



Adoption East Midlands
Statement of Purpose 2025-2026

Our Aims and Objectives

Adoption East Midlands aims to:

- Offer a comprehensive range of adoption services to children and adults in the East Midlands (Derbyshire, Derby City, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham City) whose lives have been affected by adoption.
- Ensure those with lived experience are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development.
- Treat all service users with respect and without prejudice or discrimination.
- Ensures that those affected by adoption receive the information, support and advice that they need to understand their adoption journey.
- Ensures that RAA families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption.

In addition, we are committed to:

- Providing adoptive families for children cared for by Nottinghamshire, Nottingham City, Derbyshire and Derby City where the agency has agreed this is in their best interests.
- Recruiting and supporting sufficient adoptive parents from diverse backgrounds who can offer a stable and permanent home for children.
- Providing effective and efficient Adoption Panels which are appropriately constituted.
- Ensuring all staff are appropriately recruited, supervised and trained to fulfil their agency functions.
- Working with other Regional Adoption Agencies, and Voluntary Adoption Agencies, when we are not able to make adoption matches within our own approved families.
- Ensuring the best possible match for each child based on individual needs.
- Exploring the potential for post adoption keeping in touch with the birth family, and foster carers, and making decisions according to the child's best interests.
- Provide a programme of adoption support that ensures AEM adopters are fully and appropriately empowered and supported throughout their adoption journey, from preparation through to placement and beyond the adoption order.

- Working in partnership with other agencies to achieve a positive transition for children to their adoptive family.

Named Manager

The responsible manager for the adoption service is **Shelagh Mitchell**, Head of Service (Adoption East Midlands) who is based at Trent Bridge House, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

Relevant qualifications and experience of head of service.

- Shelagh Mitchell is a qualified and registered Social worker, with over 37 years' experience, in local authority and private sector childcare provision.
- Since the Regional Adoption Agency went live in April 2019, Shelagh has led Adoption East Midlands on behalf of Nottinghamshire as the host authority.

Qualifications are as follows:

- BA (hons) Applied Social Studies, 1987,
- CQSW 1987
- Management level 5, 2010

Organisation and structure of the Adoption Service:

The service has Office bases in Matlock, Derby, Nottingham City, and Nottinghamshire, staff work from home, and office bases throughout each Local Authority, on a flexible basis.

The Postal address of the service is County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG 2 7QP

Adoption East Midlands is constituted as follows:

Adoption Support

The adoption support team is responsible for:

- Providing informed and timely support for adoptive families from the start of their adoption journey and through all stages of development post order.
- Designing and providing a universal support offer for all adoptive families which includes access to therapeutic listening conversations, telephone advice, support and signposting, as well as groups for adoptive parents (peer support, learning and social events) and groups for adopted children and young people.
- Assessing the adoption support needs of all eligible parties to adoption.

- Direct work with children, parents, adopted adults and birth parents.
- Providing and where necessary commissioning services for adopted children and adoptive families including therapeutic support packages.
- Providing adoption support service advice to agencies.
- Maintaining archive records and managing access to these records.
- Providing consultation and support to professionals and families to enable keeping in touch arrangements after the Adoption Order has been made, which are flexible to meet the child's need, and including the letterbox scheme which is a confidential postal arrangement between adoptive parents and members of the birth family.
- Supporting Birth Family members on behalf of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Derby, with a dedicated team of family workers.
- There is currently a multi-disciplinary project within the support service, providing specialist youth, education, speech and language, and psychology support to families, and professionals.

Adoption Panel

The adoption panel team is responsible for:

- Organisation and administration of adoption panels and agency decisions.
- Recruiting, supporting and training panel members.
- Providing professional advice to the panel chairperson
- Providing professional advice to the agency decision maker, this includes children's plans for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
- Producing statistical information about adoption activity across Adoption East Midlands

Recruitment, Assessment, Placement and Home Finding Teams

The Recruitment, Assessment, Placement and Home Finding Teams are responsible for:

- Recruiting, preparing and assessing prospective adoptive parents in line with national regulations and standards.
- Identifying appropriate adoptive parents for children within the region in need of an adoptive family.
- Maintaining a high public profile by effective use of the recruitment and publicity strategy.

- Ensuring all prospective adoptive parents are considered regardless of marital status, racial origin, religious persuasion, health, disability gender identity or sexual orientation. The primary consideration will be the family's potential to parent a child by adoption

Adoption Support:

AEM provide a range of services for adoptive families, adopted adults and birth families, designed to offer the right level of support at the right time throughout their individual adoption journey.

Many adopted children need help to navigate different points in their life, whether in their early years, at adolescence or as young adults. Adoptive Parents may also find that at times some guidance and support is needed throughout their child's development.

At AEM we want to make sure that families can access the right support at the right time whether that be during preparation to become adoptive parents, in the early days of becoming an adoptive parent or at key points during a child's development as they come to terms with what it means to be adopted. Our aim therefore, is to:

- Work in co-production with adopters and adoptees to understand their lived experience, what support can make a difference and the ongoing development of our regional support offer
- provide informed and timely support for adoptive families from the start of their adoption journey and through all stages of development post order which is focused on early intervention and improved outcomes
- deliver excellent customer service which is proportionate to the level of need and with the aim of empowering families and improving outcomes for all
- support adopted adults and birth relatives with a clear service pathway

At AEM we believe that co-production with experts by experience helps develop more equal partnerships between families who use our services and professionals, and can help make the best use of resources, deliver better outcomes for adoptive families and build stronger relationships and communities across our region. We now have a number of co-production groups who meet regularly to review and develop our support offer including:

- Complex trauma group
- Parenting Teenagers group
- Education group
- Adopted Adults group

In addition, we continue to expand and develop our Voices of Adoption consultation and participation group which as well as informing the development of services, represents the youth voice both regionally and nationally on behalf of AEM.

Through co-production work, AEM aim to ensure the right support is provided in a number of ways:

- Providing Information, resources and guidance ([Adopters' Support Hub Nottinghamshire County Council](#))
- Signposting to relevant and helpful groups and organisations
- Providing regular & relevant training seminars and access to peer support
- Providing an easily accessible early support offer from our multi-disciplinary reflecting team (see below) which includes specialist consultation
- Access to and delivery of therapeutic services and support programmes (group and 1:1) utilising the Adoption Support Fund where necessary
- Adoption Support needs assessments, including multi-disciplinary specialist assessments and support
- Delivering packages of therapeutic / parenting support to families using our in-house therapists (including DDP, Systemic Family Practice, Theraplay and Therapeutic Life Story Work)
- Helping families keep in touch with people who are important to their child, and restring links at the adoptive families request where possible
- Providing Birth Family Support to enable more effective and better supported keeping in touch arrangements

Multi-disciplinary support:

At AEM we adopt a systemic approach to adoption support using a neuro-sequential lens which is focused on early intervention and underpinned by our regional Peer Mentor community. Our core and early intervention support offer is used to support regulation, feelings of safety and stronger relationships between young people and their main care givers, as well as looking at the wider system of interaction and support around a young person.

Now fully integrated into our wider social work team is our multi-disciplinary team (MDT) which incorporates specialist, trauma informed knowledge & practitioners from education, health, youth work, therapeutic social work and

representatives from the adoption community. These roles within the MDT enable a more holistic understanding of need and therefore the most effective support at any given time.



Through our multi-disciplinary reflecting team, we seek to work alongside parents to bring crisis levels down, increase resources for the family (both internal and external to the family) and promote feelings of safety for the whole family. We do this by:

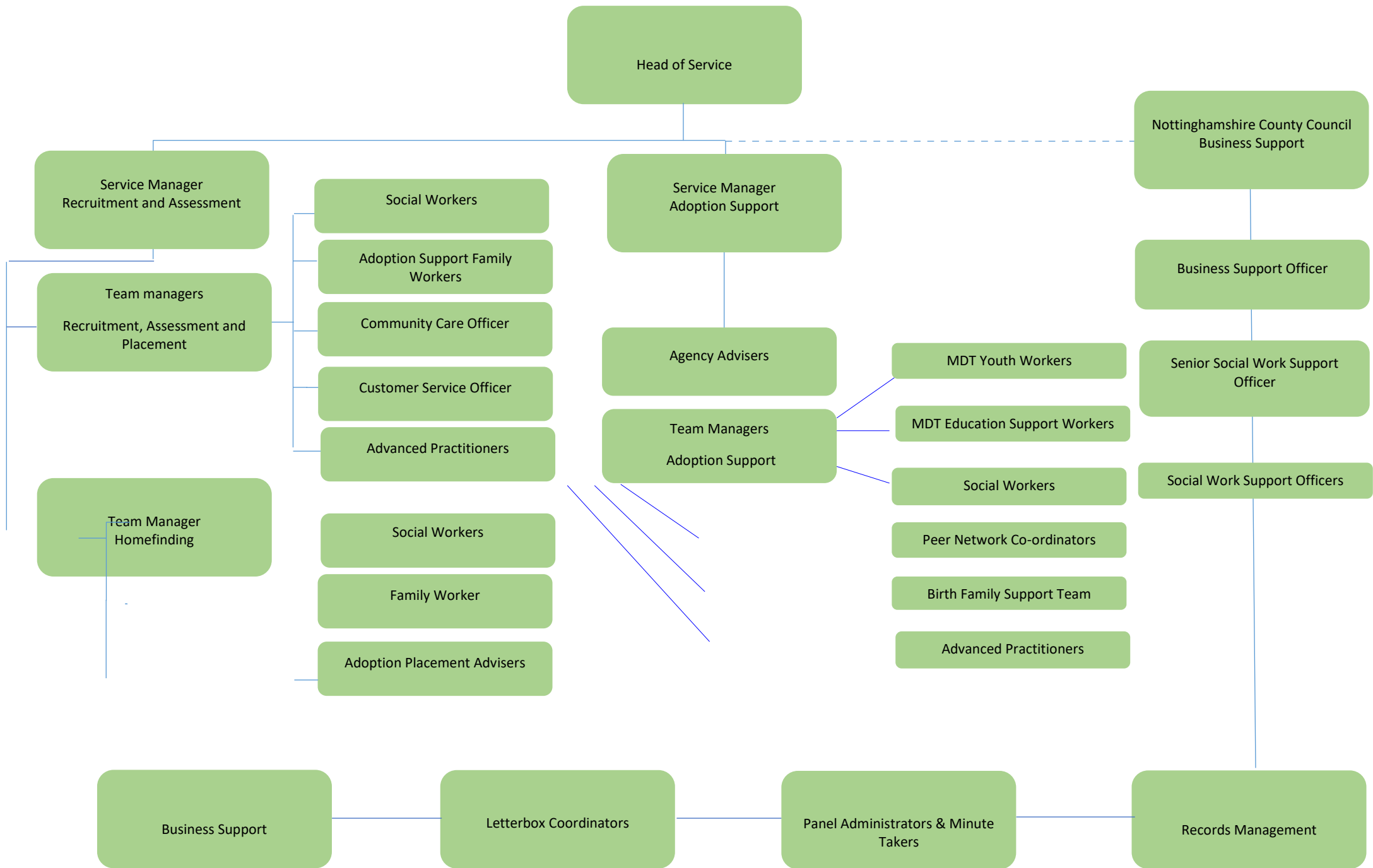
- Understanding the child's history & developmental trauma through multiple lenses enabled through our MDT approach
- Stabilising the child's home and school environment so they are able to better regulate
- Provide support to primary care givers to strengthen their network (this can include family, friends, informal and formal support) to create feelings of safety
- Providing resources, training, consultation and support to educational staff to better understand and support the needs of adopted young people in the school environment
- Provide consultations to families and professionals giving opportunities for deeper reflection, understanding and planning.

Helpdesk

Our team of helpdesk social workers are part of the multidisciplinary reflecting team that triages incoming pathway assessments from families and are the first point of contact for families into the service. Having background information already supplied by the family and including the voice of the child where possible means that when they make contact, our social workers are immediately able to start to support families through therapeutic listening & reflection. A range of support interventions can take place and include signposting to our universal support offer (training, activity days, young people's groups, peer mentoring) as well as being able to offer an agreed package of regular therapeutic listening consultations (TLC) to offer support during periods of difficulty.

Adoption Assessment & Support

Where difficulties are more challenging or complex, our Helpdesk can refer on to our further support team of social workers to carry out an assessment of adoption support needs and develop an adoption support plan. Our social workers carry out home visits and can offer direct work and support to both parents and child(ren). If more specialist therapeutic support is identified as a need, our social workers can commission a therapy package from our in-house therapists or via our therapeutic providers commissioning framework.



The above structure is further supported by a team of business support staff.

All social workers are suitably qualified and experienced and registered with Social Work England. We have staff trained in therapeutic life story work Dyadic Development Practice, systemic family therapy, Theraplay, sensory development, and the use of virtual reality headsets and tools.

8. Procedures for the recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval and support of prospective adopters

a) Recruitment

Adoption East Midlands has a Recruitment Strategy which is regularly reviewed and updated.

Adoption East Midlands works closely with corporate communications to publicise the need for adoptive parents and design recruitment campaigns, liaising with local media.

Adoption East Midlands has a dedicated phone number for recruitment purposes, in addition to receiving enquiries via the Adoption East Midlands website. All enquirers have the opportunity to discuss their interest in adoption with a social worker

Regular Information events are held virtually, to provide information to people interested in adoption.

Enquirers who indicate a wish to proceed to register an interest will be visited where possible within 5 working days. A decision on accepting the registration of interest will be taken within 5 working days.

b) Preparation

Applicants are required to attend Preparation Groups which are run on a monthly basis across the region. Whilst the primary aims are to educate and inform on a range of adoption matters, participants are made aware that the training is part of the assessment process of Stage One, and that any issues or concerns will be discussed with them and also with their social worker. Preparation Groups consist of several sessions spread over a two-week period and are held in person. They are an introduction to adoption and form the basis of further learning and development in Stage Two. They are largely based upon a model developed by Coram/BAAF, but there are also several sessions which have been developed in-house, including the transcultural workshop and keeping in touch. Our aim is for all applicants to complete Stage One within eight weeks.

c) Assessment

As far as possible the same social worker will take applicants through stage one and two, ensuring there is no delay.

Stage Two is undertaken in compliance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations and we aim to complete within 16 weeks.

d) Approval

Applicants are encouraged to attend the Adoption Panel. They are provided with information in advance explaining the panel process and are able to read “pen pictures” of Panel Members before they attend. After the meeting, they are asked to complete a simple evaluation form about their experience. Adoption Panels are virtual meetings, currently AEM hold five adoption panels a month.

e) ‘Family Finding’

To provide high quality, child-centred and timely Family Finding Services to the children of our four Local Authority partners.

f) Support:

In addition to the various forms of support outlined so far, support events, social events and opportunities for further training are provided for prospective adopters and their networks once approved and into placement.

Quality of service:

Adoption East Midlands is continually monitored and evaluated to ensure the quality and effectiveness of services. We aim to consult and involve adopters in ensuring the quality of service delivery and in-service developments. This is because feedback from service users is central to the quality and effectiveness of services. We regularly request feedback at trigger points in the process- for example after attendance at panel, after completion of stage one and stage two and following completion of training modules or specific work.

Other ways we evaluate quality and effectiveness are:

- Adoption panel comments on the quality of reports presented to them.
- Regular supervision of all staff which highlights potential areas for development.
- Reflective group discussions, subject focussed.
- Monitoring of issues raised within the complaints’ process
- Learning from the conclusions of disruption meetings about what could have been done differently or better

Complaints:

Nottinghamshire host Adoption East Midlands. Nottinghamshire County Council's Families and Cultural Services Complaints, Representations and Investigations Procedure is followed. Information on this procedure is available from:

CFCS Complaints, Representations & Investigations Services
Nottinghamshire County Council
County Hall
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7QP

Telephone: **0300 500 80 80**

E-mail: **Complaints@nottscc.gov.uk**

Contact details for Ofsted

Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire subject to inspection by Ofsted whose contact details are as follows:

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

Tel: 08456 404045

Website: www.ofsted.org.uk

Reviewing the Statement of Purpose:

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually by the Adoption Management Team and is formally adopted by the Adoption East Midlands Performance Partnership and Quality Board.