adoption Service until they adopt a child.

- 12.3 Prior to a child being placed, the link worker will visit the prospective adopters at least every three months and a report of each visit and contact will be entered onto the adopters file.
- 12.4 Once a child is placed, the frequency of visits will increase and as a minimum will be in line with statutory requirements.
- 12.5 Approved adopters will be given information regarding local and national groups. Adopters have access to a support group, nurture group, young peoples' group, social events for adopters and their families, post approval training and parenting courses such as Webster Stratton and Safebase.
- 12.6 Adopters have access to the safe base parenting course, delivered in partnership with Bury, Rochdale, After Adoption and ourselves.
- 12.7 Adopters will be informed about the introduction of the Adoption Support Fund through a range of communication methods to encourage awareness and take up of this opportunity for support for therapeutic services and support, post adoption order.
- 12.8 We may also offer the provision of financial support, where appropriate to facilitate the placement of Oldham children for adoption.
- 12.9 Oldham Adoption Service offers guidance to people who wish to adopt where the child they propose to adopt has not been placed by an adoption agency. An adoption social worker undertakes the supervision of non-agency adoption placements and the provision of the required report for the adoption hearing.
- 12.10 The service offers appropriate guidance to people who are considering adopting a child from outside the UK and will refer them onto the Intercountry Adoption Service for more specialist advice.

13. Birth family

- 13.1 The services of Caritas Diocese of Salford (formerly CCRS) are contracted to offer independent support to birth parents once adoption has been identified. This service is also available to children where siblings have an adoption plan, and they have a different permanency plan.
- 13.2 Birth parents are encouraged to engage in the planning for their children as much as possible, in a sensitive and timely way. They are offered support for indirect and direct contact arrangement.

- 13.3 The social worker will work in partnership with birth parents and other significant family members to ensure they have information about the adoption process, including the Adoption Letterbox Service when indirect contact has been agreed as being in the child's best interests.
- 13.4 The Adoption Letterbox Service is co-coordinated by Oldham Adoption Service. Oldham Adoption Service provides information about the National Contact Register to birth families who have had a child placed for adoption. The National Contact Register maintains a local register of adopted people. Information will also be placed on the child's adoption record at the request of a birth family member. Birth family members will also be directed to appropriate sources of support, including After Adoption.

14. Children

- 14.1 Looked After Children who might benefit from being brought up in adoptive families are identified by the child's social worker and adoption plans are made as soon as possible.
- 14.2 Each child for who adoption has been identified as the plan is allocated to an adoption social worker who has the responsibility of ensuring that appropriate care plans are developed and implemented to meet the child's assessed needs.
- 14.3 Robust permanency planning means that multi-track plans are in place for children shortly after the first looked after children's review. As part of the strategy to reduce delay for children, an adoption social worker co works the adoption plan up until the point of placement order and then becomes case responsible for the child.
- 14.4 For relinquished children, the adoption team becomes case responsible for the child and birth family, following an initial assessment by the Children's Assessment team.
- 14.5 The social worker takes account of the child's wishes and feelings and ensures that the child has knowledge and an understanding of the adoption process and of their life history appropriate to their age and level of understanding. All preparation work for adoption is undertaken by the adoption team. This includes the provision of a Life Story Book, a Later Life Letter and ensuring that memorabilia of the child's life are given to the adopters.
- 14.6 The fact that children with a plan of adoption are allocated to the adoption team at the point of placement order means that robust, outcome based support plans can be agreed prior to match, informed by workers with a good understanding of adoption. This is reviewed as part of the LAC review process. Adopters are

encouraged to contact the child's social worker post order if there is the need for further support or services.

- 14.7 We endeavour to hear and respond to the child's voice at all times.
- 14.8 The social worker will supervise the child in an adoption placement until the Adoption Order is granted and provide the required reports for the adoption hearing.
- 14.9 The service uses a team around the child approach to support children who are awaiting placement and post placement, drawing on the expertise of other colleagues in Health, CAMHS and Education when necessary.
- 14.10 Where an adoptive placement is at risk of disruption, support is offered to the adopters and to the child in placement. When an adoptive placement disrupts prior to the making of an adoption order or within two years of the order, a disruption meeting is arranged with the aim of assisting future planning for the child.
- 14.11 As a small local authority, it is normally inappropriate to place within the local area. Oldham Council is a member of Adoption 22 (which is a regional consortium). The consortium enables Oldham Adoption Service to facilitate the placement of children with appropriate approved adoptive families. National family finding publications are also used to find families who can best meet children's needs. Referrals are made to the Adoption Register, and children's profiles are routinely circulated. We are pro-active in attending exchange days run by the Adoption Register and Adopt North West.
- 14.12 In addition we host a placement group for 5 other local authorities and ourselves which focuses on the timely placement of traditionally easier to place children. The placement group also runs an adoption activity day for harder to place children.

15. Post adoption services

- 15.1 Oldham provides assessments for support services for adoptive families who have children placed by Oldham but live outside the borough for three years post order. The majority of our adoptive placements are outside the borough and adopters are encouraged to maintain links with the child's social worker in the adoption team where possible, so that they can easily access support from someone who knows the child's history and receive some continuity.
- 15.2 Additionally adoptive families who live in the borough can request an assessment for support services at any time.

- 15.3 Oldham Adoption Service provides counselling and guidance to adopted adults who are seeking information from their adoption records.
- 15.4 The service also provides support to adults who live inside the area or where placed by Oldham who wish to trace their birth parents.
- 15.5 The adoption service provides a range of adoption support services to those eligible under the regulations:

These include

- Information
 - Advice
 - Young people's group
 - Assistance with accessing birth records
 - Counselling
 - An assessment for support, which may include a range of services.
 - Supporting post adoption contact.
 - Duty Officer available to respond to enquiries five days a week.
 - Social events
 - Independent support to birth relatives
 - Adoption Letterbox Service
 - Financial support in certain circumstances.
 - Developing post approval training
 - Access to consultation from educational psychologists, clinical psychologist and specialist counsellor
 - Toddler group for adoptive families
 - Young people's group
- 15.6 A number of the above services are run in conjunction with Bury and Rochdale Adoption Teams.

16. Assessment for adoption support

- 16.1 If there is a need for support in addition to the services outlined above, those eligible as defined by Regulation 4 of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 can request an assessment. All local have an Adoption Support Services Advisor (A.S.S.A) whose role it is to provide advice and information to all parties involved in adoption. They can assist in signposting to other appropriate services. In Oldham the A.S.S.A is based in the adoption service and can be contacted at:

Oldham Adoption Service
Unit 9 – Whitney Court
Southlink Business Park
Oldham
OL4 1DB

Tel: 0161 770 6605
Fax: 0161 770 6683
Email: adoption@oldham.gov.uk

16.2 The Adoption Support Fund, launched by the Department for Education on the 1st May 2015 will provide additional funding specifically for therapeutic adoption support, post adoption order. Applications can be backdated to 31st March 2015. This will assist the council in supporting adoptive families throughout the time the adopted child is growing up. The fund should also stimulate the availability of therapeutic services in the area and nationally, which will benefit Oldham as an authority that places most children outside of its borough.

17. Monitoring and evaluation

17.1 The adoption services are monitored by the Adoption Team Manager and Oldham Adoption Panel by a variety of means.

17.2 All staff, including the registered manager receives regular supervision on both a formal and informal basis, in line with policy. In addition, staff have annual appraisals, which identify areas for development. Supervision has functions of support, management and monitoring of service delivery and service quality.

17.3 Randomised file audits are undertaken by the team manager, files are also audited by line managers at the point of transfer between teams and when they are closed. There is also a quarterly independent audit by managers outside of the service.

17.4 Annual reports are made available to Councillors, to ensure that are fully informed about the management and performance of the adoption service.

17.5 Oldham Adoption Panel also has a monitoring role, having a quality assurance role in relation to practice which it considers on a ongoing basis.

17.6 Panel monitors the timeliness of placement for children with an adoption plan through quarterly reports.

17.7 The Independent Panel Chair and the Adoption Team Manager ensure a regular dialogue about practice issues and standards. Cases may be withdrawn prior to panel if the standard for submission has not been met.

17.8 The views of children are sought though direct work, the review process and participation opportunities if placed locally. The service promotes the voice of the child throughout their journey with us.

17.9 The service seeks evaluations from all professionals and service users involved.

- 17.10 The views of prospective adopters are sought after the preparation groups, which help to evaluate the group. Adoption Applicant(s) Monitoring Form monitors applicants for adoption.
- 17.11 The business planning process evaluates the service against its stated objectives. Government indicators (performance indicators) provide a further external evaluation process.
- 17.12 Policies and procedures of the service are reviewed annually.

18. Complaints procedure

Step one – Contact Vicky Brooke, Adoption Team Manager

On the telephone: 0161 770 6537

By letter: Vicky Brooke, Adoption Team Manager

Oldham Adoption Service

Unit 9, Whitney Court

Southlink Business Park

Oldham,

OL4 1DB

By email: vicky.brooke@oldham.gov.uk

- 18.1 If individuals feel uncomfortable contacting the Adoption Team Manager or they feel that they have not been listened to and are dissatisfied with the response, they can contact the Complaints and Representations Officer.

Complaints and Representations Officer

They can be contacted by:

Telephone : 0161 770 1129

Letter:

Complaints and Representations Officer

Oldham Council

PO BOX 4

Civic Centre

Level 8

West Street

Oldham

OL1 1UL

Email: cypf.complaints@oldham.gov.uk

- 18.2 The Complaints and Representations Officer will listen to their complaint and advice on the appropriate complaints procedure.

Local Government Ombudsman

If they are dissatisfied with the outcome from the complaints procedure the Local Government Ombudsman can be approached.

Ofsted

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Review Mechanism

The prospective adopter may also appeal to Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), if they have been notified by the adoption service / agency that they are not suitable to be approved as adoptive parents.

The IRM can be contacted at:

Contract Manager,
Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)
Unit 4,
Pavilion Business Park,
Royds Hall Road,
Wortley,
LEEDS LS12 6AJ
Telephone: 0870 034 6420
Fax: 0870 034 6421
Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

19. Oldham Adoption Service contact details:

Oldham Adoption Service
Unit 9 – Whitney Court
Southlink Business Park
Oldham, OL4 1DB
0161 770 6605
adoption@oldham.gov.uk
www.oldham.gov.uk/adoption

19.1 Appendix

19.2 Eligibility Criteria for Prospective Adopters

19.3 Introduction

19.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the recruitment strategy for prospective adopters.

19.5 Oldham Adoption Service aims to target recruitment activities at people who traditionally do not put themselves forward to adopt. In order to widen the pool of available adopters locally, regionally and nationally.

This will include:

- Black and minority ethnic communities
- Single people
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual people
- Transgender
- People with a disability
- Older people

19.6 It is hoped that by diversifying the range of adopters the department will be better able to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption both locally and in the Northwest. Especially children from the following groups:

- Older children
- Sibling groups
- Children from diverse minority ethnic backgrounds
- Children with a disability

19.7 This policy aims to ensure that any interested person who is eligible to adopt, will be welcomed and treated fairly, openly and with respect.

19.8 Eligibility Criteria for Prospective Adopters

19.9 The needs of the child should be paramount within the process of adoption. This should be balanced but not compromised by the equality of opportunity of prospective adopters. It is important that social work teams and the adoption team share a clear understanding of how the needs of the child can be met by adopters who might not be the traditional, married, heterosexual couple. Discussions regarding these types of decisions should be formalised and recorded.

- 19.10 There are certain core expectations, which the agency has of its adoptive applicants:
- 19.11 Age** – Age alone will not be a limiting factor in considering applicants, unless they are under 21. The age of applicants is linked to their general health, fitness and emotional well-being. The agency needs to be confident that applicants will be able to meet the varied demands of children during their growing years and be there for them into adulthood.
- 19.12 Race, Religion and Culture** – Children will normally be placed with applicants of the same racial, religious and cultural background as the child. Where such applicants are not available, a balance needs to be sought, between the potential delay in securing the ideal placement and the potential benefits of other approved adopters.
- 19.13 Marital Status** - Unmarried as well as married couples are now eligible to adopt.
- 19.14 All applicants, whether married or not, need to have been living together for sufficient time to demonstrate the stability of their relationship. Couples, both same sex and opposite sex need to have been living together for two years prior to making an application. Previous marriages do not exclude applicants from adoption.
- 19.15 Sexual Orientation** – Adoption legislation recognises civil partnership. It is important that people who identify as transgender, gay, lesbian or bisexual are not exposed to value based judgments during the process of adopting.
- 19.16 Geographical Considerations** – Applications will be accepted from Oldham residents and people outside of Oldham within a radius of 25 miles.
- 19.17 Infertility / Limitation of Family Size** – Potential applicants undergoing investigation or treatment for infertility will not be accepted as applicants for adoption. During introductions to a child, prospective adopters with unexplained infertility or no infertility would be advised to take contraceptive precautions for a limited time to avoid the added stress of a pregnancy during the early stages of the placement.
- 19.18 Promoting Attachment** – The agency requires applicants to give an undertaking that their lifestyle will accommodate the needs of a child placed for adoption. In particular in the early stages of placement a child will need the constant availability of their care to ensure attachments takes place. Minimum requirements would be twenty-six weeks, but for some children this will need to be a more extensive period.
- 19.19 Medical Considerations** – The health of any applicant must be such as to give a prospect of living with reasonable health until the child reaches adulthood. This

would be based on advice from the Agency Medical Advisor. This takes account of the likelihood of the child already having experienced significant loss.

19.20 Disability – The agency welcomes people with a disability to apply to become adopters. It is recognised that not all disabilities pose a threat to health and well being and the social model of disability should be applied. Any consideration of health issues will be applied as outlined above.

19.21 Transgender - As discussed in the sections relating to sexual orientation, it is important that applicants are not exposed to value based judgements during the process of adopting.

19.22 Health and Safety – Oldham Adoption Service will expect that the applicant's house will meet basic health and safety standards and regulations before placing a child.

Alcohol Consumption – Applicants who drink alcohol will be expected to do so within safe limits. For men the current maximum safe limit is 28 units per week and 21 units per week for women.

19.23 Smoking – As an authority we are aware that many looked after children are already disadvantaged with neglected or impaired health by the time they come into the care system and they have a right to have their health protected and promoted by their carers. Children's health must be our primary consideration. Prospective adopters will be advised that if they are considering to adopt children under five, then they will be severely disadvantaged as agencies have adopted smoking policies which mitigate against the placement of under fives with smokers

19.24 This authority does not place children under five with smokers, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

19.25 In relation to E cigarettes, unfortunately, given that there is no current research in the long term health implications either for users or for those exposed to their use, we apply the same approach as we do to those who smoke.

19.26 Pets – Applicants who own pets will be required to answer questions during the assessment in relation to the control and management of them. Applicants will not be accepted from people who possess dangerous pets as specified within the legislation.

19.27 Offences – The agency shall not consider an applicant to be suitable if they or a member of their household have committed an offence specified in The Children (Protection from Offenders) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1997. Other offences will be considered and a decision made by the agency decision maker following a risk assessment.

19.28 Refusal of Applicants

Adoption is a service for children rather than a service for adults. Therefore no adult has the right to be an adopter. The reason to discontinue an application will be put in writing. All applicants will have the right to have their written and / or oral views considered by Panel.

To appeal against the decision the prospective adopter can contact:

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

Unit 4,

Pavilion Business Park,

Royds Hall Road,

Wortley,

LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Telephone: 0870 034 6420

Fax: 0870 034 6421

Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

[Home](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Search](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Contents](#) | [User Guide](#)