

**City of Bradford
Adoption Services
Statement of Purpose**

**Aire Building
35 Saltaire Road
Shipley
West Yorkshire
BD18 3HH**



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1. Introduction

It is a requirement under the Adoption Minimum Standards that an Adoption Service must compile a **Statement of Purpose** that describes the Service's aims and objectives and the services and facilities it provides. It can be used by parents, children and young people as a guide to what they should expect a service to provide and to do.

This document is the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Agency of Bradford Council.

It is a requirement that the Statement is reviewed annually and amended as necessary, and approved by Elected Members.

2. Values of the Agency

The Adoption Service is run as part of an integrated Adoption and Fostering Unit within the Children and Young Peoples Service covering the Bradford Metropolitan District.

The values below explain the important principles which underpin the requirements under the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond and where possible this should be within their own family.
- The child's welfare safety and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be fully taken in to account at all stages.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- Children ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language will be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made.
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made.
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family will be valued and respected.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many organisations, professionals and individuals who have to work together to meet the needs for services.
- Birth parents and birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

3. The Aims and Objectives of the Agency.

Aims:

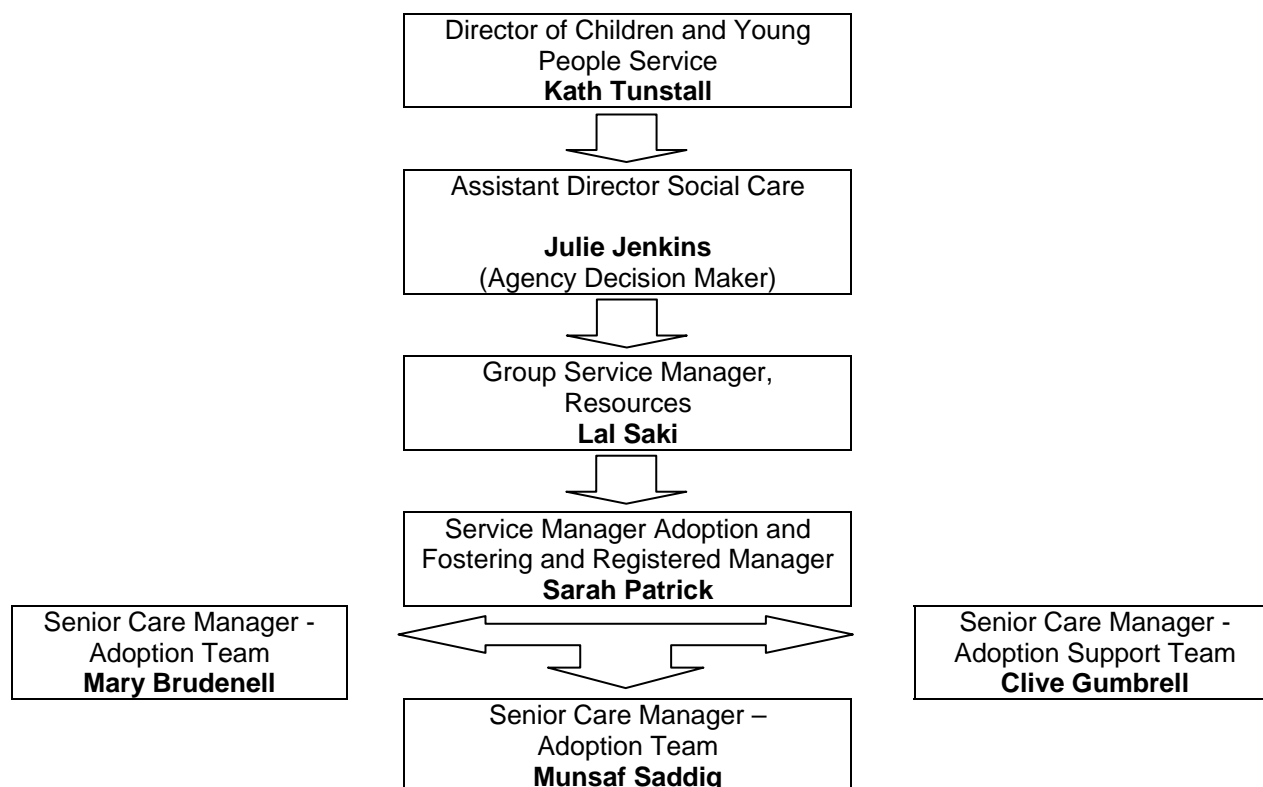
The agency is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 by:

1. Ensuring the provision of a high quality adoption service which guarantees the best possible standards for care, safety and protection for children or young people who are looked after and who need adoptive placements.
2. Ensuring that all those whose lives have been affected by adoption are helped to identify and receive appropriate services.

Objectives:

1. To recruit, assess and provide adopters that meet the needs of the children to be placed for adoption within the timescales laid down by National Adoption Standards.
2. To provide information on the process to applicants interested in becoming adopters and on the children requiring adoption.
3. To ensure that adopters receive appropriate preparation ,training, support and advice to enable them to offer the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for children or young people in their care.
4. To provide information on the services available to all those affected by adoption recognising that as Adoption has lifelong implications for all those involved their needs will change over time.
5. To provide a range of adoption support services to birth relatives, adopters and their children in partnership with other agencies.
6. To provide information on the Service that is available to those wishing to Adopt from abroad.
7. To ensure that any decisions are fair and transparent.
8. That concerns about the service are addressed, that information about the complaints procedure is made available.
9. That the organisation regularly reviews the services it provides, consults with, and learns from, those in receipt of their services through comments, compliments and complaints.

4. Management Structure



5. Office Location and Facilities

- The Adoption service is based within the Adoption and Fostering Unit at Shipley with easy transport links to Bradford city and the areas of the metropolitan district in the Aire Valley
- Information about the Adoption Service can be accessed in a variety of ways including the recruitment line and several websites; Bradford website (www.bradford.gov.uk) accessed from the home page by using the A – Z of services menu, the “one stop” shop, Bdirect (www.bdirect.org.uk) and the Units’ own website (www.bradfordadoptionfostering.org.uk).
- All enquiries whether received by the recruitment phone line, email, internet or visit to the office are dealt with and followed through to up to approval by the Admin Recruitment Officer. An interpreter is available through the three way phone service via the Interpreting and Translation Unit. Help is also offered by social workers in the Unit who speak Asian languages. Currently there are social workers who speak Urdu, Punjabi, Mirpuri and Bengali.
- The Adoption Service recruits, prepares and supports adopters and offers advice on adoption support and access to information issues. There are two adoption teams. One team is responsible for the recruitment and approval of adopters and placement of children who have adoption as their plan and an Adoption Support Team responsible for providing a variety of post adoption services in conjunction with other agencies; these include the administration of the Letterbox service, undertaking assessments of need, providing support or advice to all those

affected by adoption. This team is also responsible for assessment of support where children who were previously Looked After are cared for under Special Guardianship Orders

- The Adoption teams are based within the Adoption and Fostering Unit .The Unit is based within two adjacent buildings which house both mainstream, Family and Friends and the Shared Care Fostering teams. Also based in this building are the Placement Coordination team who are responsible for receiving all initial requests for placements and the Residential Service Managers.
- The main building has a range of meeting rooms used for both the general public information meetings, preparation and training of foster cares and prospective adoptive parents and the Adoption panels. There is limited visitors' and disabled parking space directly outside the building and on street parking , some of which is time limited during the day. There are public car parks within a few minutes walk. Regular bus services are available into Bradford, Keighley and across the city. Train stations at Shipley and Saltaire are also close by.
- There is disabled access to the ground floor meeting rooms with more limited access to the second floor and basement. There is a Mincom link at Reception.
- There is secure storage for paper case records and adoption archives. Information stored electronically on the mainframe drives are backed up centrally.

6. Numbers, Qualifications and experience of staff

- The Adoption Service is managed by the Service Manager for Adoption and Fostering .who is the Registered Manager for the Adoption Service and the Fostering Service. There are three Senior Care Managers for the Adoption service. The Registered manager is responsible for the long-term and short term fostering teams with three managers There is another Service Manager Fostering and 4 further fostering managers for other parts the fostering service ..
- Service Manager Adoption and Fostering , Sarah Patrick , CQSW and Diploma in Management Studies, joined the service in July 2004 . She has 36 years post qualification experience in child care, including 20 years in Adoption and Fostering and been a manager for 20 of those within both a child care team and adoption and fostering.
- Senior Care Manager Adoption Team - Mary Brudenell CQSW , a BA (Hons)in Applied Social Studies and the Post Qualifying Award in Social Work . Mary has 23 post years qualification experience in child care and adoption including a previous management post in a child care team.
- Senior Care Manager Adoption Team - Munsaf Saddiq DipSW, BA (Hons) in Organisation Studies and NVQ Level 4 in Training and Development. Munsaf has 13 years post qualification experience in child care including a previous management post in NHS as a CAMHS Workforce Development Manager.

- Senior Care Manager Adoption Support (Acting) - Clive Gumbrell CQSW, BSoc Sci (Political Science), and the Post Qualifying Award in Social Work . Clive has 23 years post qualification experience in child care and adoption including at Senior Practitioner level in Adoption Support .
- There are a total of 12 social workers in the Adoption team (equivalent to 9.95 fulltime workers).All staff are permanent apart from one who is covering the 12 month secondment of member of staff to the Adoption Support team.
- In the Adoption Support team there are four permanent fulltime social workers and one community resource worker.
- The Community Resource worker has experience of child care work, in the community and family centre work, a qualified NNEB.
- All social workers have a social work qualification, are registered with the General Social Care Council and have relevant experience within a children and families service. Four of the workers across the Adoption teams have the full Post Qualifying Award. All staff have an enhanced CRB check. New social workers and managers with no previous adoption experience are subject to a six month probationary period.
- The Adoption team share the services of the admin team with the Fostering Service. One admin worker is dedicated to the Post Adoption Service and two admin workers are panel secretaries to the two Adoption Panels. The admin recruitment officer provides the initial contact point for all fostering and adoption enquiries and follows applicants through the process, arranging the information meetings, taking up the references, CRBs etc, dealing with any queries right up to the point of panel.
- Service Promotions for the Adoption and Fostering Service are managed by a job share of two marketing workers. This role is broad covering the co-ordination of all publicity, recruitment advertising, collation and analysis of information about recruitment, assist in organising events and feedback and the publishing of the in-house newsletters for adopters and foster carers.
- The services of a Child and Educational Psychologist are contracted on a sessional basis to provide services to the Unit. He undertakes assessments, consultation, and offers advise about matching and placements with some direct therapeutic work with children and carers/adopters
- When required the Adoption team contracts with other adoption or social work agencies to provide independent assessments.

7. Procedure for recruiting, preparing, assessing and approving adopters

- **Enquirers**

An information pack about the service and the process is sent to enquirers. Dates are provided for the Information meetings for the year. These packs are usually sent to enquirers on the same day but always sent within 2 working days of an enquiry being made. The pack also includes a leaflet about Adoption UK, illustrating that Bradford supports enquirers in obtaining the widest information available and that this agency seeks to work collaboratively with a wide range of organisations.

- **Applications for Adoptions From Abroad**

Due to the specialist nature of this work the Unit has a service level agreement with Doncaster Family Welfare Society who conducts this work for Bradford residents. Applicants who wish to use this service are required to pay a fee of £5000 directly to the Society (Correct at April 2010).

- **Information Meetings**

These are held monthly for adoption and bimonthly with the fostering service. This meeting provides the opportunity for people enquiring about adoption to explore different options. Approved adopters are present meet and talk to people about their experiences, answering any questions. Enquirers are then seen individually by a worker to both explore individual queries and discuss the initial eligibility criteria. Interpreting facilities are provided for those families who wish to gain information in Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi. Members of staff with those languages may also be present.

Enquirers who meet the eligibility criteria are provided with a registration of interest form which, if the application progresses, is used to take up the statutory checks, medicals and references.

If an enquirer is employed by Children's Social Care they will usually be advised to apply to another agency.

- **Initial Home Visit**

Following receipt of a registration of interest form an adoption social worker makes an Initial Home Visit to discuss their interest in more detail and identify any possible issues which may need to be followed up before proceeding.

Following this a decision is made about whether they will proceed to the next stage, this is confirmed in writing with dates of the preparation groups and once an application form is received the statutory checks, CRB and medicals are taken up and the assessment is deemed to have commenced.

If the decision is taken not to proceed the reasons will be given in writing along with advice about appeal and the complaints procedure.

- **Preparation Groups**

Invitation to attend a preparation group is usually within 1 month of the application being received.

Preparation groups for first time adopters are run 5 or 6 times per year. Groups for Asian language speakers are run 2 or 3 times per year in collaboration with Kirklees and Leeds councils, under the auspices of the Yorkshire Adoption Consortium. Work shops for adopters making subsequent applications are run as required; usually once per year.

- **Home Study**

The allocated social worker starts the home study within a month of completion of the preparation group and a panel date will be identified usually within three months of the start of the home study.

A leaflet explaining all about the Adoption Panel is included with a letter inviting applicants to the panel when the hearing of their case is confirmed for a specific date (2 to 4 weeks before the panel date).

Panel should take place 6 months from the receipt of application form unless complications or delays have occurred due to unforeseen circumstances. The Adoption Placement Report presented to panel will include adoption support plans and will be presented to applicants 10 days before panel of their comments.

There may be circumstances where it is not possible to allocate an assessment within a reasonable timescale or where it is deemed there may be a conflict of interest. In these situations consideration will be given either to asking another agency or worker to undertake the assessment.

- **Adoption by existing foster carers.**

Foster carers should write to the Department stating their wish to be considered as adopters for child/children in their care. If the plan is for adoption this will be acknowledged and a meeting held between workers from the adoption and fostering teams and the child's social worker to consider how this should be progressed and will be discussed with foster carers who will also be informed of their legal rights. For foster cares to be considered as agency adopters an assessment as adopters would usually need to take place and this would include the carer's attendance at adoption preparation groups.

- **Adoption Panel.**

The main purpose of the Adoption Panel is to consider and make recommendations to the Adoption agency that:-

- a child should be adopted,
- people are approved as adoptive parents,
- approve the match of a child/ren to adopters and,
- consider where those decisions are to be rescinded.

There are two Adoption Panels, each meets once per month and both have the same Independent Chair. Membership of the panels meets the statutory regulations and includes adoptive parents and other ex service users.

Panel members hold a briefing meeting at the start of each panel and work out questions for each item of business which are then typed up for social workers and applicants to read prior to coming into panel.

All applicants are invited to attend Adoption Panel, and it is expected that they will attend. On the rare occasions applicants choose not to attend, their worker will arrange to ring them on the day to consult them about the questions that panel have drafted.

There may be up to two observers on panel.

The Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who will make his / her decision following consideration of the recommendations and the information presented at panel. They may make a decision different to that recommended by the Panel.

Negative Recommendations and Decisions that the prospective applicant is not suitable to adopt.

Occasionally the agency may not be recommending approval but applicants have a right for their case to be considered by the Panel if they wish.

The Panel may make a recommendation that the prospective adopter is not suitable to adopt and if the Agency Decision maker is minded to accept this recommendation the prospective adopter will be notified in writing that it proposes not to approve then as suitable to adopt a child (this is called a Qualifying determination) along with reasons for this and a copy of the recommendations of panel. The applicant then has 40 working days from the date the notification was sent to either submit any representations which will be considered by the Adoption Panel or choose to have their case heard by the regional Independent Review Panel (IRM); the IRM may either uphold the decision or recommend to the Agency Decision that the case is reconsidered.

Applicants and workers will be verbally informed of the agencies decision within 2 working days and will receive this in writing within 5 working days.

8. Post Approval

- **Support and matching**

Following panel the worker for the adopters will work with them to identify matches to a child/ren and provide support and guidance throughout the process up to the point of adoption.

Post approval visits will usually be six weekly with contact in between those times when necessary. Prospective adopters are advised to consult their worker if considering any changes to their circumstances that may alter the assessment that was approved by the Panel. Information will be given about the children currently on referral from Bradford and when a referral to the regional consortium or the National register will be made. All prospective adopters are referred to the National Adoption Register at six months if no match has been identified. Each child who has adoption as the plan will have been allocated a social worker from the Adoption team, the Family Finder, who works closely with the child's social worker to consider matches for that child

Adopters are given the Child Permanence Report, meet with the child social worker and other professional relevant for that particular child; medical advisers, child's foster carers, teacher etc to ensure they receive all the available and known information about a child to enable them to make an informed decision. The report will include details of any proposal for contact, or exchange of information through the Letterbox system, to the birth family and any other birth siblings who have been adopted which will operate once the child is adopted.

Details of the level of parental responsibility that will be delegated to the prospective adopters will be outlined and any post adoption support, including any financial arrangements will also be discussed. The proposals for the placement will be set out in the Adoption Placement Report which will be seen by the prospective adopters before panel and their comments and observations will be included in the panel documentation.

- **Process for Matching of a child**

The child's worker, the prospective adopters and their worker attend the Adoption Panel. The child's foster carers may also attend. The process for panel is the same as for approval with recommendations being made to the Agency Decision Maker who make the decision. In the event that a child from another agency is to be matched with a Bradford family, it is expected that prior to panel, the details of the child will be shown to the medical and legal advisers for this agency for their comments and observations. If a match is agreed by the Agency Decision Maker, introduction will be planned to incorporate the needs of all parties with a clear focus on the needs of the child. There will be a planning meeting which will normally take place after the first meeting between the adopters and the child. This meeting will involve the foster carer, the prospective adopters, and the relevant social workers (for the child, the carers and the adopters) and may be chaired by a manager or other worker.

The meeting will draw up a timetable and process for the introductions and the monitoring and support.

A provisional move date will be suggested but will be reviewed during the introductions.

Most adopters will meet the child's birth parents prior to placement, or soon after, so they can talk to their child about their birth family and aid the exchange of information.

- **Financial Arrangements**

Adopters receive information about the financial help available to them. All adopters receive an initial grant to assist with essential equipment and cost of the application to Court. If the child to be placed meets the criteria an assessment for ongoing financial support will be carried out to inform the prospective adopters of the level of finance they can expect to receive. Additional support may be available following identification and assessment of need of the particular child. The financial support will be documented in the Adoption Placement Report presented to panel at the time of the proposed match.

- **Annual Reviews of Prospective adopters**

In the event that it is not possible to move to a match within 12 months from approval, the Adoption Social Worker, and their manager will conduct a Review of the plans with the adopters. If no placement has been made within two years of approval, an updated report will go to Adoption Panel for their consideration.

- **Post Placement**

Visits will be made by both the child's social worker and the prospective adopters' social worker. These are based on both statutory requirements and the individual needs of the child and prospective adopter. The child has to be visited in the first

week of placement, followed by at least one of the workers visiting weekly up to the child's first statutory review at 4 weeks post placement where the pattern of visiting will be discussed and agreed at that Review but will not be less than six weekly. A meeting between the prospective adoptive parent(s) and the birth parents is usually arranged a few months after placement, in a suitable venue.

The Child's review will determine when an application to adopt may be made and advice will be given by the worker for the prospective adopters.

The Annex A Report for Court will be prepared by both the family's and child's social workers.

- **The Letterbox Service**

A Letterbox arrangement may be set up between the adoptive parents on behalf of the child and a birth parent or guardian, any other relative or with any other person the agency considers relevant. This includes contact between birth siblings who have been adopted into different families. Currently there are 1000 exchanges for 450 children.

- **Post Approval Training**

Workshops are provided for approved adopters on issues concerning drugs and alcohol and their impact on children and on legal issues are run twice per year. Their worker will ensure that adopters have access to local support networks and specialist national organisations, e.g., BAAF, Adoption UK, NORCAP and other statutory services and on the mailing list for any events organised through the Unit.

9. Adoption Support Services

The Unit has a specialist Adoption Support team who offer a range of support services and act as a contact/sign-posting for other services to all those affected by adoption:

- Adoptive Parents,
- adopted children and young people under 18 years old,
- birth parents,
- adopted adults over 18 years old,

The team works in partnership with After Adoption Yorkshire, who are contracted to provide a range of services to adopted adults, birth relatives and adoptive families.

For Adoptive Families:

- Assessments of need for adoption service,
- assistance and review of contact arrangements between adopters and birth relatives, such as letterbox service,
- a regular newsletter to Adopters on adoption matters and services,
- an annual social event for adoptive families,
- training and workshops on a range of adoption issues,
- links with mental health services and educational services,
- respite support,
- advice and a confidential counselling service.

For adopted children and young people:

- Listening to them,
- helping them to understand their background,
- helping them to have contact with other children who are adopted, through activities and social events,
- providing information about other organisations that are designed to help adopted children.

For birth relatives:

- A confidential and independent advice and counselling service,
- help in maintaining some contact with their child/children through the Letterbox Service, where letters and/or pictures can be exchanged via the Unit,
- enabling parents to record on their child's file whether or not they wish to have contact with their child from the age of 18.

For Adopted Adults:

- Discussion and advice about wishes around contact with and from birth relatives,
- counselling and assistance with accessing and understanding more information about their history,
- counselling /advice about the implications of tracing and making contact,
- intermediary service between adopted adults and birth relatives,
- support groups and workshops.

- **The Music Group**

The JG music group operates once a week throughout the school term. The group provides the opportunity for children/young people who are fostered or adopted, and the children of foster carers or adopters, to learn to play a musical instrument within a supportive and small environment, encouraging the development of a range of skills and promoting self confidence.

The trust was formed with donations following the death of social work manager and was developed by a member of the Units staff.

The Adoption and Fostering Unit funds the musicians and the foster carers and adopters who facilitate the sessions. There is a committee, supported by staff at the Unit, who is responsible for the running of the group, managing the applications and fundraising for future developments.

An annual end of term event is held to celebrate each young person's achievements and the awarding of certificates.

10. Monitoring and evaluation of the Adoption Service

- The Adoption Agency is monitored by external inspections by OFSTED the last inspection was In July 2007 where the service was judged to be Good . The report is available from the registration address , via the Ofsted website A copy is also available in the Units reception area , on the Website or a copy may be requested direct from the Service.

- The service provides reports to Senior Management on performance and is measured against national targets on a regular basis through the Children's Integrated Service Improvement Framework.
- Issues arising from complaints are discussed and recommendations following complaints are implemented.
- Regular feedback is received from the Adoption Panels with quarterly meetings between the management team, Panel chair and vice chairs. The Adoption Agency Review is presented to one of the Adoption Panel training sessions at the end of the financial year.

11. Concerns and Complaints.

If at any stage any one receiving a service is not satisfied with the service the first approach should be to discuss this with a member of staff providing the service. The procedure is outlined overleaf, you can request a complaints leaflet or write direct to the Complaints Unit. The contact details are at the end of this document.

STAGE 1	<p>Your complaint will be acknowledged within two working days. A manager responsible for providing the service will look into the issues you have raised, and will provide you with a written response within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. If your complaint is very complex and this isn't possible the Complaints Manager will let you know.</p> <p>(undertaken by direct line manager/children's complaints officer)</p>
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STAGE 2	<p>If you are not satisfied with the written response at stage 1 you could ask for your complaint to be considered at stage 2.</p> <p>An investigation will be carried out by a manager from a different area and an independent person. You will receive a response from the Head of Service within 25 working days, together with copies of the Investigating Officer's and the Independent Person's report. If the complaint is very complex and this isn't possible, the Complaints Manager will contact you.</p>
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STAGE 3	<p>If you are still dissatisfied with the response at Stage 2 you can ask (within 20 working days) for an independent Review Panel to review the investigation and the response. The Panel will make recommendations to the Director within 5 working days of this review, and the Director will give you a final response within 15 working days.</p>
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12. Complaints received about a service provided by another Agency.

Where the Department has received a complaint in relation to another agency, which is providing a service on behalf of the Department, the Complaints Officer has a responsibility to notify the agency and pass on the complaint. In these circumstances the Department will seek confirmation that the complaint was fully investigated by the other agency.

Complaints about any parts of the service may be made direct to the Service or through the following:-

Complaints Manager Children's Social Care Services
FREEPOST BD2400
Olicana House
35 Chapel Street
Bradford
BD1 1BR

Registration Authority
Ofsted
North 3rd Floor
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA
Telephone 08456 404040