



**Adoption  
Central  
England**

# Statement of Purpose



Reviewed September 2021

# Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. ACE Aims and Objectives..... - ACE and DDP	4
3. Organisational Structure and Staffing .....	6
4. ACE Procedures and Processes.....	9
5. Matching a child with prospective adopters .....	13
6. Adoption Support .....	14
7. Birth Records Counselling and Intermediary Services .....	16
8. Non-agency Adoption .....	17
9. Independent Adoption Support to Birth Families .....	17
10. Tracking, Reporting and Service Improvement.....	18
11. Quality Assurance Processes.....	18
12. Contact Us.....	19
13. Signatories to the Statement of Purpose .....	20
Appendix 1 Adopter Charter .....	21
Appendix 2 Therapeutic Team Terms of Reference.....	23
Appendix 3 Performance Reporting .....	26

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Adoption Central England (ACE) is a local authority shared service that is the regional adoption agency for Coventry City Council, Herefordshire Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council and Worcestershire Children First.
- 1.2 This **Statement of Purpose** is a public document for any person interested in adoption in either a professional or personal capacity. It outlines ACE philosophy and principles, on how ACE delivers a comprehensive adoption service in the region on behalf of and in partnership with the local authorities. This Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the requirements of the Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2014 - Standard 18.
- The adoption agency and adoption support agency has a clear Statement of Purpose which is available to and understood by staff, volunteers, children, birth parents and guardians, prospective adopters and adopters, and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance.
  - The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are outcome focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.
  - The Statement of Purpose is reviewed at least annually.
  - The agency's policies, procedures and any written guidance to staff and volunteers accurately reflect the Statement of Purpose.
  - Service users and staff are clear about the aims and objectives of the adoption agency/adoption support agency, and what services and facilities it provides. The adoption agency/adoption support agency meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose.
- 1.3 ACE was launched on 1 February 2018 following legislation arising from four Department for Education (DfE) policy papers on adoption. The Regionalising Adoption paper published in June 2015 spelt out the government's expectations for all local authorities to be part of a regional adoption agency and 'Adoption: A vision for change' (April 2016) committed to deliver a radical, whole system redesign by regionalising adoption services by 2020.
- 1.4 The governance and arrangements for ACE are underpinned by a **Partnership and Hosting Agreement** and **Service Specification**. The service is hosted by Warwickshire County Council and the work of the regional adoption agency is overseen by the Executive Board. Governance and accountability are further enhanced through

the **ACE and Local Authority Managers Group**, **ACE and VAA Partnership Group** and the **Adopted Young Person's Group**.

- 1.5 This review recognises that Adoption and Children Coronavirus Regulations and associated guidance will cease to be in effect from 30 September 2021 and that the permitted flexibilities in the operation of adoption services will no longer exist.

**1.6 ACE and DDP**

The ACE Executive Board supported the recommendation that ACE should become a service underpinned by Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP). This is because ACE recognises that children who are placed for adoption have experienced developmental trauma within their original family, which has long-lasting effects. Children placed for adoption may not have learnt how to feel safe in relationships. Others may fear trusting an adult again. DDP is an approach that helps families develop healthy patterns of relating and communicating so all feel safe and connected and helps children overcome trauma. ACE services are delivered by staff who are trained in using a DDP informed approach. The services offered to families throughout their adoption journey with ACE draw on DDP principles aimed at helping adoptive parents understand, accept and make sense of the strategies that children have developed to deal with the impact of their trauma. This is the foundation for building attachment security, placement stability and positive long-term outcomes for adopted children.

- 1.7 To ensure that relationships and emotional connection are at the heart of ACE services and all aspects of the organisation are informed by DDP principles.

- 1.8 In January 2021 ACE received certification as a DDP service. ACE continues to commission support from a DDP Consultant who work alongside the staff in various ways offering clinical supervision and support to all ACE staff members as their DDP skills and knowledge are embedded into practice. The work of embedding DDP within ACE is ongoing as there is a re-certification within 4 years that ensures that high standards of DDP practice are maintained.

**2. ACE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 To meet the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014, the overarching aim of ACE is as follows:

**ACE provides an innovative and relationship focussed service for children, adoptive families and others affected by adoption. This is by offering lifelong**

**support based on up to date practices and interventions and  
supported by modern technology.**

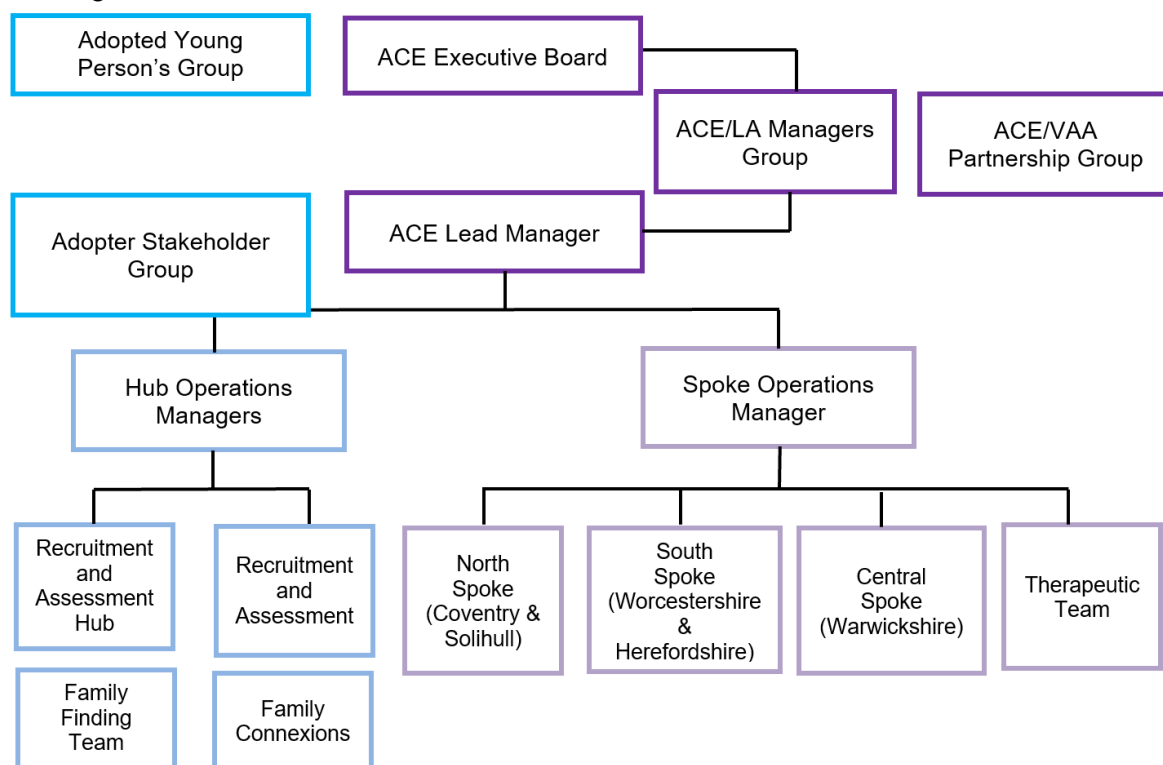
- 2.2 ACE also works in partnership with local authorities and other services to achieve the following objectives and outcomes:
- To ensure that a wider pool of prospective adopters is ready to meet children's need to be loved, nurtured, protected and understood,
  - To ensure that adopters understand, accept and can meet children's needs and provide a secure relationship within which they can thrive,
  - To increase the levels of adoption for children waiting to be adopted,
  - To reduce the length of time those children wait to be adopted,
  - To improve/ensure attachment and trauma informed post adoption support services to adoptive families.
- 2.3 Through the recruitment and assessment process, ACE ensures adopters are prepared to meet the needs of children into the long term. From the outset, ACE will help prospective adopters consider and develop their self-care, self-regulation and reflective skills. Early on, prospective adopters are introduced to attachment and developmental trauma and key DDP principles and ACE staff will model the DDP attitude of PACE. PACE is an acronym (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) that conveys the importance of parents having a playful connection with their child, accepting the child's inner world, being curious about the meaning of underlying behaviour, and empathically connecting with the child's emotional state. PACE is at the heart of therapeutic re-parenting which ACE promotes.
- 2.4. The provision of adoption support services is based on accurate and up-to-date assessment of need, drawing upon other professional expertise as necessary and guided by an understanding of developmental trauma, attachment, intersubjectivity and neurobiology theories. The aim is to ensure that adoptive families receive the help they need when they need it and to offer support in ways that focus on enhancing family relationships. To achieve this, all ACE workers are encouraged to think about the timing and context for connecting and for offering problem-solving, solutions and advice.
- 2.5 ACE also appreciates the important role of birth parents and works with them so that they may support their child's identity development and understanding of their life story. It is hoped that through the Family Connexions intervention they will be less likely to

have children removed from their care in future and will experience improved health and wellbeing through participating in the adoption process. Further it is recognised that all forms of contact are important and ACE works to facilitate effective contact arrangements providing a direct service where possible and in line with the requirements of the service specification.

- 2.6 As an organisation ACE aims to ensure a culture of continuous challenge, innovation and improvement using research, academic input and stakeholder views and experiences. The organisational culture is geared towards building staff's capacity for regulation and reflection, maintaining openness with families, each other and with partner agencies. This is consistent with the principles of DDP.
- 2.7 ACE has performance and quality assurance systems in place and aims to be a well-respected brand and centre of excellence for adoption practice. Further ACE abides by equal opportunities legislation and policies and will provide services irrespective of race, colour, religion, language, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age. An **Equality Impact Assessment** is reviewed annually.

### 3. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

- 3.1 The organisational structure is summarised below:



3.2 There are 93 people in ACE who are employed as follows:

Role	No. of people	FTE positions
Managerial posts (incl. Business Support Manager)	11	10.42 FTE
Hub social workers	21	17.5 FTE
Spoke social workers	26	19.11 FTE
Family Connexions – Birth Families Support Service	5	3.33
Family Finding Team	3	2.81
Therapeutic Team	4	2.91
Family support workers	4	3.43
Adoption Panel Advisers	2	1.5
Business Support Team incl. data analyst, ASF Finance Officer, adoption panel administration, deputy team administrators and letterbox coordinators	17	12.19
<b>Totals</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>73.91</b>

Social workers are based in the Hub or Spokes. The Hub workers are primarily based in Warwick and Worcester/Hereford and the Spokes are based in three local authority areas covering the south, central and north areas of the region.

All social work staff have:

- A professional social work qualification e.g. CQSW, Dip. in Social Work,
- Full Disclosure and Barring Service checks,
- Professional Registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

In line with the DDP certification processes over 90% of staff in ACE have completed DDP level 1 training with a further 23% of social workers progressing to DDP level 2. It is intended that the service will support a smaller number of staff to become certified DDP practitioners to ensure the sustainability of this model in ACE.

3.3 The lead manager and operations managers have or are in the process of obtaining recognised management qualifications.

3.4 The Hub is concerned with the recruitment, preparation, assessment and matching of

children with adoptive parents, providing ongoing support to adoptive families for 12 months after the adoption order is granted. There is a dedicated team of family finders aligned to the Hub and Family Connexions - the birth parent service is managed through the Hub arrangements also. The Hub operations managers can provide advice to the local authority agency decision makers who are responsible for making the adoption decision for the child. This serves as a quality assurance role and allows ACE to have early knowledge of children with proposed adoption plans.

3.5 The adoption panels, which have responsibility to make recommendations to the agencies on (i) whether applicants are suitable to adopt, (ii) whether a child should be matched with prospective adopters, and (iii) whether a relinquished child should be placed for adoption, are coordinated through ACE. These are online with two panels arranged each week. The panel members have ongoing online training opportunities and three opportunities a year to meet together as a group.

3.6 The Spokes are primarily concerned with supporting adoptive families, which include direct intervention, undertaking assessment of need and commissioning and processing applications through the Adoption Support Fund. They are also responsible for non-agency (step-parent) adoption work to an agreed quota and birth records counselling for adopted adults. The Therapeutic Team is a regional service providing therapeutic interventions, partly funded through the Adoption Support Fund on a group or individual child/family basis. The work of the Therapeutic Team is particularly attuned to the principles of DDP through the range of training and interventions offered.



3.7 In line with the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 adoption reports are completed by social workers with 3 years post qualifying experience in childcare social work, including direct experience of adoption work.

3.8 Where there is a local authority social worker involved an ACE social worker may be assigned to complete certain pieces of work with the child and/or adoptive family.

3.9 Other specialist roles include the Family Support Workers - Letterbox Scheme who are aligned with the Family Connexions Service.

3.10 Work is supported through a business management structure consisting of the Business Support Manager, 2 part time Deputy Team Administrators and a business



support team based across the Hub and Spokes. There is a dedicated finance officer who processes Adoption Support Fund payments. The part-time data analyst works in partnership with the local authorities and is responsible for a range of tasks including the quarterly ACE performance report and statutory data returns for ACE. The Contracts Manager supports the delivery of the Framework Agreement for Therapeutic Providers.

- 3.11 All staff are recruited to ACE through the Warwickshire County Council equal opportunities and fair recruitment process. There is an induction process in place, and the staff group training analysis informs the **Workforce Development Plan** incorporating the requirement for all staff to have DDP awareness and knowledge. All staff receive regular supervision, sign a supervision agreement and contribute to an annual appraisal process. All staff must complete Information Governance training and sign the confidentiality agreement. Additionally, social workers applying principles of DPP and Theraplay in their practice receive clinical supervision, and there is a commitment to ensuring that internal arrangements support staff in reflective practice and in embedding DDP into their work.

#### **4. ACE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES**

- 4.1 Approaches to working with prospective and approved adoptive families are underpinned by an **Adopter Charter** that outlines the ACE commitment to providing a professional, timely and relationship focused service (Appendix 1).
- 4.2 All enquiries, contacts or referrals to ACE, either by telephone or the ACE website enter through the Hub where business support staff will establish the nature of the contact and take basic personal information which is entered or checked on the electronic record system called Mosaic. As the business support staff are often a first point of contact into ACE, they try to ensure all callers are left feeling understood and supported from the outset. Where enquirers only request information, this is logged and sent to them directly within 3 working days. For more detailed discussion the referrer is transferred to either the Hub or Spoke duty social worker depending on the nature of the enquiry.
- 4.3 **Services to Prospective Adopters**
- Prospective adopters are prepared for adoption through a robust and thorough process in line with regulatory requirements and statutory guidance. These ensure safety and security for a child to be placed. Registrations of Interest to adopt are accepted in line with requirements and eligibility criteria. ACE welcomes interest in adoption from all

sections of the community irrespective of race, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or religious persuasion and expresses this commitment through its published diversity statement:

***As an organisation ACE will be inclusive, respecting diversity of individual and family experiences. We will be culturally sensitive and will take time to listen and understand individual and family needs so that we can respond appropriately and sensitively.***

4.4 Recruitment priorities are agreed annually and detailed in the **ACE Adoption Recruitment Sufficiency Strategy**. The recruitment, information and preparation processes serve to raise awareness of adoption generally and specifically the needs of children currently waiting for placement. Throughout these processes ACE is proactive in introducing models of attachment theory, intersubjectivity and how - through a DDP parenting ethos and PACE principles - they can establish strong emotional bonds with their adopted children forming the basis for secure attachments in future.

#### 4.5 **Enquiries and first contact**

Enquirers at the initial stage can also request a telephone discussion with an adoption social worker where the discussion may cover domestic and intercountry adoption (where applicable), the implications of adoption, early permanence and fostering for adoption, the circumstances of children waiting for placement and the preparation, application and assessment process. Enquirers interested in intercountry adoption will be referred to the Intercountry Adoption Centre – a service commissioned by ACE that offers a specialist service in this area of adoption practice.

#### 4.6 **Information meetings**

**Adoption Information Meetings** are held regularly online and provide enquirers with:

- Information about the ACE Adoption Service – pre and post adoption including details of the range of adoption support services,
- Adoption activity and the number and needs of children who require adoption,
- The process for adoption approval for both adopters and children. This includes children's experiences of trauma, loss and abuse and how they impact upon their development and how children need to be parented therapeutically as a consequence,
- Early permanence and fostering for adoption arrangements.

#### 4.7 **Stage 1 pre-assessment process and preparation groups**

Following receipt of the Information Meeting material, enquirers send through a **Registration of Interest Form**, which is followed by a home visit within 5 working days which may be online. The decision is made by the Hub Manager to either:

- Accept an application,
- Defer an application to adopt,
- Undertake early checks and references,
- Decline an application where enquirers are not suitable.

4.8 Applicants are invited to attend the **Adoption Preparation Course** consisting of 6 core modules that may be facilitated online or face to face. Applicants are required to complete all sessions which includes a module on adoption of siblings. Applicants who are seeking to adopt for a subsequent time will not usually be required to attend the preparation course if this has been completed within the previous 5 years. This is unless there has been a significant change in the content of the material during this period or where it would be beneficial to the adopters to attend a refresher course.

4.9 All applicants must be able to demonstrate that they fully appreciate the significance of adoption and the long-term impact that it will have on the child, themselves and their extended network of family and friends. The groups cover in more depth issues of attachment, the neurological impact and how PACE and DDP informed therapeutic parenting can assist them in remaining available and sensitive to a child's needs. A 'PACE-ful' attitude and approach is modelled during the course.



4.10 The stage 1 process also involves ACE undertaking all necessary reference and DBS checks including an adopter medical which is considered by the adoption agency medical advisor. Once these have been received and are satisfactory, the applicants can decide to proceed to stage 2 of the adoption assessment process or request a break for up to 6 months without needing to start the process again.

#### 4.11 **Stage 2 - Assessment process**

The **Adopter Assessment Report (AAR)** is completed. Social workers approach the assessment with an attitude of PACE with the aim of facilitating openness, discovery and a deeper understanding of the prospective adopter's experience. At the outset of the home study process an **Assessment Agreement** will be signed and the service aims to complete the assessment within 4 months of the agency accepting the adoption

application. A decision is also made at this point whether it would be helpful to the applicants to be linked with an **Adopter Buddy** – a specific service to support adopters through the early stage of their adoption journey up until they are matched with a child. The assessment will include 6 personal references (for couples) in addition to former partners and children as appropriate, and in all cases a reference from the current employer/s is obtained. Where applicants have previously worked with children or vulnerable people references are also sought. Applicants can read, comment upon and sign the completed assessment report after it has been approved by an adoption manager.

4.12 Prospective adopters are invited to attend the **ACE Adoption Panel** when their application is being considered. Once the ACE decision maker has considered the Adoption Panel recommendation, applicants are informed of this within 5 days. Where the decision is to defer or not to approve as suitable to adopt, the prospective adopters are advised and notified in writing of their right to make representation, including the Independent Review Mechanism.

4.13 Approved adopters are reviewed annually. In circumstances where an adopter has not been matched within 2 years the review is considered by the ACE Adoption Panel. Where three years have elapsed a re-assessment report is required (including statutory reference checks) which will consider whether the applicants are still suitable to adopt.

4.14 **Post approval**

Following approval adopters will receive a comprehensive **Post Approval Information Pack**. Training events are promoted which are delivered across the ACE region. Post placement the **Therapeutic and Sensory Based Parenting** is available that covers DDP informed parenting techniques and understanding the meaning of behaviour in more detail. The key message of the training is that addressing problems with behaviour is more effectively done when adoptive parents have understood the child more and can experience some empathy for the child. Further, where adopters have attended the training, they are invited to join the follow up support group and can request consultation with the clinical psychologist commissioned by ACE to support adoptive placements.

4.15 Adopters will also receive the **Adoption Newsletter** and are invited to join the **Adopter Stakeholder Group**.

4.16 The minimum visiting frequency by the adoption social worker is 3 monthly and the

adoption social worker remains involved with the adoptive family for 12 months following the granting of the adoption order. The independent reviewing officer who reviews the child's adoption placement up until the adoption order is made can specify whether a future review is required in respect of contact or adoption support.

## **5. MATCHING A CHILD WITH PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS**

- 5.1 Approved adopters will have their approval details changed on Mosaic. Their matching considerations and potential placements are considered at the monthly **Matching and Tracking Meeting**. Their details, with consent, are also entered onto **Link Maker** (adopter-led national matching database) thereby extending the range of potential placements for them, although first consideration will be given to agencies who are part of the **Midlands Together Collaboration**.
- 5.2 The adoption social worker works proactively and cooperatively with approved adoptive parents to identify the most suitable child/ren to be placed with them, ensuring that they have full understanding of the child's current and potential future needs. The proposed match is then presented to the Adoption Panel using the **Adoption Placement Report** and **Adoption Placement Plan** including **Contact Plan**. The documentation must be signed by the prospective adopters. The latter must detail the support needs of the adopters and child to be placed including DDP informed support and intervention or training that will promote connection and ultimately the child's emotional and behavioural development.
- 5.3 Following Adoption Panel a team manager in ACE will chair the **Introductions Planning Meeting**. The meeting will involve the foster carers of the child, the prospective adopters and the relevant social workers. The meeting is governed by the **'Practice Guidance – Supporting transitions to an adoptive family'** that will ensure that the adopters have all the available information on the child, draw up a timetable for contact and introductions that will be appropriate for the child, and will also clarify the support available and required by the family. It will also confirm the visiting arrangements to the family up until the first review within 28 days of the child being placed.
- 5.4 At the review meeting prior to the granting of the adoption order, the Adoption Placement Plan is reviewed and amended to reflect ongoing support required.
- 5.5 The process is different when an **Early Permanence – Fostering for Adoption** placement is made where the placement might happen over a shorter time period

where the child's local authority grants the adoptive parents temporary approval as foster carers. Fostering allowances are received for this period up until the point that the child is placed under the adoption regulations following the adoption match being presented to the Adoption Panel, once the local authority has gained authority to place for adoption by the courts by virtue of a placement order.

## 6. ADOPTION SUPPORT

6.1 ACE provides the following services as standard provision for adoptive families:

- Post approval allocation for social worker services,
- Placement matching and support,
- Support for 12 months post order with a minimum of quarterly contact,
- Support through the Spokes based on a tiered approach according to need,
- Support Groups,
- Quarterly Newsletter to adopters,
- Training for adoptive parents,
- Organisation of events to enable adopted children to meet,
- Letterbox Information Exchange Scheme and other services associated with post adoption contact,
- Space 2 Talk – support for adopters from trained adopter volunteers,
- Consultation with ACE Clinical Psychology Service,
- Adopted Young Person's Group,
- Information and features to Facebook followers.



6.2 The following training courses are actively promoted, which may also be funded through the Adoption Support Fund:

- **Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)** is an approach for parents experiencing serious difficulties such as child to parent violence or other safeguarding concerns including children putting themselves at risk of harm and is a way for parents to build or rebuild a strong connected relationship with their child/ren.
- **Therapeutic and Sensory Based Parenting** – Children who have experienced trauma respond less well to traditional behavioural management and benefit more from regulatory and relationship-based parenting. This training focuses on

incorporating ways of parenting that help children to develop pro-social behaviours and to find safe ways to express strong emotions. This approach is described as 'connection before correction' (Golding & Hughes, 2012).

- **Theraplay** - Uses play activities to create an active, emotional connection between the child and parent, resulting in a changed view of the self as worthy and lovable and of relationships as positive and rewarding.
- **P-CAP** – Parent to child attachment play programme.

Various online You Tube videos are also available of aspects of adoption including PACE and educational matters.

6.3 Subsequent requests for an **Assessment of Need for Adoption Support Service** are referred to an ACE Spoke (North, Central or South) where:

- Advice and information are provided on support services,
- Telephone counselling or office appointment is offered,
- Assessments of need for adoption support are started within 5 working days of the referral.

6.4 Where the assessment concludes that there is a need for ongoing services arrangements will be made for these to be provided through:

- The allocation of an adoption social worker to complete specific work with the child/family,
- An application to the **Adoption Support Fund** for specified therapeutic interventions that can be provided through the ACE Therapeutic Team or commissioned separately. The terms of reference of the ACE Therapeutic Team are attached (Appendix 2).

6.5 Where the presenting situation is complex the adoption manager may determine that a referral to the local authority Children's Services is necessary. In these circumstances the services work together with the adoption social worker providing support to the adoptive parent/s.

6.6 All contact with adoptive families is sensitive to their needs and is conducted in a PACE-ful manner. This can involve 'holding' the family and not rushing to solutions but is an approach that supports adoptive parents to reconnect with their child's experiences and develop their understanding, skills and confidence to parent in a therapeutic manner. Where uninitiated contact has occurred between the adopted child



and their birth family this may be facilitated through the **ACE Family Group Conference** process.

6.7 All financial support to adoptive placements is the responsibility of the child's placing local authority. Examples of these costs include:

- Regular payments such as the payment of an adoption allowance agreed at the point of placement matching,
- Transitional payments to former foster carers who adopt,
- Top up costs for therapeutic services,
- Supplementary payments to prospective adopters to cover exceptional or unforeseen circumstances,
- Costs associated with direct face to face contact,
- Settling in payments including essential equipment, travel and accommodation and short term child-care costs,
- Grants or loans for property costs/adaptations or larger vehicles.

Since April 2021, ACE has introduced a specific financial support package for sibling groups of three or more children which is aimed at encouraging more prospective adopters to consider adopting sibling groups. It also provides a financial buffer for the family who will be required to make living adjustments particularly following the placement of the children.

## **7. BIRTH RECORDS COUNSELLING AND INTERMEDIARY SERVICES**

7.1 Adopted adults can apply to ACE for birth records counselling. Where they do not know their birth name, they first approach the General Registrar's Office (GRO) for the information to apply for their birth certificate. Where adopted post 1975 the GRO provides the full birth information.

7.2 Following an initial telephone discussion with the adopted person the social worker assesses the current level of knowledge and support available to the person. Where this discussion highlights possible complexities an office appointment is offered.

7.3 ACE locates the adopter's record within the local authority archives. The ACE social worker produces a summary report having reviewed the file and redacted confidential third party information. An office appointment is offered, and ID checked before the summary report and key significant documents are shared.



- 7.4 For post 2005 adoption there is an additional consideration that full disclosure can only occur where consent is evident. Where the reports are not available for whatever reason, ACE will provide an information pack about specialist adoption support agencies where further advice and support is available. This may also be available for those seeking an intermediary support in contacting birth family members.

## **8. NON-AGENCY ADOPTION**

- 8.1 All enquirers in respect of non-agency adoptions come to ACE via the Hub. Enquiries are taken by the ACE Hub duty social workers, where they provide advice and information to applicants with regards to the non-agency process and requirements. Should the family wish to receive further information, they are sent the **ACE Non-Agency Adoption Leaflet** and ACE request for an initial consultation. Where the non-resident birth parent is aware of the enquiry and where the child is also aware depending on age and level of understanding, a consultation request is accepted by ACE and an office appointment can be offered.
- 8.2 Where the application proceeds, they are allocated an ACE Spoke worker to undertake the assessment and complete the required Annex A for Court. The family are required to put in writing their intention to adopt to the Director of Children's Services c/o ACE. ACE then forwards the notification to the relevant local authority. This is required 3 months prior to the adoption application being submitted to the court. The assessment includes DBS checks on the applicants, references, and interviews with the child and non-resident birth parent. The **Annex A** is completed and submitted to court as directed. The ACE social worker attends the hearings as court directed, until the court outcome is concluded.
- 8.3 ACE is responsible for undertaking 37 non-agency adoption assessments per year. Any assessments in excess of this number are returned to the responsible local authority.
- 8.4 All records of non-agency enquiries and assessments completed by ACE are recorded and maintained on the electronic social care record (Mosaic).

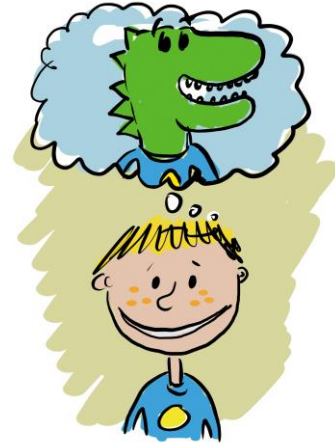
## **9. INDEPENDENT ADOPTION SUPPORT TO BIRTH FAMILIES**

- 9.1 Since 1 November 2019 ACE is responsible for delivering a regional adoption support service for birth families called **Family Connexions**. This proactive service will first

outreach to birth families at the point of the adoption decision and will continue to offer support and advice throughout the process.

- 9.2 It will be closely aligned to the Letterbox Exchange Service providing support to birth families in maintaining their Letterbox commitment.

## 10. TRACKING, REPORTING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT



- 10.1 The ACE Annual Report summarises ACE adoption activity and highlights service achievements and areas for service development that in turn inform the **ACE Service Improvement and Business Plan**. An interim report is also produced mid-year and shared with the Executive Board and more widely within the partner local authorities.
- 10.2 The **Matching and Tracking** databases maintained by the Operations Managers provide an early indicator of children who may be proceeding with an adoption plan and those children at later stages of the process. This allows for the early tracking of these children, providing the opportunity for close working between the local authority social worker and the assigned ACE social worker and sooner identification of prospective adoptive parent/s. Details of prospective and approved adopters are also maintained on this database. This also provides an opportunity to explore the child's early life experiences and the impact of developmental trauma, which in turn can be shared with prospective adopters and given consideration in determining their support needs.
- 10.3 ACE has arrangements with each local authority to ensure effective partnership working. This is achieved through its co-location where the ACE Spokes are based in each local authority area. Further ACE managers are involved in key decision making and tracking forums within the local authorities. These assist in the early identification of children for adoption ensuring that clear plans are in place and delay is reduced in securing permanent placements for them.

## 11. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

- 11.1 ACE has a range of quality assurance processes in place. These processes serve to answer two key questions:

- **What do we know about the quality and impact of practice?**
- **How does ACE know this?**

They also reflect the commitment that ACE has to continuous improvement, and DDP informed practices, that are all encompassing in our aim to achieve good outcomes for children and adoptive families.

- 11.2 ACE reviews and improves its service and performance through the effective use of data (from Mosaic) and business intelligence and robust quality assurance processes. Regular reports are made available for ACE and the ACE Executive Board. Data is also supplied to Ofsted, the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board and Permanence West Midlands. Appendix 3 provides a summary of the report content. The Adoption Panel also has feedback processes in place and reports on the quality of adoption practice to the ACE/Local Authority Managers Group.
- 11.3 Further the Executive Board receives details of complaints and data breaches against the service. These are monitored by the Lead Manager and tracked by the Business Support Manager ensuring that remedial action is taken and service improvements delivered.
- 11.4 An annual report also summarises any learning from adoption placement disruptions and learning reviews where a fostering for adoption placement does not continue to adoption or where a placement match does not proceed beyond introductions. This is the **Adoption Disruption Review Report**, that is widely distributed to ensure broader learning and appreciation of the issues.
- 11.5 An **Equality Impact Assessment** is completed annually providing an opportunity for ACE to review how its policies and procedures impact upon marginal groups within the community.

## **12. CONTACT US**

- 12.1 ACE can be contacted on a dedicated phone number **0300 3690556**. Further the service can be emailed directly through the website at [aceadoption.com/contact](https://aceadoption.com/contact) or via [enquiries@aceadoption.com](mailto:enquiries@aceadoption.com)
- 12.2 Compliments, Complaints or Representations can be made to the Lead Manager, ACE Regional Adoption Agency, Warwickshire County Council, Saltisford Office Park, Ansell Way, Warwick, CV34 4UL or by email [enquiries@aceadoption.com](mailto:enquiries@aceadoption.com)

### **13. SIGNATORIES TO THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

**Name ..... Date.....**

**Lead Manager for ACE**

**Name ..... Date .....**

**On behalf of Coventry City Council**

**Name ..... Date .....**

**On behalf of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Name ..... Date .....**

**On behalf of Warwickshire County Council**

**Name ..... Date .....**

**On behalf of Worcestershire Children First**

**Name ..... Date .....**

**On behalf of Herefordshire Council**



# ACE ADOPTER CHARTER

## Purpose

- To outline the commitment that ACE gives to prospective and approved adopters.

## ACE Values and Principles

- To achieve permanence for children is the primary function of ACE; the needs of children to be loved, nurtured, protected and understood always come first. At all times ACE will place relationships and the needs of children, young people, prospective and approved adopters at the heart of service delivery.
- To support children's recovery from developmental trauma and capacity for attachment security within their adoptive family by delivering services that are informed by Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP). ACE are committed to helping families build relationships and communicate in ways that promote safety and emotional connection.
- To work in ways that enhance reflection and support emotional regulation of staff, prospective and approved adopters, children and young people, modelling the DDP attitude of PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) throughout the service.
- To provide the highest quality adoption service, drawing on best practice and led by stakeholders ensuring their involvement in service design and delivery, as well as in decision making.
- To achieve value for money - this includes making use of modern technology to be effective and efficient.
- To work jointly with other organisations and Regional Adoption Agencies where this improves services.

## ACE Charter Commitments

- To respond promptly to requests for information or advice and to provide clear information about processes and procedures involved depending on the nature of the enquiry or service required.
- To provide a duty service Monday – Thursday 9.30 am - 4.30 pm, Friday 9.30 am - 4.00 pm.
- To recognise the right of every adopter to request ongoing support from ACE and to provide this without undue delay or barriers being in place.
- To offer appointments within 10 working days of the service request.
- To acknowledge correspondence within 48 hours providing a day and time

when a fuller response will be provided either verbally or in writing.

- To give honest explanations for delay or deferment in decisions or actions.
- To provide quarterly contact to adoptive families for 12 months after the adoption order is granted.
- To distribute a Newsletter on a quarterly basis to subscribing adopters with updated information about events in between.
- To invite adopters to the Adopter Stakeholder Group and to contribute to other service development opportunities as they arise.

(July 2018, Updated April 2021)

## **Adoption Central England - Therapeutic Team**

### **Terms of Reference**

The Therapeutic Team within Adoption Central England provides individual and group therapeutic training and interventions to adoptive families throughout their adoption journey.

The service aims to provide adoptive families an opportunity to access a range of therapeutic support and training, to enhance their knowledge and understanding regarding the impact of trauma and to have insight and strategies to parent therapeutically.

The main interventions provided, funded through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) are:

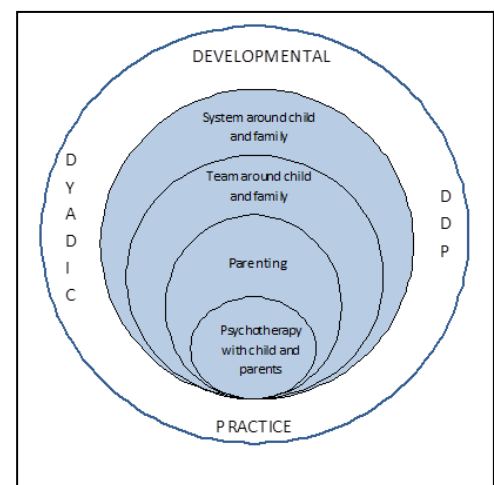
#### **Dyadic Developmental Parenting support – DDP**

is an approach that helps families develop healthy patterns of relating and communicating so all feel safe and connected. Children can then be helped to integrate the impact of experiences of trauma and loss, increase abilities to regulate emotional states, improve reflective functioning and socialise with adults and peers. This is achieved by helping parents with day-to-day parenting based on principles of PACE.

**Non-Violent Resistance – NVR** is an approach for parents experiencing serious difficulties such as child to parent violence or other safeguarding concerns such as children putting themselves at risk of harm. NVR is a way for parents to build or rebuild a strong connected relationship with their child/ren.

**Therapeutic and Sensory Based Parenting courses** – Understanding trauma and attachment and using the principles of PACE, parents will be introduced to the attitude of parenting with playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy (PACE). We explore managing difficult behaviour with therapeutic parenting. Parents are encouraged to practice the strategies offered.

**Theraplay** - Theraplay sessions create an active, emotional connection between the child and parent, resulting in a changed view of the self as worthy and lovable and of relationships as positive and rewarding. This training is aimed at giving adopters the opportunity to learn about Theraplay and how to use play activities to make connections with children.



**Parent-Child Attachment Play** is an enjoyable evidence-based programme for strengthening parent-child relations.

## **Referral Process**

### **1. Matching Stage**

Where a need for therapeutic support has been identified prior to a child being placed with adopters, following consultation with the Therapeutic Team assistance can be provided in formulating the adoption support plan and interventions offered.

The social workers in the Therapeutic Team can provide a plan of work to assist the child and parents during introductions and early days of placement i.e. Theraplay and therapeutic parenting.

The following documents can be provided as part of the referral process:

- Child Permanence Report
- Prospective Adopters Report
- Adoption Placement Report incorporating the Adoption Support Plan.

Referrals should be made directly to the Team Manager – Therapeutic Team.

The ASF application can be completed once the adoption match has been ratified by the Agency Decision Maker and it is the responsibility of the referring social worker to complete the Adoption Support Working Agreement and review the intervention.

### **2. Post Adoption**

The Spoke social worker will complete the assessment of need for adoption support and where the assessment recommends that individual therapeutic intervention would be beneficial to the family the social worker will consider a referral to the Therapeutic Team for intervention in the first instance. If appropriate a referral for service is forwarded to the Team Manager – Therapeutic Team including the Mosaic number.

The child/family will be assigned to a social worker in the Therapeutic Team. The therapeutic social workers do not hold case management responsibility.

The assigned social worker will prepare a plan of work and quote which will be shared with the family i.e. 10 sessions of Theraplay and an end of therapy report. If the family are in agreement with the content, the Business Support Officer will submit an application to the ASF. The ASSA will authorise the application.

When the ASF have confirmed approval, a Working Agreement is completed by the Business Support Officer and the therapeutic intervention can start with the family.

If the family have an allocated social worker, they will be responsible for reviewing the intervention. All adopters undertaking NVR will have an allocated social worker in the Spoke to manage case management issues that may arise. Families will be offered duty surgery appointments during this course where necessary and where a social



worker is not allocated.

At the end of a therapeutic intervention the social worker from the Therapeutic Team will provide a report for the family. A copy will be uploaded to Mosaic ESCR by the Business Support Officer.

All adoptive families receiving therapeutic support will be asked to complete an evaluation.

### **3. Training Courses**

If the family would benefit from attending a therapeutic group – the referral process is by an email to the Therapeutic Team Business Support Officer.

Therapeutic social workers will prioritise places on training if oversubscribed.

The Business Support Officer is responsible for submitting group applications to the ASF. Families do not need to have an allocated social worker on group training (except NVR).

All adopters attending training will be asked to complete an evaluation form. Courses will be periodically observed by the Team Manager or Operations Manager. Both course and individual evaluation reports will be shared with the social workers delivering the course and retained for quality assurance purposes.

### **4. Adoption Support Fund**

All interventions will be funded through the Adoption Support Fund – ASF. Guidance on what therapeutic interventions are in scope and how applications can be made are determined by the ASF. If a couple cannot attend an ACE course together, ACE will match fund a place on the next training event held in house.

ACE will not charge for travel time – this will be part of match funding if it is within the ACE region.

ACE will return unspent monies to the ASF following courses or individual interventions.

### **5. Supervision**

Social workers in the Therapeutic Team receive group supervision from a clinical psychologist and can access individual consultations regarding specific cases.

They also receive group supervision from a systemic family therapist, qualified in NVR when undertaking NVR interventions. This supervision will be funded through the ASF. Staff can access 1 hour clinical supervision for every 25 hours therapy time.

Their day to day supervision is from the Team Manager - North Spoke.



## **Adoption Central England Executive Board Quarterly Performance and Activity Report Contents and other monitoring information**

- No. of children placed for Early Permanence - Fostering for Adoption
- No. of children placed with ACE approved adopters - not yet adopted
- Adopted children timescales against the national scorecard measures
- No. of enquirers for adoption
- No. of households attending adopter information sessions
- No. of approved adopter households
- No. in stage 2 adoption assessments completed within timescale
- No. of Black and minority ethnic/LGBTQ+ households approved
- No. of households approved for harder to place children
- No. of placement disruptions
- No. of interagency placements
- No. of applications to the Adoption Support Fund
- No. of allocated adoption support cases
- No. of birth records counselling cases
- No. of non-agency adoption assessments
- Waiting timescales between adopter approval and placement
- Referrals to and workload of Family Connexions Service

ACE is working currently working on how the timeliness of Assessments of Need for Adoption Support can be reported.