



# ADOPTION SERVICE

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

# August 2009

**This Statement of Purpose complies with the Adoption National Minimum Standards and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, as required by Ofsted. This document is reviewed annually.**

**All adopters approved by *Caritas Care* will receive the Statement of Purpose. Placing Authorities will be issued with a copy of the document immediately where children are currently in placement.**

**Prospective placing Authorities will receive the information at the point of enquiry in respect of a placement.**

**The Statement of Purpose will be available upon request to children who may be adopted, or adopted persons, their parents and guardians, and persons wishing to adopt, and any local authority.**

**August 2009**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Lancaster first established a childcare agency in 1934. Approved as an Adoption Agency in 1943, the Lancaster Diocesan Protection and Rescue Society directed its energies primarily towards the adoption of infants. As broader childcare activities evolved the Agency became the Lancaster Diocesan Catholic Children's Society.

By the mid 1980's the Diocese was keen to extend the range of social welfare activities. The childcare work became progressively specialised and continues to be at the core of the Agency's activities. Since 1987 a range of services within the community and for adults with disabilities has developed and this diversification is reflected in the change of the Agency's name to Catholic Caring Services. These changes brought with them more robust management structures and central support systems.

In March 2009, formal links between the Charity and the Diocese of Lancaster ended. The charity then changed its name from Catholic Caring Services to ***Caritas Care***.

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## STATUS AND CONSTITUTION

***Caritas Care*** is an autonomous Registered Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, founded in 1934 and is one of the longest established independent charities in the North West. Caritas Care provides a wide range of services operating from sites in Lancashire, Cumbria and Greater Manchester.

As a Registered Charity the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association prohibit the distribution of profits and we are therefore recognised as a voluntary organisation as defined within Section 105 of the Children Act 1989. ***Caritas Care*** is therefore properly constituted to have the care of children delegated to it by Local Authorities as detailed in the Local Authority Circular (98)2.

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## THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

A Board of Trustees governs **Caritas Care**.

The work of the agency is now structured into two operational areas, Children's services where the principal purpose is to provide security and permanence for children and young people in need, achieved through adoption, foster care or placement within the Agency's therapeutic children's home, and Community Services which include day service provision for adults with physical and/or learning disabilities, pastoral services to people whose hearing is impaired and a range of community development services.

The Board of Management is responsible for the direction of the Agency, for defining policy and approving annual budgets. The officers of the agency are accountable to the Board; strategic and operational management is delegated to the Director supported by a Senior Management Team of three Assistant Directors.

Details of the Management Structure appear in Appendix 1 on page 17.

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## CARITAS CARE POLICY FOR CHILDREN

All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. This has been set out by the DCSF in five outcomes that are key to children and young people's wellbeing:

- Stay safe
- Be healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

To achieve this, children need to feel loved and valued, and be supported by a network of reliable and affectionate relationships. If they are denied the opportunity and support to achieve these outcomes, children are at increased risk of disadvantage and social exclusion in both childhood and adulthood.

In all its practices concerning the placement of children, **Caritas Care** is first and foremost dedicated to the well being of the child, based upon the belief that it is within the family that a child's needs are primarily satisfied and their rights secured. This should be the principal focus with applicants who wish to adopt children.

The agency has for many years pioneered good practice in the field of adoption and childcare. It is committed to providing secure placements for children seeing these as the fundamental pre-requisite of healthy emotional growth, stability, security and sense of identity, thus enabling the formation of

successful, enduring relationships. A child also needs a full understanding of past events and clear sense of identity. **Caritas Care** is particularly concerned about children who have lost or are at risk of losing some or all of these rights.

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## **PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE SERVICE**

To ensure the child is safeguarded and their rights promoted, our work is informed and underpinned by the following principles expressed through professional practice of a high standard which:

- Meets the needs of children and young people, by upholding their welfare as paramount.
- Provides looked after children with safe, secure and life enriching experiences.
- Enables children, young people and adults to have increased responsibility for their own lives.
- Recognises the wholeness of human experience including the spiritual.
- Respects confidentiality and privacy of information about individuals who use our service and those whom we employ.
- Provides those who are socially excluded or discriminated against because of a disability or disadvantage with real opportunities to exercise choice and achieve their full potential.
- Works in partnership and collaboration with other agencies, groups and individuals committed to the best interests of those children and young people with whom we work.
- Enables the child, parent(s), carers and other people of significance to participate in decision-making processes, which challenge unfairness or injustice.
- Allows the involvement of all parties in determining and promoting the child's welfare through consultation and co-operation in order to achieve the best outcomes for the child.
- Explains and advises the child and parent(s) of the powers, responsibilities and duties of all individuals involved in the provision of care for the child.
- Takes care to recruit and develop people who have appropriate professional qualifications and experience and who are committed to our mission and values.
- Does not compromise our independence but sustains our freedom to respond to changing needs of society thus creating new opportunities which further the development of our services.
- Recognises the lifelong implications of adoption, and the commitment required from the organisation, professionals and individuals involved.

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## THE ADOPTION SERVICE

The mission, values and ethos of the agency together with the principles embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guide our work and we have a proven track record of our ability to meet the needs of children. The adoption service has the commitment of a skilled workforce to develop and sustain practice that will continue to deliver the highest standards of care.

The work of the adoption service is based upon the belief that it is within the family of origin that a child's needs are best met. However, it is recognised that for some children and young people, this is not appropriate or possible. The agency is committed to securing appropriate alternative family care for such children, through its adoption, fostering and therapeutic residential services.

The agency is committed to targeting the securing of adoptive placements for:

- Older children, who have had damaging early life experiences
- Children who have a physical or learning disability
- Children for whom it has been agreed that contact with birth family members should continue (this may be direct or indirect contact)
- Sibling groups
- Children with developmental delay, or uncertain future development
- Children whose parents have suffered mental ill health, drug or alcohol misuse.

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## THE SERVICES OFFERED

At **Caritas Care** the adoption service currently provides:

- The recruitment and assessment of adopters, who are able to offer a range of placements for children of all age groups, which are non-denominational.
- A comprehensive programme of training, both pre and post approval.
- A qualified, experienced team of social workers to assess, train and support adopters.
- Monthly support groups for adopters.
- Support throughout the matching, placement and adoption process.
- Post adoption support.
- Access to psychological support where appropriate.
- Access to professional packages of support in respect of learning disability, deafness, and physical disability through Caritas Care Community Services.
- Pregnancy counselling.
- Post adoption counselling for adopted adults and their birth relatives.

Many children arrive in their adoptive home feeling unhappy, confused isolated, and sometimes rejected. It is important to address such feelings through the provision of a supportive caring and secure environment with consistent boundaries. Some children are emotionally damaged, have special needs or display very challenging behaviour, and consequently require a high level of supervision and support. In such circumstances **Caritas Care** are able to access therapeutic or psychological consultancy support for adoptive families. If through the process of consultancy a need is identified for a particular type of specialist input or therapy for the child, a referral for such can be facilitated by the Agency.

In order to maximise the influence and potential of the Agency in offering adoption services, **Caritas Care** is a member of the following:

- Adoption 22 Regional Consortium
- Consortium of Northern Adoption Agencies
- National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO)
- Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA)
- North West Voluntary Adoption Agencies (NWVAA)
- British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)
- Caritas – Social Action

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## **ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

As a long established charity, **Caritas Care** has developed a range of additional services for children, and undertakes specific pieces of work to assist Local Authorities in the placement of children, including:

- Friends and Family Assessments
- Step-parent adoption applications
- Membership of adoption/permanence panels
- Independent Chairing of Disruption Review meetings
- Family finding for children within our residential establishment
- Preparation of Child Permanence Report
- Life story work
- Preparing children to give evidence in court
- Independent Assessments as required or directed through the court i.e. contact, parenting capacity, attachment

A professional fee, currently of £55 per hour, is charged for these additional services.

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## THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

The adoption service is committed to:

- Recruiting adopters who are able to demonstrate through assessment their suitability for the task.
- A child centred approach, which takes full account of the views of children, and respects their rights.
- Providing high quality care in an alternative family setting.
- Careful attention to matching considerations.
- A service which operates within local consortiums and the national framework thus leading to a greater choice of placements which will increase the possibility of meeting the needs of a wider range of children.
- Anti-discriminatory practice and equality of opportunity.
- Regard to the importance of a child's racial, religious, cultural and linguistic needs.
- Consideration of the gender, sexuality, special needs and any disability of children and young people.
- A service which recognises the lifelong commitment of adoption.

***Caritas Care*** through the provision of adoption aims to provide placements which:

- Meet the child's needs in an environment, which positively promotes their emotional, physical and psychological well being.
- Helps a child to develop an understanding and acceptance of past events.
- Helps a child to build a positive sense of identity and self worth.
- Promote the development of attachments.
- Enable children to achieve their educational potential.
- Protect children from emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- Encourage children to develop their own personal resources and strengths in preparation for independence.
- Safeguard children's welfare, by ensuring that prospective adopters are rigorously assessed and subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks, references and medicals.
- Promote children's health and development.
- Are carefully matched to meet the individual needs of children placed.
- Enable partnership working between adoptive parents, social workers, and others involved in a child's life.

In order to achieve these aims ***Caritas Care*** offers to all its adopters:

- A service which values adopters through the provision of positive, structured support.
- A designated social worker to advise, support and guide in relation to the child/ren in placement.
- Regular visits and telephone contact from their social worker.

- Careful matching of children, in line with the identified skills and approval categories of adopters.
- A programme of preparation and post approval training.
- Quarterly Adopters Support group meetings.
- Annual Reviews of approved adopters awaiting placement.
- Comprehensive written information, detailing their responsibilities, entitlements, advice and guidance on issues, which may arise in the course of caring for children.
- A copy of the Statement of Purpose in relation to the Adoption Service.
- A service with sound, robust policies and procedural guidance in accordance with the requirements of the Adoption National Minimum Standards.
- Access to a complaints procedure.

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## THE STAFFING STRUCTURE

The Assistant Director for Children's services strategically manages the adoption service of **Caritas Care**; operational management is delegated to the Adoption Team Manager:

### **CARITAS CARE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

### **SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Jim Cullen

### **ASSISTANT DIRECTORS**

#### **COMMUNITY**

Phil Moore

#### **CHILDREN**

Amanda Forshaw

#### **FINANCE**

Christine Briggs

### **TEAM MANAGERS**

#### **ADOPTION**

Christine Sutherland

#### **FOSTER CARE**

Susan Swarbrick

#### **RESIDENTIAL**

Pauline Johnston

**PRESTON OFFICE:**  
**CARLISLE OFFICE:**  
**BARROW OFFICE:**  
**DIDSBURY OFFICE:**

**4 x SENIOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS**  
**1x SENIOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER**  
**1x SENIOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER**  
**1x SENIOR SOCIAL PRACTITIONER &**  
**2x SOCIAL WORKERS**

The Assistant Director has direct line management responsibility for the Adoption Team Manager who is delegated line management responsibility for

the social work practitioners. In the absence of the Adoption Team Manager, the Assistant Director will deputise.

The staff employed within the adoption service have been selected with care through an equal opportunities process in recognition of the guidance within the Warner Report 'Choosing with Care' and are required to subscribe to the values and ethos of **Caritas Care**. Criminal Records Bureau Checks are undertaken for all newly appointed staff.

All staff members receive a contract of employment detailing the conditions of service surrounding their appointment and take part in a thorough process of induction in relation to the Agency and Adoption Service. All members of the Adoption Team are registered with The Social Care Council.

Details of the staffing structure appear in Appendix 1.

Adoption team members are professionally qualified social workers.

**Caritas Care** is committed to enabling all staff to achieve an acceptable and healthy work/life balance. Policies and procedures encourage the retention of salaried staff by offering flexibility in work patterns, regular structured supervision and annual appraisal, a commitment to on going training, manageable workloads and staff welfare. Personal and professional development is important.

The work of the Adoption Service is effectively and efficiently supported by well established administrative and finance departments.

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## THE ADOPTION PANEL

The Agency is supported by clear policies and procedures, which meet the Adoption Services National Minimum Standards and Adoption Agency Regulations 2005.

The role and function of the Panel appointed by **Caritas Care** is to:

- Ensure that that the assessment process has been adequately carried out and meet the requirements of the law and agency policy.
- Examine applications thoroughly and consider whether there is evidence of the applicant's abilities and suitability to adopt. Applications where there is a disclosure, through the CRB process of a 'specified offence' are automatically considered unsuitable and will not therefore be presented to Panel for consideration.
- Make recommendations in relation to the approval, review and deregistration of adopters.
- Advise on professional standards and practice, and any other issue which the Director wishes them to consider,

- Monitor activity of the Adoption Service.

Membership of the Adoption Panel is coterminous with **Caritas Care** Fostering Panel. Members are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks and required to sign a 'Statement of Confidentiality'. The Panel membership comprises people with complimentary experience within the professional arena of child care and lay members with relevant personal life experience. Medical and Legal advisors are also appointed and effectively serve the Panel.

The composition of the Panel is as follows:

<b>Chair</b>	Robina Murdoch
<b>Vice Chair</b> Independent, (LA Social Adoption Panel Adviser)	Steve Barsby
<b>Member</b> Independent, (Adoptive Parent)	Lorraine Egan
<b>Member</b> (Senior Social Work Practitioner)	Julie Dawkins
<b>Member</b> Independent, (Foster Carer)	Franz Stiendl
<b>Member</b> (Senior Social Work Practitioner)	Louise Young
<b>Member</b> (Board of Management)	Jo Craven
<b>Medical Advisor</b>	Dr Judith Chaloner
<b>Legal Advisor</b> (non Member)	Peter Baldwin
<b>Panel Advisor</b>	Amanda Forshaw
<b>Agency Decision Maker</b>	Jim Cullen, Chief Executive

- An accurate account of the business and proceedings of each Panel meeting is documented.
- The minutes of each Panel meeting details the reasons for all Panel Decisions.
- Written notifications of decisions are issued to applicants and social workers.
- Statistical records are maintained for performance monitoring, service development and the annual report.

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## THE RECRUITMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The National Adoption Standards 2002 require that Agencies recruit adopters who reflect the geographic and ethnic mix of the community. In this respect the recruitment process undertaken by **Caritas Care** is currently operational within Lancashire, Cumbria, and the Manchester areas. We aim to recruit potential adopters using a variety of publicity materials, including a website, local media/press, newsletters, Open/Information sessions and as an on going process by word of mouth based upon our reputation. Radio and television coverage is used on occasion, for specific campaigns or events.

**Caritas Care** will respond to every enquiry by:

- Providing the enquirer with the opportunity to discuss adoption with a qualified social worker.
- Providing the enquirer with written information about adoption, in the form of an Information Pack.
- Holding Information Events at least three times per year, at different venues.
- Offering an initial interview with the Adoption Team Manager, or Senior Practitioner.

Where an application has been accepted by **Caritas Care** it will respond by:

- Undertaking a thorough assessment of potential adopters as recommended by BAAF. A professionally qualified Social Work Practitioner will undertake the assessment.
- Obtaining authorisation for and carrying out statutory references, DOH, CRB and Local Authority checks on all adults, over 18, resident within the household.
- Obtaining written consent for a medical examination to be conducted as required by BAAF.
- Requesting a minimum of three personal references and subsequently endorsing these through interview.
- Seeking the views of former partners and adult children of applicants where appropriate.
- Seeking employers' references where either applicant has worked directly with children and vulnerable adults.
- Verifying the identity of each applicant.
- Considering the necessity of checking any adult non-household member who may have regular contact with any child placed.
- The applicants will be seen together and on an individual basis as part of the assessment process, all other relevant parties will also be seen, particularly any children of the applicants.
- Completing the BAAF Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR), which will be shared upon completion with the applicants (excluding confidential references).
- All applicants who are being assessed and prepared to become approved as adopters are required to undertake the Adoption training programme hosted by **Caritas Care**.
- Presenting the application to the Agency Adoption Panel either upon completion of the assessment or for early consideration, if appropriate. The Agency Decision Maker subsequently considers the recommendation from the panel, after which the applicants are informed of the outcome.
- Applicants are provided with the opportunity to attend Panel when their application is being considered if they so wish.
- Assessments will be carried out within the timescales set out in National Adoption Standards. Where this is not possible due to particular circumstances, an explanation for this will be included in the Prospective

Adopter's Report/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer's Report, and presented to the Adoption Panel.

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## **ADOPTION TRAINING**

Throughout the application process, the aim of the adoption service is to empower applicants to make their own decisions based on accurate and honest information. We believe that training plays an important part in the development of prospective adopter's understanding of the reality of adoption. It begins with training to become an adopter via the preparation training programme and continues following the approval of adopters, both through specific training events and involvement in the Adopters Support Group.

Training provided aims to:

- Enable adopters to deliver the best possible care for children.
- Enable adopters to understand the importance of separation and loss.
- Enable adopters to understand the effects of abuse and lack of attachment upon children.
- Enable adopters to understand the importance of identity.
- Fully explain the adoption process.
- Enable adopters to understand the effects of discrimination and how this impacts upon the children in their care.
- Ensure that adopters are competent in delivering safe care for children in placement.
- Encourage adopters to develop a range of skills and knowledge in respect of looking after children.
- Enable adopters to acknowledge and meet their own learning needs.

The Adoption Preparation programme covers the following core issues:

- Historical background to adoption – brief reference to adoption legislation
- Who are the children?
- Background circumstances of children
- Child development
- Identity
- Differing perspectives of the adoption 'triangle'
- Bridging a child into the new/adoptive family
- Re-parenting the child
- Dealing with behaviours
- Explaining adoption – Life Story Work
- Contact issues: direct/indirect
- Meeting experienced adopters for a question and answer forum

Post approval training for adopters has included:

- Contact with birth family- Adopted adults talking about their experiences of contact in adoption.
- Re-parenting –(NSPCC)
- Strengthening Families course taster-NSPCC
- Building Resilience
- ‘Telling’ workshop
- Building self esteem and resilience in your child
- The teen-age years – (panel of adoptive parents)
- Attachment
- Caring for the sexually abused child
- Education statements
- Using libraries – helping children enjoy reading
- Child psychiatry
- Growing up adopted
- GRIP (Group Intervention Panel:LCC)

Adopters unable to attend training events would receive all necessary information via their social worker. The training offered by **Caritas Care** is subject to continual evaluation and review.

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## **SUPPORT FOR ADOPTERS**

The Agency’s investment in the adoption service is considerable both financially and ethically. From the outset of our relationship with adopters, we believe that openness, honesty, thoroughness, and professionalism in planning are imperative. We have learned from research what can go wrong in adoption, and lead to disruptions. We recognise from this the essential importance of offering high quality support to adopters, in contributing to both the success of placements and to adoptive families feeling valued by the Agency.

The main tasks of the social worker in supporting adopters are:

- To assist adopters in the careful consideration of potential placements.
- To review approval status annually.
- To ensure that adopters are kept informed of developments within the field of adoption, and in the Agency.
- To provide continuity, from assessment, through approval to placement, and beyond.
- To plan the introduction and placement of children, alongside adopters and the responsible authority.
- To ensure that adopters receive all available information in respect of a child’s background, history, birth family, medical history, and all aspects of their emotional, educational and cultural needs.
- To assist in the formulation of an appropriate Post Adoption Support Plan.

- To assist and enable adopters to develop effective problem solving and behaviour management strategies.
- To liaise with social workers, and other professionals as appropriate.
- To advise on what other support services may be available.
- To keep a written record of all developments within the placement.
- To visit regularly, not less than the minimum statutory requirements.
- To maintain regular telephone contact.
- To maintain an office duty system to ensure immediate professional response.
- To provide access to out of hours support, by ensuring all adopters are given written information regarding Local Authority out of hours telephone numbers, in addition to CCS contact telephone number of our Residential Children's Home.
- To ensure that adopters feel valued by **Caritas Care**.

The social workers primary concern is the welfare of the child. Any concern for the health, welfare or safety of the child will be immediately addressed, and shared with the relevant authorities.

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## ADOPTION REVIEWS

**Caritas Care** will review adopters in the following circumstances:

- On the anniversary of their initial approval.
- A placement disruption.
- If a complaint or allegation is made against them.
- Where there is a major change in circumstances e.g. relationship breakdown.
- Death of a child in their care.
- At the adopter's request.

The purpose of the review is to provide an appraisal of the adopter's circumstances, abilities and experience over the year and will concentrate on the following areas:

- Any significant change in circumstances.
- Any changes in matching considerations, including ages and special needs of children.
- Any potential linkings considered following approval, and reasons why they did not proceed.
- Recommendations for the future.

All reviews will be presented to **Caritas Care** Adoption Panel for their consideration and subsequent recommendation.

Copies of the review will be shared with placing authorities and will be available with the Prospective Adopter's Report to authorities considering placements and their Panels.

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## **TERMINATION OF APPROVAL**

If on review **Caritas Care** no longer feel satisfied that an adopter is suitable to provide care for children:

- A recommendation that their approved status be terminated will be presented to the Adoption Panel.
- Adopters in this situation will have had opportunity to discuss the recommendation of the assessing social worker, prior to the Panel meeting with their social worker and/or the adoption team manager.
- The social worker will ensure that the adopters are made aware of their right to Appeal against the decision, both to the Agency, and to the Independent Review Mechanism.

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## **COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS PROCEDURE**

Any complaint received will be treated seriously and fully investigated by an independent party.

This procedure is to enable users of the adoption service provided by the Agency, including children, to make representation including complaint about any aspect of the service. This procedure requires agency staff to attempt to satisfy the complainant through negotiation, arbitration and mediation aimed at resolving the complaint. However, should these methods prove to be unsatisfactory the matter will be pursued through the formal processes outlined below.

### **COMPLAINT RECEIVED**

#### **INFORMAL STAGE**

Aim is resolution through negotiation, arbitration, and mediation  
Timescale – 7 days

#### **FORMAL STAGE**

Independent person appointed to undertake formal investigation and response to complainant  
Timescale – 28 days

## REVIEW STAGE

Complainant dissatisfied 28 days to request review

Review conducted by review panel of three

(1 independent of the agency)

Recommendations made to agency and complainant notified in writing

Timescale – 28 days

- Information relating to Complaints and Representation is contained within the application pack issued to adopters at the point of their initial interview following their enquiry to the Agency.
- Information relating to the Independent Review Mechanism is also included within the information pack, and is also referenced during the Home Study.
- Complaints will be recorded and retained on file, including outcome and action taken. All formal complaints will be recorded in the 'Complaints Record File' located in the Assistant Directors office.
- Complaints of a child protection nature are referred immediately to the placing authority.
- Children will be provided with information relating to this process within the Children's Guide in an age appropriate accessible format.
- Complaints regarding the registered manager of the service should be made to the Director, the Trustees and Social Worker.
- The complainant will be kept informed at every stage regarding the progress of the investigation of their complaint.
- The complainant will be advised of their right to approach Ofsted to raise concerns regarding any aspect of the service. The address is below:

Ofsted  
National Business Unit  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404040

E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE ADOPTION SERVICE  
APRIL 2008-09:**

0

**NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTION ENQUIRIES INITIATED IN RELATION  
TO CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT APRIL 2008-09:**

0

<b>Number of approved adopters awaiting placement as at 01/04/09</b>	<b>Number of children placed 01/04/08-01/04/09</b>
15	19

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**POST ADOPTION SUPPORT AND SERVICES**

**Caritas Care** is committed to providing a post-adoption service to birth parents, children and adoptive parents.

Legislation (Adoption Support Regulation 2003) also places a duty on the local authority to provide post adoption services for all parties.

A placing authority is responsible for providing an Adoption Support Plan, which all parties should have a copy of prior to an adoption placement being made or at the latest prior to an Adoption Order being made.

The placing authority is responsible for considering a request for post-adoption services up to 1 year after the making of an Adoption Order, or 3 years since the date of the placement (which ever is the sooner).

The receiving local authority (the local authority in which the adoptive family lives) will thereafter become responsible, after the above period, for carrying out an assessment for post adoption services should this be requested.

The adoptive parent, adopted child, and any other child of the adoptive parent can request an assessment of need for Adoption Support Services. The birth parent or significant relative can also request an assessment of need for Adoption Support Services.

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**ADOPTIVE FAMILIES**

All **Caritas Care** adoptive parents and their children will have access to ongoing support from the Adoption Service. Adoptive parents, may need to contact the agency to request support for themselves, or any of their other children (birth or adopted) who may be affected by adoption.

As detailed previously, adoptive parents (and their children) will also be able to request an assessment from the relevant local authority, under the Adoption Support Regulations 2003. **Caritas Care** will offer advice on how to access this support.

### **Support Services available at Caritas Care**

- A letter to all adoptive parents at the time of the making of an Adoption Order, outlining **Caritas Care** post adoption Support Services
- An option provided to all adoptive families, for **Caritas Care** to contact families by telephone or letter, 6 months after the making of an Adoption Order.
- Adopters' Support Group meets a minimum of 4 times annually.
- Training and workshop opportunities linked to the Adopters' Support Group.
- Regular mailings of Agency Newsletter.
- **Caritas Care** will sponsor adoptive parents' attendance at Regional Training events on request.
- Annual Fun Day for all adoptive families.
- Contact name and telephone number for adoptive families to access at **Caritas Care**.
- Access to qualified social workers for advice and support
- Access to specialist advisors.
- Agency Medical Advisor
- Agency Legal Advisor
- Child Psychologist
- Support Worker (Foster Carer)

Where it is agreed that children would benefit from group support, but where there are insufficient children within their age group for the agency to provide such a service, the agency will seek out the nearest support group or service, where possible.

**Caritas Care** is committed to provide a post adoption service that all parties can confidently rely upon.

**Caritas Care** acknowledges adoption is a life-long process, and therefore the service aims to evolve and develop in response to need.

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### **BIRTH PARENT & RELATIVES**

While there are currently few relinquishing birth parents requesting an adoption service, where **Caritas Care** is the placing agency in such instances, the agency will continue to offer and provide a post-adoption service.

Support and guidance in relation to any Letterbox Agreement will be provided where such an agreement is in operation. Birth parents will also be advised of alternative support services through organisations such as After Adoption.

The majority of birth parents will continue to be the responsibility of the placing local authority. **Caritas Care** will not have direct involvement with birth parents, where their child was placed by a local authority.

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## CHILDREN

All children who are adopted from 2004 will have an Adoption Support Plan. Where a specific need is identified at the time of the child's placement with an adoptive family, **Caritas Care**, together with the placing local authority, will ensure compliance with the plan. The child's adoptive parent(s) will have a copy of the Plan.

All children will have a Life Story Book and a copy of the Children's Guide by the time they are adopted.

At any period post-adoption where a child directly, or via their adoptive family, identifies a need, **Caritas Care** will respond and conduct an assessment of need.

Intervention by **Caritas Care** may involve a 'one-off' contact or a programme of agreed work with the child. Referrals may relate to a child's need to update Life Story Work, contact issues with birth relatives, including siblings, or behavioural issues.

Where it is deemed appropriate to access other services, **Caritas Care** will advise and where appropriate liaise and advocate, on behalf of the child to the appropriate services. The agency is able to request an assessment of the relevant local authority under the Adoption Support Regulations 2003.

## **Appendix 1 – List of Staff Members and Qualifications**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Commenced employment with Caritas Care</b>
Jim Cullen	Director	Dip SW BA MSc CQSW DMS	February 1984
Amanda Forshaw	Assistant Director	BA CQSW DASS Certificate in Management	October 2003
Christine Sutherland	Team Manager	CQSW Certificate in Family Placement Practice Teacher's Award NVQ /SVQ level 4 in Management	February 1991
Rachel Newton	Senior Practitioner	CQSW BA PQ Childcare Award	September 2002
Suzannah Walker	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW BA PQ Childcare Award	February 2001
Louise Young	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW BA MA	May 2003
Stephen Bateman	Senior Practitioner	CQSW	June 2005
Shelagh Surplis	Senior Practitioner	CQSW BA	February 2001
Sandra Wolfenden	Senior Practitioner	CQSW PQ 1	May 2003
Patricia Hurst	Senior Practitioner	CQSW BA Dip Mh, PQ Childcare Award	November 2008
Elaine Stainsby	Social Worker	Dip SW BA PQ1	November 2008
Kay Baker	Social Worker	Dip SW MA BSc	November 2008