



**Adoption
Central
England**

Statement of Purpose



Reviewed March 2025

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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 County Council.
- 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 have 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 in February 2018 following legislation arising from the 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**, **Adopter Stakeholder Group**, and the **ACE Finance Sub Group**. Further the voice of those affected by adoption is captured through the Adopted Young People's Group, **the birth parents support groups and adult adoptees reference group**.
- 1.5 **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 may have experienced developmental trauma within their original family, which has long-lasting effects. 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 upon DDP principles that are 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.

- 1.6 To ensure that relationships and emotional connection are at the heart of ACE services all aspects of the service are informed by DDP principles and in January 2021 ACE received certification as a DDP service which was renewed following the successful application for ongoing certification. ACE continues to commission support from a DDP consultant to work alongside the staff in various ways offering clinical supervision and support to ACE staff members as their DDP skills and knowledge are embedded into practice.

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 needs 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 provide 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 theories and the key DDP principles with ACE staff modelling 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 behaviours, 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 assessments of need, drawing upon other professional expertise as necessary and guided by an understanding of developmental trauma, attachment, intersubjectivity

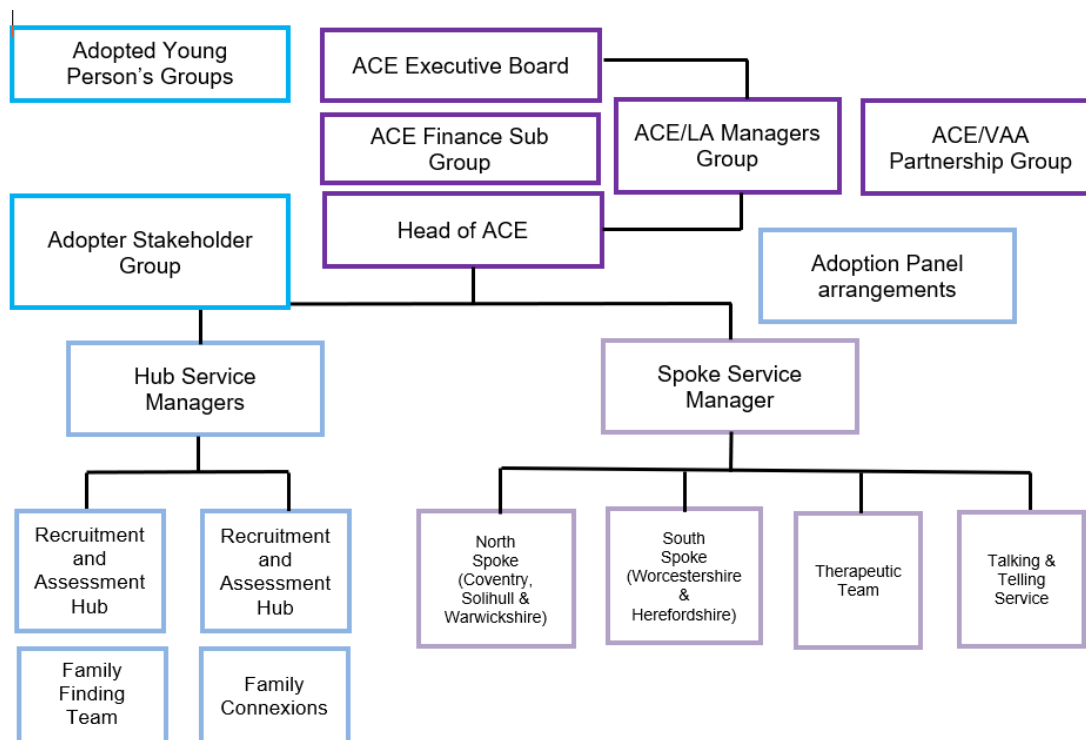
and neurobiology theories. The aim is to ensure that adoptive families receive the help they need when they need it and to offer support in ways that is focused on enhancing family relationships.

- 2.5 ACE also appreciates the importance 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 experience improved health and wellbeing through participating in the adoption process. Further it is recognised that all forms of maintaining relationships are important and ACE works to promote and support effective arrangements, in partnership, and in line with the requirements of the service specification.
- 2.6 As an organisation ACE has 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.
- 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. ACE, through the leadership of its managers aims to be inclusive and has an EDI Improvement Plan in place, and upholds its commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion as follows:

'ACE acknowledges the significant impact of adoption on children, young people, adoptive parents, birth parents and adopted adults. We want ACE to be a place where everyone who has contact with the service feels valued, included, safe and supported. We will do this by taking time to listen and understand each person's experiences, recognising the strengths in their differences, so that we can respond sensitively to their unique situation.'

3. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

- 3.1 The organisational structure is summarised below:



3.2 The establishment for ACE is 74.52 FTE and currently there are 95 people working in ACE, 4 staff have dual roles and responsibilities.

Staff are employed as follows:

Roles	Number of people	Establishment
ACE Managers	11	10.12 FTE
Hub social workers	19	15.64FTE
Family Finding Team - social workers	4	3.01 FTE
Family Connexions – social workers	5	3.33 FTE + 0.81 social care worker
Spoke social workers	24	17.6FTE
Therapeutic Team – social workers incl. Therapeutic Life Story Work Practitioners (Talking and Telling Service)	6	3.63 FTE
Family support workers supporting the Spokes	4	3.62 FTE
Social worker – Adopter training lead	1	1.0 FTE
Business support and related roles	18	13.2 FTE
Adoption Panel Advisors – social workers	2	1.5 FTE
Total	93	73.46

Social workers are based in the Hub or Spokes. The Hub workers are primarily based

in Warwick and Worcester/Hereford and the Spokes whilst organized on a north/south basis ensure a presence in all five local authority areas.

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 Social Work England.

In line with the DDP certification processes over 90% of staff in ACE have completed DDP level 1 training with a target of 25% holding DDP level 2. 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 Head of ACE and Service Managers hold 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 family support service is managed through the Hub arrangements also. The Service Managers provide advice to the local authority agency decision makers who are responsible for making the adoption decisions for children. 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 are coordinated through ACE and 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 consensual adoption child should be placed for adoption, are coordinated through ACE. These are held online with six panels arranged each month. The panel members attend an annual training event and have opportunities to meet together on a quarterly basis to attend bitesize learning and get together events.
- 3.6 The Spokes are primarily concerned with supporting adoptive families, which includes direct intervention, undertaking assessments of need and commissioning and processing applications through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF). They are also responsible for non-agency (stepparent) 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 ASGSF on a group or individual child/family basis.

- 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. Arrangements have been put in place in ACE to countersign reports by an appropriately qualified person, and to offer the additional levels of support to newly qualified or less experienced social workers.
- 3.8 Where there is a local authority social worker involved an ACE social worker may be assigned to complete specific work with the child and/or adoptive family.
- 3.9 Other specialist roles include the Family Support Workers – working in the Spokes and as Maintaining Connexions Coordinators (Letterbox Scheme) aligned with the Family Connexions Service.
- 3.10 ACE staff who hold the Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work provide the **Talking and Telling Consultation Service** and training to adoptive parents.
- 3.11 Work is supported through a business management structure consisting of the Business Support Manager, 2 Deputy Team Administrators and a business support team based across the Hub and Spokes. There is a dedicated finance officer who processes ASGSF 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**.
- 3.12 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 can attend DDP embedding and learning sets. This demonstrates the 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.

4.2 All enquiries, contacts, or referrals to ACE, either by telephone or the ACE website enter through to the business support team who 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 nationally agreed 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.

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, now Coram IAC – 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 why children need to be parented therapeutically,
- Early permanence and fostering for adoption arrangements,
- Current changes in line with 'Openness in Adoption' and the expectations and importance of maintaining relationships, identity and children knowing their narrative.

4.7 Stage 1 pre-assessment process and preparation groups

Following receipt of the Information Meeting material, enquirers may return the **Feedback Form** and upon receipt, a follow up contact will be made by the Hub social worker leading to initial visit which is undertaken online. Following this the enquirer will be sent a **Register of Interest Form**. Once this is received, the decision is made by the Stage 1 Manager to either:

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

Where they are accepted the applicants will be invited to join the 5 days of **Preparation Training**. These are face to face meetings consisting of 6 core modules and applicants are required to complete all sessions. The topics covered are:

- Separation and loss
- Children's lived experiences, including the impact of trauma
- Fostering for Adoption
- Priority children
- Maintaining Relationships
- Therapeutic Parenting

- Theraplay
- Adopting siblings
- Family finding, the next steps after approval.

4.8 Applicants who are seeking to adopt for a subsequent time will not usually be required to attend the preparation course if it 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 references 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 4-6 months (depending on complexity) of the agency accepting the adoption application. Also, during Stage 2 additional further training is to be attended on:

- Adopting Again
- Adopting Siblings
- Adopting with Birth Children.

A decision is also made at this point whether it would be helpful to the applicants to be linked with peer support **from an experienced adoptive parent in similar circumstances**. ACE also offers a training workshop to the friends and family of prospective adopters.

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. Where three years have elapsed an enhanced review is required (including statutory reference checks as required) which will consider whether the applicants are still suitable to adopt. Where this is not the case an updated report is presented to the Adoption Panel with the recommendation not to continue the approval.

4.14 **Post approval**

Following approval adopters will receive a comprehensive **Post Approval Information Pack**. Training events are promoted on the ACE website and in the quarterly Newsletter which are delivered across the ACE region. Post placement the **Therapeutic and Sensory Based Parenting** is available that covers DDP informed parenting techniques in more detail and the meaning behind children's behaviours. 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 **ACE Training Programme Brochure**, **Adoption Newsletter** and are invited to join the **Adopter Stakeholder Group**.

4.16 The minimum visiting frequency by the adoption social worker is monthly up until the adoption order is granted. Quarterly visits then continue for the 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 maintaining relationships (contact) or adoption support.

5. MATCHING A CHILD WITH PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

- 5.1 The approved adopter's 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** including the **Support Plan**, also 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 the matching Adoption Panel a team manager in ACE will chair the **Transitions Planning Meeting** using the **Adoption Placement Plan**. 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 Report 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 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,
- Opportunities to meet informally with other adoptive families,
- Quarterly Newsletter to adopters,
- Training for adoptive parents,
- Maintaining Connexions (Letterbox Scheme) and other services associated with post adoption contact,
- Consultation with ACE Clinical Psychology Service,
- Adopted Young People's Group,
- Information and features to Facebook followers,
- Talking and Telling Service.

6.2 The following training courses are actively promoted, which may also be funded through the Adoption and Special Guardianship 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. The ACE website also provides an invaluable range of information and resources for adoptive parents.

6.3 Subsequent requests for an **Assessment of Need for Adoption Support Service** are referred to an ACE Spoke (North 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 and Special Guardianship Support Fund** for specified therapeutic interventions that can be provided through the ACE Therapeutic Team or commissioned separately.

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 initiated contact has occurred between the adopted child and their birth family this may be facilitated through the ACE Spoke and Family Connexions Service working closely together.

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 maintaining relationships/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.

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 the 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 more than 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 Maintaining Connexions (Letterbox Service) providing support to birth families in exchanging correspondence and/or other forms of maintaining relationships as agreed i.e. exchanges of videos and/or voice notes..

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 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 Hub 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 is offering an opportunity to explore the child's early life experiences and the impact of developmental trauma, which in turn can be shared with prospective adoptive parents and given consideration in determining their support needs.
- 10.3 ACE has arrangements with each local authority to ensure effective partnership working. This may be 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, equality, diversity and inclusion 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. 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 and actions taken. Safeguarding and causes of concern for children in adoptive placements

are also recorded and monitored by the Head of Service and tracked by the Business Support Manager ensuring that remedial action is taken and service improvements delivered.

- 11.4 An annual report 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 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 at regular intervals 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 369 0556**. Further the service can be emailed directly through the website at aceadoption.com/contact or via enquiries@aceadoption.com.
- 12.2 Compliments, Complaints or Representations can be made to the Head of ACE, ACE Regional Adoption Agency, Warwickshire County Council, Shire Hall Post Room, Northgate Street, Warwick, CV34 4RL or by email enquiries@aceadoption.com.

13. SIGNATORIES TO THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Name



Date 10/03/2025

ACE Head of Service

Name



Date 10/03/2025

On behalf of Coventry City Council

Name



Date 12/03/2025

On behalf of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Name 

Date 11/03/2025

On behalf of Warwickshire County Council

Name 

Date 18/03/2025

On behalf of Worcestershire County Council

Name 

Date 10/03/2025

On behalf of Herefordshire Council