



Herefordshire Adoption Services

Recruitment Strategy

2008/2009

Introduction

The aim of the Adoption Service is to identify sufficient adoptive families to meet the needs of Herefordshire children whose care plan is adoption, and to provide adopters who will meet the unique needs of children locally, within the consortium and within a wider geographical area. To facilitate this, the Adoption Service will welcome all enquirers about adoption without prejudice and ensure that they are given clear information on the services provided by Herefordshire Adoption Agency. The Adoption Service will foster and maintain links with neighbouring authorities, both generally and through the local adoption consortium, in recognition of Herefordshire's particular needs.

Aims and objectives taken from Herefordshire Adoption Agency's Statement of Purpose

To provide a full and comprehensive range of adoption and adoption support services to all parties affected by the adoption process. The service will be consistent with best practice and national and departmental standards and requirements.

This will include: -

- Ensuring children unable to live with their birth families have the opportunity to attach securely to adopters capable of providing safe, supportive care throughout their childhood and beyond.
- Counselling, training and supporting adoptive parents pre and post adoption.

Principles that underpin the adoption service

- Child-focused services. The primary focus is to secure positive outcomes for children. The adoption service is closely linked with services for looked after children to ensure that planning for children is managed to avoid unnecessary delays. The service will comply with legal requirements, national standards and guidance for looked after children.
- Confidentiality. Confidentiality will be respected and is paramount in adoption. To ensure security of information, paper files are kept in locked cabinets. Access to paper based and computer held information on adoption is restricted and protected by suitable levels of physical security. There is a back-up system for computerised information, which is maintained and kept in a fireproof safe. Archived files are stored in the authority's records office, which is secured. Only approved personnel can access adoption information, and disclosure occurs only as permitted by the Regulations.

- Anti-oppressive and non-discriminatory practice. The service operates within the department's Comprehensive Equality Policy and strives to work in an anti discriminatory and anti oppressive way, celebrating diversity.
- Efficient and effective service which is regularly monitored and reviewed. The service is open to innovative ways of working to achieve the most effective and efficient service and to ensure 'best value'. The internal operation of the service will ensure effective management and oversight of the development of the service. The service sets performance targets in line with national standards. These will be collated, analysed and reported. An annual report is prepared on the actions of the adoption service and presented to relevant elected members of the Council. A review of the Service is undertaken at three-yearly intervals.
- User consultation and participation. The Service is committed to stakeholder involvement and regularly seeks the views of users to inform the future development of the service.

Context

From the 1st April 1998 a new unitary authority for Herefordshire and a county council for Worcestershire replaced the former body. Herefordshire Adoption Service came into being in April 2001; previously Herefordshire and Worcestershire provided a joint adoption service.

Despite developments, the whole feel of the county is still that of a deeply rural community, where farming and village life is very important to the people who live here. The city of Hereford and the market towns are striving to become places where people can enjoy more urban pleasures and establish thriving businesses but they are also seeking to remain places where livestock markets and food production remain at the core of the county's economy.

The most recent estimate of the population of Herefordshire is **177,800**. The ONS has published 'experimental' estimates of the population by ethnic group. These suggest that 3.7% of Herefordshire's population in 2005 was of Black or Minority Ethnic origin.

It is often not possible to place children within Herefordshire's boundaries, because of its small geographical area; therefore the majority of Hereford children are placed within other Local Authority areas. By recruiting families which are of benefit to other Local Authorities, the Adoption Service aims to recoup in part the cost of buying in adoptive families from other agencies.

General Recruitment

Herefordshire Adoption Agency will continue to seek to recruit adopters from both inside and outside the county boundary to enable Herefordshire children to be placed with families assessed and trained by Herefordshire and to provide families for children unable to be placed within their own areas.

Herefordshire's Adoption Service has a good reputation both locally and within neighbouring local authorities. It therefore has little need to advertise as such, although general information about children needing adoptive families is maintained through the local media for open information events, especially around the time of adoption week. Enquirers are often prompted to approach the agency through word of mouth.

The agency has a reciprocal arrangement with Worcestershire and if applicants cannot be assessed, for example if they are employees of children's services, they may be 'offered' to the other authority.

The service aims to recruit families from within its boundaries from diverse backgrounds and with a range of skills, even though it is unlikely that Herefordshire children will be placed, as such families are sought after by other agencies and will be of benefit to the overall adoption picture in the UK.

Types of placements needed

In general most of Herefordshire's children requiring adoptive placements are under 5, of White/British origin and one third being in sibling groups. For older children, and children with particular needs, for instance a child with disabilities, targeted family finding is usually required, and we will aim to achieve this through specific advertising in adoption journals, contact with other agencies and through the Adoption Register.

All adoptive applicants are assessed regarding their ability to parent children not born to them, who have suffered the trauma of separation from their families of origin and often, significant abuse. We do not offer a service for childless adults, but rather a service to meet the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan.

If applicants are unable to have children by birth, we expect their fertility investigations and treatment to be completed and for them to have moved on to see adoption as a positive way to become a parent. We expect applicants to obtain some direct childcare experience before being approved as adopters.

The reality for adopters approved by Herefordshire is that they are unlikely to be chosen to parent Herefordshire children, as the majority of our children are placed outside the county for reasons of confidentiality. This means that Herefordshire adopters must have something out of the ordinary to offer to those seeking placements for children from elsewhere.

Targets 2008/2009

We have held Information Events publicised through the local media, in an attempt to attract adopters from beyond Herefordshire's boundaries and hope these will bear fruit in the months to come.

Herefordshire plan to run two training and preparation groups per year, with an open mind to run an additional course if there is a need. The 2008/2009 courses will be run in April and November.

Two Information Events are scheduled this year for Saturdays in June and October; experience has proved that Saturdays are more popular than evening sessions. These events attract prospective applicants who are often at the very early stages of consideration of adoption. The opportunity to speak to those who have adopted and to social workers who are honest and realistic about the challenges of adoption is invaluable in helping prospective applicants consider whether adoption is right for them

A three times yearly newsletter has been launched to publicise Family Fun Days, workshops and events for adoptive families, all of which have been well attended and received. This will continue and we hope to continue to draw in our adopters to attend our workshops and family days.

Monitoring and evaluation

This plan will be monitored regularly, with evaluation taking place in March 2009. The preparation and training of adoptive families is evaluated by trainees and participants following each training day, with an overall evaluation at the end of the course. December 2007 saw Herefordshire's first pilot of training and preparation solely for prospective adopters. Prior to this, all training was joint, with foster carer and adoptive applicants.

Due to the expansion of the adoption team being fully staffed, this has enabled us to hold adoption information morning and evenings, providing us with interest from applicants in and out of county. An increase in adoptive applicants has enabled us to make the decision to split our training needs, thus viable.

We track enquirers and monitor who attends courses and subsequently go forward for assessment. We also review what responses we receive in relation to national adoption week and Herefordshire specific recruitment advertisement e.g. information events.

Feedback from the trainers is used to inform the next stage for adoptive applicants, some of whom will decide not to proceed, having heard of the realities of parenting traumatised children. Feedback is vital to the development of the training provided by Herefordshire adoption service.



**Herefordshire Adoption Service
The Children's Resource Team
Moor House
Widemarsh Common
Hereford
HR4 9NA
Email: [adoption @herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@herefordshire.gov.uk)
01432 383240**

March 2008