



ADOPTION SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

November 2019

Registered Provider: Amanda Forshaw

Registered Manager: Susan Swarbrick

*Registered Address: 218 Tulketh Road, Ashton, Preston PR2 1ES
Tel: 01772 732313*

This Statement of Purpose, as required by Ofsted, complies with;

- Adoption Agencies (England) Regulations 2005
- Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 – England and Wales as amended by the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (Amendment Regulations 2005)
- The Adoption Agencies (Misc Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013.

This document is reviewed annually.

The agency works within the requirements of legislation, associated Regulations and guidance outlined in:

- The Adoption Act 1976
- The Children Act 1989
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 2004
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre and Post Commencement) Regulations 2005
- The Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005
- The Adoption and Children Act 2006
- Equality Act 2006 and 2010
- The Independent review of Determinations (Adoption) Regulations 2009
- Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013
- The Care Planning, Placement and case Review and Fostering Services (Misc Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Our practice is also informed by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, associated child protection guidance and Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures.

All adopters approved by Caritas Care will receive the Statement of Purpose. Placing Authorities will be issued with a copy of the document when children are placed.

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, persons wishing to adopt, and any local authority.

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 was 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***.

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, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and Humber, Stoke and Staffordshire.

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.

Caritas Care is a specialist voluntary adoption agency which operates throughout the North West of England. It has office bases in Preston, Carlisle, Manchester, Warrington and Stoke. The agency is registered with Ofsted as an adoption agency and as an adoption agency also providing support services to adopted adults and children. With 80 years experience as an adoption agency, ***Caritas Care*** maintains the welfare of the child as paramount in the on going and innovative approach to the development of adoption services.

THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

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

The Board of Management is responsible for the direction of the Agency, for defining policy and approving annual budgets. Members of the Board act as Directors of the

Limited Company and as Trustees of the Registered Charity. Board members, in addition to their main responsibilities have particular areas of responsibility such as finance, staffing and personnel, property, policy development and pastoral. The primary focus of the Board is to safeguard the Charity and ensure appropriate conduct of the business.

The officers of the agency are accountable to the Board; strategic and operational management is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, supported by a Senior Leadership Team, is responsible for strategic and operational management of the agency. The team comprises Chief Executive Officer, Director of Children's Services, Director of Operations and Community Services and Director of Finance and Disability Services.

The work of the agency is 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 and foster care; and Adult and Community Services which include day service provision for adults with physical and/or learning disabilities, and a range of community development services.

CARITAS CARE POLICY FOR CHILDREN

The principles which underpin the policies and practice of the adoption service are consistent with the vision and values of the agency, the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, Equality legislation and the principles of the Human Rights Act 1998, that all individuals have the right to family life.

All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The adoption service also aims to provide placements for children and young people which promote the five outcomes described in Every Child Matters, initially promoted by the DCSF. The outcomes were more recently adopted and modified by the DfE who as the government body, leads the network of people who work with or for children and young people. The outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

To achieve their potential, children need to feel loved and valued, and be supported by a network of reliable and emotionally secure 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. Our aim is to provide families for children where they can grow up in a secure, stable and loving environment to meet their long term needs and enable them to achieve their full potential.

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:

- Recognises the lifelong implications of adoption, and the commitment required from the organisation, professionals and individuals involved.
- Meets the needs of children and young people by upholding their welfare as paramount.
- Responds to the changing needs of children and demands of legislation.
- Provides children looked after with safe, secure and life enriching experiences.
- Enables children, young people and adults to have increased responsibility for their own lives.
- 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 securing the best interests of the 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 possible outcomes.
- 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, support and retain staff members who have appropriate professional qualifications and experience and who are committed to our mission and values.

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 and relevant legislation, 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 an innovative approach to 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 (and fostering) services.

The agency is committed to recruiting potential adopters with the necessary characteristics and capacity to parent through adoption. We seek potential adopters who are able to offer safe, stable, loving, nurturing care which will promote the development of secure attachments. We aim to secure 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)
- Children who need to be placed with their brothers or sisters.
- Children with developmental delay, or uncertain future development
- Children whose parents have suffered from or have a diagnosis of mental ill health.
- Children who have been exposed to drugs or alcohol pre-birth.
- Children of black, minority ethnic or dual heritage
- Children whose needs are best met via early permanence.

THE SERVICES OFFERED

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

- Recruits and assesses potential adopters, who are able to offer a range of placements for children of all age groups, which are nondenominational.
- Provides support for potential adopters/service users with physical, sensory or learning impairments, communication or language difficulties and where necessary engages the assistance of experts to facilitate communication and understanding.
- Delivers a comprehensive programme of training for adopters, both pre and post approval.
- Employs a qualified and experienced team of social workers to recruit, assess, train and support adopters.
- Matches families to the children awaiting adoption locally and nationally.

- Provides support groups for adopters.
- Provides support throughout the matching, placement and adoption process.
- Offers specialised and extensive adoption support.
- Provides access to psychological and therapeutic support where appropriate.
- Provides access to professional advice and support determined by individual need, including education.
- Delivers positive and therapeutic parenting training programmes.
- Delivers training for extended family members, schools and nurseries.
- Offers post adoption advice and counselling for adopted adults and their birth relatives.
- Offers tracing and intermediary services for adopted adults and/or birth parents and 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 and 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:

- Children England
- Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA)
- CoramBAAF
- Caritas – Social Action

We are also partner agencies in:

- Adoption Counts Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)
- Adoption Now Regional Adoption Agency
- Together for Adoption Regional Adoption Agency.
- Adoption in Merseyside Regional Adoption Agency
- Coast to Coast Regional Adoption Agency

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

As a long established charity, **Caritas Care** offers a range of additional services for children including:

- Early Permanence placements including Concurrent Planning and Foster to Adopt.
- Family finding for specific children upon request

- A bespoke family finding service for children deemed 'harder to place'.
- Foster care
- Extensive adoption support both through the agency and the Centre for Adoption Support (CfAS).

We also undertake specific pieces of work to assist Local Authorities in the placement of children, including:

- Friends and Family Assessments
- Partner adoption applications
- Membership of adoption/permanence panels
- Independent chairing of Disruption Review meetings
- Life story work
- Therapeutic work with children and/or their adoptive families.
- Independent Assessments as required or directed through the court i.e. contact, parenting capacity, attachment.
- Induction training for new panel members
- Special Guardianship assessments and/or support

A professional fee, currently of £72 per hour, is charged for these additional services.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

The adoption service is committed to:

- Offering a service which recognises the lifelong implications adoption.
- Targeted recruitment of potential adopters for the children known to be waiting for placement within the region and the Regional Adoption Agencies.
- Recruiting adopters who are able to demonstrate, through assessment, their suitability to meet the needs of children awaiting adoption.
- A child centred approach, which takes account of the views of children placed for adoption and birth children, and respects their rights.
- Providing high quality care in an alternative family setting.
- Paying careful attention to matching the skills of the adopters with the needs of the children.
- Providing a service which engages positively with local consortia 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.
- Recognising the importance of a child's racial, religious, cultural and linguistic needs and promoting these in placements.
- Consideration of the gender, sexuality, special needs and any disability of children, young people and adopters.

Caritas Care aims to provide placements with adopters 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 and personal potential.
- Enable children to grow up with their siblings.
- Protect children from neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- Encourage children to develop their own personal resources and strengths in preparation for independence.
- Safeguard a child's welfare, by ensuring that prospective adopters are rigorously assessed and subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (Police) checks, personal and statutory references and medicals.
- Promote a child'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:

- A service which values adopters through the provision of high quality, 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 status of adopters.
- A thorough programme of preparation and post approval training.
- Adopters Support group meetings.
- Annual Reviews of approved adopters awaiting placement.
- Extensive adoption support services.
- Access to Centre for Adoption Support (CfAS)
- Support to engage with Local Authorities to access the Adoption Support Fund.
- Therapeutic and psychological support.
- Support for children in nursery/schools/college.
- A comprehensive resource manual detailing 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 2011.
- Access to a complaints procedure.

THE STAFFING STRUCTURE

The Director of Children's Services strategically manages the adoption service of **Caritas Care**; day to day operational management responsibility is delegated to the Service Manager (CCP) and Practice Managers.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Caritas Care</u> Board of Trustees</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Senior Leadership Team</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chief Executive Officer Amanda Forshaw</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Director of Children's Services Susan Swarbrick</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Director of Finance and Disability Services Chris Briggs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Director of Operations and Community Services Dale Tomlinson</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Service Managers</u> Angela Chapman – Concurrent Planning Service Manager</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Practice Managers</u> Patricia Hurst - Adoption Kath Burton - Adoption Kate Knowles – Concurrent Planning</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Principal Social Workers</u> Louise Young – Panel Adviser - Preston</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Cumbria</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Senior Practitioners</u> Sandra Williams Barbara Hitchcock</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Manchester</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Senior Practitioners</u> Sylvia Whight – Concurrent Planning Alison Taylor Farrell Kay Baker Laura Gilligan Hannah Maalma</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Contact Co-ordinator</u> Lynda McAllister – Concurrent Planning</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lancashire <u>Senior Practitioners</u> Nicola Roberts Karen Evans Cheryl Brown Laura Hayes</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Adoption Support</u> <u>Senior Practitioners</u> Helen Armstrong Maria Lavelle Caroline Hoyle</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Recruitment Officers</u> Linda Wlodarczak Nancy Lee Steve Clarke</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Social Worker Assistants</u> Claire Lilly – Concurrent Planning Julia Seeds Caroline Cronshaw – Adoption Support</p>

The Chief Executive Officer has direct line management responsibility for the Director of Children’s Services, who is delegated line management responsibility for the Adoption Service/Practice Managers; who in turn hold line management responsibility for the social work practitioners. In the absence of the Director of Children’s Services, the Chief Executive Officer will deputise.

The staff members employed by the agency and adoption service are selected with care through an equal opportunities process, and in recognition of the guidance contained within the *Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People* document 2007 published by the DSCF, and are required to subscribe to the values and ethos of **Caritas Care**. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service - Police) checks are undertaken for all newly appointed staff and renewed at the required intervals for existing employees.

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 Social Work members of the Adoption Service are registered with Health and Care Professionals Council and 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 working patterns, regular structured supervision and annual

appraisal, a commitment to on going training, manageable workloads and a regard for 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.

THE ADOPTION PANEL

The Agency adoption panel is supported by clear policies and procedures, which meet the required Regulations and Legislation.

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 meets 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.
- Carry out a rigorous quality assurance function.
- 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 of Children’s Services wishes them to consider.
- Monitor activity and quality of practice of the Adoption Service.
- Provide a bi-annual report to the agency on the activity of the adoption panel.

Applications in which there is a disclosure of a specified offence through the DBS process, or a conviction which is deemed to pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults, are automatically considered unsuitable and will not therefore be presented to Panel for consideration.

Membership of the Adoption Panel Central List is coterminous with **Caritas Care** Fostering Panel. Members are subject to DBS checks and required to sign a ‘Statement of Confidentiality’. The Panel membership comprises people with complementary 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 Central List is as follows:

Chair	Steve Barsby	Former LA Adoption Manager/Independent member
Vice Chair- Independent Member	Julie Gorrie	Retired Health Visitor
Vice Chair – Social Worker	Alison Taylor Farrell	Senior Practitioner – Adoption

Legal Adviser	Angela Eaton	Solicitor
Independent Member	Dr Zuber Patel	Medical Adviser
Vice Chair -Social Worker	Karyn Brand	Independent member
Social Worker	Lucy Doughty	Senior Practitioner – Fostering
Social Worker	Bernie Galt	Senior Practitioner – Fostering
Social Worker	Kate Knowles	Practice Manager - Concurrent Planning
Social Worker	Barbara Hitchcock	Senior Practitioner - Adoption
Social Worker	Sandra Williams	Senior Practitioner - Adoption
Social Worker	Collette Perry	Senior Practitioner – Fostering
Independent Member	Ann Barrett	Adopted Adult / Former adoption Helpline counsellor and former Teacher in Prison Education
Independent Member	Peter Buckley	Member of the Board of Trustees, Adoptive Parent and retired Educational Psychologist.
Independent Member	Sandra Davies	Adoptive Parent and former Foster Carer
Independent Member	Philippa Davies	Adopted person, Former Looked After Child.
Independent Member	Andrew Hammond	Former Looked After Child
Independent Member	Barry Hunt	Ex Local Authority Social Worker
Independent Member	Elizabeth Ibeziako	Foster Carer
Independent Member	Sarah Ryder-Chippendale	Adoptive Parent
Independent Member	Christine Sutherland	Member of the Board of Trustees
Independent Member	Vincent Ryan	Adoptive Parent and former Foster carer (CCP)
Panel Adviser	Louise Young Susan Swarbrick Patricia Hurst	Principal Social Worker Director of Children’s Services Adoption Practice Manager
Agency Decision Maker	Amanda Forshaw	Chief Executive Officer

- 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 recommendations.
- Written notifications of decisions are issued to applicants and social workers.
- Statistical records are maintained for performance monitoring, service development and the annual report.

THE RECRUITMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The National Minimum Standards: Adoption 2011 requires 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 the Lancashire, Cumbria, Manchester, Yorkshire and Humber, Stoke and Staffordshire areas. We aim to recruit potential adopters using a variety of publicity materials, including our mobile adoption hub, website, live chat, social media, local media/press, newsletters, open/Information/meet the adopter events 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. The information available can be produced in other languages upon request.

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/Meet the Adopter Events on a monthly basis, at different venues across the Regions in which we work.
- Offering an initial interview with an experienced Adoption Practitioner or Manager.

Where a Registration of Interest in Adoption is accepted by **Caritas Care**, it will respond by confirming entry to Stage 1 of the process in the form of a written agreement by:

- Obtaining authorisation for and carrying out statutory references, DBS and Local Authority checks on all adults over 18, resident within the household.
- Obtaining written consent for a medical examination to be conducted using the medical report template produced by CoramBAAF.
- Requesting a minimum of three personal references and subsequently endorsing these through a telephone interview.
- With the consent of the applicants, seeking the views of former partners and adult children of applicants, where appropriate.

- Seeking employers' references particularly where either applicant has worked directly with children and/or vulnerable adults, with the consent of potential adopters.
- Seeking references from any organisation where either applicant has engaged in voluntary work with children and/or vulnerable adults.
- Verifying the identity of each applicant.
- Considering the necessity of undertaking statutory checks and references for any adult non-household member who may have regular contact with any child placed.
- Agreeing a programme of preparation for the potential adopters, including their attendance at Adoption Preparation Training and opportunities to meet with other adopters.
- Agreeing timescales for the completion of Stage 1- this would be expected to be within 8 weeks of commencement.
- Confirming progression to Stage 2 where and when appropriate.

Progression to Stage 2 will be confirmed in writing, outlining the actions to be undertaken in the form of a Stage 2 agreement including:

- Undertaking a thorough assessment of potential adopters and their ability to parent through adoption. A professionally qualified Social Work Practitioner will undertake the assessment.
- Meeting with the applicants 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 CoramBAAF Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR) upon completion of the assessment; this will be shared with the applicants (excluding confidential references) and they will have the opportunity to comment upon it. This ensures compliance with the appropriate Regulations.
- All applicants who are being assessed and prepared to become approved as adopters are required to undertake the Adoption Preparation Programme hosted by Caritas Care.
- Presenting the application to the Agency Adoption Panel either upon completion of the assessment using the PAR or as a brief report, if the agency intends to terminate the assessment or does not intend to recommend approval.
- Applicants are provided with the opportunity to attend Panel when their application is being considered and they will be supported in this process by their Social Worker. They will be informed of the Panel recommendation within 24 hours
- The Agency Decision Maker (The Chief Executive or Director of Children's Services) subsequently considers the recommendation from the panel, after which, the applicants are informed verbally (within 2 working days) and in writing (within five working days) of the outcome.
- The agency decision will be taken within 4 months (16 weeks) of the commencement of stage 2.

- If an applicant is not recommended as suitable to adopt, the various options available to them are explained and confirmed in writing. (either representation to the Agency or the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)).
- The agency has two Adoption Panels which meet monthly.
- Assessments will be carried out within the timescales set out in Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013. Where this is not possible due to particular circumstances, an explanation for this will be included in the PAR (or Second Officer's Report if completed) and presented to the Adoption Panel. Assessments are undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced Social Work practitioners.

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 being provided for them. We believe that preparation and training plays an important part in the development of a prospective adopter's understanding of the reality of adoption, and needs of the children waiting. It begins with training to become an adopter via the preparation training programme and continues following their approval and matching; both through specific training events and involvement in the Adopters Support Group.

Training provided aims to enable adopters to:

- Understand the lifelong implications and impact of adoption
- Deliver the best possible care for children.
- Understand the importance of separation and loss.
- Understand the impact and effects of abuse, trauma and lack of attachment upon children.
- Understand the importance of identity.
- Fully explain the adoption process.
- Understand the effects of discrimination and how this impacts upon the children in their care.
- Competently deliver safe care for children in placement and understand the importance of keeping children safe.
- Develop a range of skills and knowledge in respect of looking after children as their needs change.
- Understand their own needs and feelings and how these may be affected or impacted upon by children in their care.
- Acknowledge and meet their personal 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.

- Understanding Attachment.
- The impact of trauma and brain development.
- Child development.
- Identity.
- Differing perspectives of the adoption 'triangle'.
- Bridging a child into the new/adoptive family.
- The Joy of parenting.
- Re-parenting the child.
- Supporting learning and education.
- Understanding behaviours and keeping children safe.
- Explaining adoption – Life Story Work.
- Contact issues: direct/indirect.
- Meeting experienced adopters for a question and answer forum.
- Strengthening families through play.

Post approval training for adopters includes:

- Bespoke preparation for placement.
- Support network training.
- Contact with birth family - Adopted adults talking about their experiences of contact in adoption.
- Therapeutic parenting.
- Re-parenting.
- Nurtured Heart – positive parenting programmes.
- 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.
- Promoting Education and achievement
- Using libraries – helping children enjoy reading.
- Child psychiatry.
- Facing up to Facebook/Social Media.
- Growing up adopted.
- E:safety.

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. On going post approval training is identified in response to need.

MATCHING

Approved adopters are supported and advised by the Social Worker in the process of identifying the child or children to join their family. The completed PAR serves as a

matching tool for Social Workers when considering how adopters can meet the needs of children waiting.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to be pro-active in terms of matching and register their details with Linkmaker, Be My Parent and Adoption UK - Children who Wait websites. They are also supported in attending Activity Days and Exchange Events hosted by Local Authorities, regionally and nationally. **Caritas Care** Social Workers also attend the RAA family finding meetings, where the profiles of adopters and children waiting are exchanged.

Social Workers are involved in the process of linking and matching and support approved adopters by providing an objective overview and opinion regarding the suitability of a proposed link. This objectivity is informed by their knowledge and experience of the adopters and expertise in placing children for adoption.

The matching process is extensive and the agency ensures that prospective adopters have access to all the information available in respect of a child including health, development and birth history. This enables them to make informed decisions, with the support of their Social Worker about the suitability of a potential match.

The support available to a placement, from both agencies, will also be considered as part of this process and confirmed in writing. The prospective adopters will be supported and encouraged to contribute to the Adoption Placement Report.

We would aim to involve a child as much as possible, dependent upon their age and understanding, with the support of their Social Worker, in the decision making regarding a potential placement. We recognise that this is not always appropriate or possible and will be sensitive to the needs of the child in this respect.

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 about what can go wrong in adoption, and lead to disruptions. We recognise from this the 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

- Provide continuity, from assessment, through approval to placement, and beyond.
- Assist adopters in the careful consideration of potential placements and provide relevant and extensive information to facilitate this process.
- Plan the introduction and placement of children, alongside adopters and the responsible authority.
- 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, physical, educational and cultural needs.
- Promote early engagement with our Adoption Support service.
- Assist in the formulation of an appropriate Adoption Support Plan.
- Assist and enable adopters to develop effective parenting techniques, problem solving and behaviour management strategies.
- Liaise with social workers and other professionals as appropriate.
- Advise on what other support services may be available including a trauma therapist, clinical psychologist, teachers, support workers and the agency medical and legal advisors.
- Keep a written record of all developments within the placement.
- Visit regularly, not less than the minimum statutory requirements.
- Maintain regular telephone contact.
- Maintain an office duty system to ensure an immediate professional response if required.
- 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 the agency contact telephone number and contact number for their allocated social worker.
- Review approval status annually up to the point of linking/placement.
- Ensure that adopters are kept informed of developments within the field of adoption, adoption support and in the Agency.
- 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 addressed immediately and shared with the relevant authorities.

ADOPTION REVIEWS

Caritas Care will conduct a review of 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 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 linking considered following approval, and reasons why they did not proceed.
- Recommendations for the future.

Only the first annual review will be presented to **Caritas Care** Adoption Panel for their consideration and subsequent recommendation; unless there are significant changes in circumstances when a further review will be presented.

Copies of the review report will be shared with placing authorities and will be available alongside the PAR to authorities considering placements and their Panels.

TERMINATION OF APPROVAL

Following review, if **Caritas Care** no longer feels satisfied that an adopter is suitable to adopt and provide care for children, a recommendation that their approved status be terminated will be presented to the Adoption Panel, which will include the reasons for that recommendation.

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 Practice Manager/ Service 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.

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, to make representation including complaint about any aspect of the service. This procedure requires 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 member being 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 information 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 included within the information pack, and is also referenced during the Home Study.
- Complaints will be recorded and retained on file, including the outcome and action taken.
- 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 Chief Executive Officer or the Trustees.
- 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
 Piccadilly Gate
 Store St
 Manchester
 M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 1231231
 E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE ADOPTION SERVICE:
1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 – none

NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTION ENQUIRIES INITIATED IN RELATION TO CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT
1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 – two

Number of approved adopters awaiting placement between 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019	Number of children placed 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019
28	28

ADOPTION SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Caritas Care is committed to providing a post adoption service to children and adoptive parents. Adoption support will be provided by dedicated adoption support social workers. The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 also places a duty on Local Authorities to provide post adoption services for all parties. The placing authority is responsible for financing post adoption services for up to 3 years after the making of an adoption order. 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.

Adoption support is '**assistance or support required for the purpose of ensuring the continuance of the relationship between an adoptive child and their adoptive parents**'. **Caritas Care** is committed to providing an adoption support service that all parties can confidently rely upon. 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 upon request.

Intervention may involve a 'one-off' contact or a programme of agreed work with the child or family. Where it is deemed appropriate to access other services, **Caritas Care** will direct and where appropriate, liaise with and advocate on behalf of the child or family to the relevant services. The agency is also able to request an assessment on behalf of the adoptive family by the relevant Local Authority under the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

All **Caritas Care** adoptive parents and their children will have access to on-going 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 2005. **Caritas Care** will offer advice on how to access this support and the financial support which may be available via the Adoption Support Fund.

SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE AT CARITAS CARE

- Dedicated team of adoption social workers to provide emotional, practical support and signposting to other relevant services, both pre and post placement/adoption
- Training for Adopter's Support Network
- Access to specialist Trauma Therapist for adoptive parents and/or children either individually or via a surgery.
- Access to Clinical Psychologist
- Training and advice for Schools
- Liaison with other associated professionals: eg Health
- Co-working in partnership with Local Authority Social Workers, pre and post placement/adoption
- Adoption Support, Advice and Consultation events.
- Life Story Work
- Assistance in completing and updating Life Story Books
- Support in participating with Information Exchange ('Letter-box')
- Skills Bank - linking adoptive families together via a buddy system
- Access to training and support delivered by a dedicated team of social workers highly experienced in adoption support.
- Comprehensive Information Sheets covering a range of topics including attachment and parenting the hurting child

- Nurtured Heart - therapeutic re-parenting and associated workshops
- A letter to all adoptive parents at the time of the making of an Adoption Order, outlining Adoption Support Services available
- Adopters Support Groups and social events for children.
- 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
- Children's groups, seasonal and other social events
- Access to Agency Medical Advisor
- Access to Agency Legal Advisor
- Access to Birth Records.
- Counselling and support in preparation for tracing, intermediary services and reunion.
- Opportunities for contact with other adoptive families through social events

Caritas Care is committed to providing an accessible pre and post adoption service that all parties can confidently rely upon. We acknowledge that adoption is a life-long process, and therefore the service aims to evolve and develop in response to emerging needs.

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, we will seek out the nearest support group or service, where possible.

This Agency offers an 'open door' policy to post-placement/adoption support that is available at any time for parents and children. We also provide training to a family's support network and school staff on issues such as attachment and managing challenging behaviours. Our methods are based on therapeutic re-parenting. This helps all close to the child to develop practical strategies in order to respond similarly and constructively to individual need.

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, we 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 other organisations.

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 post adoption, where their child was placed by a Local Authority.

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 that need.

Intervention by **Caritas Care** may involve a 'one-off' contact or a programme of agreed work with the child and/or family. Referrals may relate to a child's need to update Life Story Books, safeguarding, 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 by the relevant local authority under the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.

Caritas Care will support families to approach Local Authorities in relation to accessing the Adoption Support Fund as required.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SERVICES

The agency has a monitoring and evaluation policy.

The quality and success of our service delivery is monitored and measured by:

- Monitoring the characteristics and number of prospective adopters recruited and approved.
- Reviewing our recruitment policy and amending in line with developing trends in adoption.
- Monitoring timescales of the adoption process.
- Obtaining written feedback about the panel process from adopters and Social Workers.
- The completion of the Panel Chairs report to the agency providing feedback on the quality of the work undertaken and timescales.
- The numbers of families matched with children each year.
- The length of time our adopters wait for placements.

- Monitoring the referrals of children awaiting adoption locally and nationally.
- Maintaining an overview of the needs of children matched with our approved families.
- Monitoring the numbers of and reasons for complaints.
- Monitoring the timescales from placement to adoption.
- Monitoring the numbers of adoption orders each year.
- Monitoring the numbers and reasons for placement disruptions
- Obtaining feedback from adopters throughout the process of engagement with the agency and children where appropriate so to do.
- Obtaining feedback following training and support events.
- Obtaining feedback from other agencies.
- Obtaining feedback following the delivery of support.
- Promoting the involvement of service users and staff members in service development.
- Quarterly Strategic monitoring of the service presented in a Balanced Scorecard (BSC) performance management system for the service.
- Quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees regarding service delivery.
- Monthly supervision and appraisal of staff.
- File audits.
- The annual review of the service under the BSC .
- Ofsted inspections.

Appendix 1 – List of Staff Members and Qualifications

Name	Position	Qualifications	Commenced employment with Caritas Care
Amanda Forshaw	Chief Executive Officer	BA CQSW DASS Certificate in Management	October 2003 October 2014 as CEO.
Susan Swarbrick	Director of Children's Services	Dip SW Approved Practice Teachers Award ILM4 Management	August 1998
Kath Burton	Adoption Practice Manager	CQSW	August 2014
Louise Young	Principal Social Worker	Dip SW BA MA	May 2003
Patricia Hurst	Adoption Practice Manager	CQSW BA Dip Mh, PQ Childcare Award	November 2008
Angela Chapman	Concurrent Planning Service Manager		August 2018
Kay Baker	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW BSc MA	November 2008
Sylvia Whight	Senior Practitioner	CQSW BA PQ1	April 2010
Laura Gilligan	Senior Practitioner	MA Social Work	October 2012
Hannah Maalma	Senior Practitioner		April 2019
Helen Armstrong	Senior Practitioner	CQSW Practice Teaching Award	May 2015
Maria Lavelle	Senior Practitioner	CQSW	March 2013
Karen Evans	Senior Practitioner	BA (Hons) degree in SW Post Qualifying Consolidation Module	June 2015
Cheryl Brown	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW	April 2013
Barbara Hitchcock	Senior Practitioner	CQSW	February 2013
Laura Hayes	Senior Practitioner		May 2019
Nicola Roberts	Senior Practitioner	BA SW PQ1	May 2014
Caroline Hoyle	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW	June 2015

Sandra Williams	Senior Practitioner	BA CQSW	June 2014
Alison Taylor Farrell	Senior Practitioner	MA SW PG DIP SW	July 2014
Lynda McAllister	Contact Co-ordinator	NNEB	June 2014
Caroline Cronshaw	Social Work assistant – Adoption Support	BTEC Diploma Nursery Nursing BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology	March 2015
Kate Knowles	Practice Manager – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW MA SW PQ	Concurrent Planning Service from April 2014
Julia Seeds	Social Work Assistant	BA (Hons) English & French	November 2016
Claire Lilly	Social Work Assistant – Concurrent Planning	Educated to A Level standard	December 2016
Steve Clarke	Recruitment Officer	BA (Hons) in Applied Social Sciences A Level – Psychology & Sociology	November 2014
Linda Wlodarczak	Recruitment Officer	GCE CSE	May 2013
Nancy Lee	Recruitment Officer		July 2014

Staff employed by Adoption Matters in the Concurrent Planning Service.

Aileen Somerset	Senior Social Work Practitioner – Concurrent Planning Service	MA Econ (CQSW) PQ1	seconded to CCP service – Feb 2015
Julie Hogan	Practice Manager – Concurrent Planning Service	BA (hons) Applied Social Studies & DipSW PQ1 ACCA	seconded to CCP service - Jan 2015
Helen Cheetham	Social Worker Concurrent Planning Service	MA SW	March 2017

Charlotte Davies	Social Work Assistant	EDL level 3 Business Administration Advanced level apprenticeship in Business and Administration. Awareness of child abuse and neglect	November 2017
John McEvoy	Senior Social Worker – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW	February 2018
Carmel Murphy	Senior Social Worker – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW	February 2018
Katie Boniface	Social Worker – Concurrent Planning	Dip SW	February 2018