

Securing families for Suffolk children



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Why have a guide to Suffolk's adoption services?

Government regulations require us to set out our principles, what services we provide and how the Agency works¹ in a "Statement of Purpose". This is a complete guide to all the services we provide and how we provide them to help all those affected by adoption to know what to expect of the service².

Who is it for?

- ✓ Young people.
- ✓ Birth family members.
- ✓ Prospective adoptive parents
- ✓ Adoptive parents.
- ✓ Agency staff (this includes social workers, social work practitioners, managers and business support staff).
- ✓ Members of our permanence panels.
- ✓ Councillors.
- ✓ Other adoption agencies.
- ✓ Other organisations that work with children and families.
- ✓ Inspectors.
- ✓ Members of the public.

Where can you see this guide?

You can find it on the internet at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

When staff and panel members join us, we give them a copy and then let them know every time changes are made.

Written copies are available at all our offices. If you would like a written copy please write to the Professional Adviser (Permanence), Suffolk Adoption Agency, Children's Services, Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Russell Rd, Ipswich, IP1 2BX.

When needed, we will arrange for the statement to be translated into other languages or made



available in a format that is right for someone with physical, sensory and learning impairments and communication difficulties.

Changes to this guide.

The guide will be regularly reviewed and updated at least annually.

Our mission: Securing families for Suffolk children

Suffolk Adoption Agency is part of the Corporate Parenting Section of Suffolk's Children and Young People's Directorate and is fully committed to promoting the Government's Every Child Matters principles³ for children by means of adoption when this is the best way to meet the child's needs.

We are committed to providing a comprehensive and high-quality service to meet the lifelong needs of all those individuals whose lives are affected by adoption.

We give particular emphasis to finding and maintaining safe and secure families for children and young people needing adoption enabling them to achieve the best possible outcomes for life.



Our values: How we try to carry out our mission

We fully support the values and principles set out in the National Minimum Standards⁴. Our Policies are based on them. These values sum up what we stand for and what we expect our staff, panels, adopters, and partner agencies to support.

- ✓ Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- ✓ Where possible it is best for children to be brought up by 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 actively sought and fully taken into 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's 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 different organisations, professions and individuals who have to work together to meet the needs of those affected by adoption.

We are also committed to -

- ✓ Ensure that our services promote equal opportunities and do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of their age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, religion or culture.
- ✓ Improve standards of practice and service continuously to respond to changes in law, standards and best practice.
- ✓ Develop and enrich partnerships with other local, regional and national agencies to improve standards and offer a complete service, taking every opportunity to share best practice as openly as possible.



Our policies

We have detailed adoption policies and procedures to guide us in the way in which we put our principles into action. These cover children, adopters, birth families, adoption support, non-agency⁵ adoption and intercountry adoption.

When staff and panel members join us, we give them a copy of the adoption policies and then let them know every time changes are made.



You can find these on the Internet at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm> or ask us for a written copy as described above.

We also have a complete range of more general Suffolk policies (for example, concerning Equalities, Conflict of Interest, Security of Confidential Information, etc⁶). Copies of these policies are given to staff as part of their induction and are available at each of our offices.

Who receives adoption services?

- ✓ Children requiring adoption.
- ✓ Birth relatives.
- ✓ Prospective adopters.
- ✓ Approved adopters.
- ✓ Children and their adoptive families who need adoption support.
- ✓ Adopted adults and members of their birth families.

What services do we provide them?



We publicise adoption services and how to access them. This includes information about services provided by other agencies.

The Suffolk Adoption Agency has a free phone line (**0800 389 9417**) for enquiries about adopting. This is widely publicised throughout Suffolk. We give basic information to enquirers by phone and send an information pack within five days. We have a Publicity and Recruitment Coordinator for the Agency and for the Suffolk Fostering Service. The post holder writes our publicity and recruitment strategy, which is updated annually⁷. This sets out how we aim to keep the need for adopters in the minds of Suffolk people.

Adoption information is also available on the Suffolk Adoption Agency website⁸ which links to a website designed for enquirers at www.suffolkadoption.com. The two sites provide a great deal of adoption information including information leaflets and links to other useful adoption organisations.



We have a well mapped out recruitment process. At every stage, we are there to advise, counsel and support enquirers who become approved adopters and those who do not.

The Suffolk Adoption Agency holds monthly information meetings to which our enquirers are invited. These meetings give an overall picture of adopting in Suffolk and include information about Suffolk children needing adoptive homes. Enquirers can also meet experienced adoption workers and adoptive parents. We tell enquirers that priority will be given to applicants who are able to meet the needs of the children currently awaiting adoption. This can change at any given time but often we need adopters for older children, sibling groups and children of black and minority ethnic heritage. It may not be practicable to assess everyone who cannot meet the needs of children currently needing placement.

People wishing to proceed receive an initial visit from an adoption social worker where their personal circumstances will be discussed. If enquirers wish to pursue their interest further we seek information from them to enable the checks and references to be undertaken⁹. We give enquirers a copy of our *Procedures on references and checks for prospective adopters* which explains what we need from them and why¹⁰.

If at this stage the enquirers or the Agency consider that they should not go ahead to be assessed as adopters, a full discussion will be offered to explore the circumstances leading to this decision. This is confirmed in writing. Whenever possible the reasons for not proceeding will be shared with the applicants. Exceptionally, it may not be possible to disclose third-party information.

Once we have received satisfactory references and checks, we invite enquirers to attend an adopters' preparation course. *We require* first-time prospective adoptive parents to attend such a course. This is to help them understand the difference between parenting an adopted child and parenting a birth child and the impact this is likely to have on the child, themselves and their families.

When the course is finished, enquirers who want to go ahead (most do) are asked to make a formal written application.

We then carry out a home study assessment. We aim to complete the assessment within six months of the formal application although sometimes the Agency and the adopter need longer to complete the process.



The exception is for foster carers, whose applications will be completed in four months



We assess prospective adopters using objective, fair and transparent criteria.

Our information booklet provides clear criteria on the qualities and skills required to adopt Suffolk children.

Adopters will need to show that they can:

- ✓ learn from experience,
- ✓ cope with stress,
- ✓ meet the ethnic, cultural, health and educational needs of the child needing adoption,
- ✓ offer consistency of care and opportunities for bonding and attachment,
- ✓ work with children's social workers and other agencies to secure necessary services for the child,
- ✓ build and sustain close, intimate and reciprocal relationships,
- ✓ understand other peoples points of view and their feelings, that is, have empathy,
- ✓ be in touch with sad and angry feelings,
- ✓ resolve past wrongs or losses,
- ✓ build secure attachments and share difficulties.

At the information meeting people are informed about a wide range of people who can adopt. These include:

- ✓ families from all types of backgrounds,
- ✓ couples with or without children,
- ✓ couples who are married or not; heterosexual or gay,
- ✓ single people,
- ✓ people from all ethnicities,
- ✓ people with disabilities,
- ✓ people who are not "perfect",
- ✓ people who have had problems in the past,
- ✓ people who rent their houses,
- ✓ some overweight people,
- ✓ people whose infertility treatment has ended.



Further explanation is given to each of these bullet points. So, for instance, when discussing weight, smoking and age this is qualified by explaining that adopters need to have the health and vigour to meet the many and varied demands of children throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

Further information is given about the qualities needed to adopt, which are:

- ✓ The ability to see the child as he or she is, not how you would like them to be.
- ✓ Acceptance, commitment, flexibility, stickability, sensitivity and openness.
- ✓ The ability to cope with a bit of mess and disruption - *not* perfectionists.
- ✓ Ability to ask for and accept help.
- ✓ A sense of humour.

During the remainder of the assessment process, other criteria are explored in more depth with applicants, including the non-smacking policy¹¹, and the need for adopters to embrace Britain as a multiracial society and value diversity. We also share with applicants information about how we safeguard children placed for adoption and how any allegations against adopters are managed.

The information for the assessment is brought together using the *Prospective Adopters Report* produced by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering. An adoption social worker visits applicants in their own home. They are seen together and separately if there is more than one applicant. Applicants are invited to make their own written as well as verbal contributions to their assessment. Work with the adopters' (or adopter's) own children is also undertaken if appropriate. Other members of the household are also interviewed. Significant relatives and referees are seen at this stage. The assessing adoption social worker will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be adopters.

Applicants see the completed *Prospective Adopters Report* and have 10 working days to comment on it before it goes to the permanence panel. Prospective adopters are invited to attend the permanence panel where their application is being considered.



We provide a service to intercountry adopters.

Suffolk Adoption Agency Policies make clear our commitment to assess and prepare intercountry adopters to the same standard as domestic adopters. However, intercountry adopters do need some additional advice and we believe they should attend a preparation group tailored to their particular needs. Since Suffolk receives only between five and ten applications per year from prospective intercountry adopters it is hard for the in-house services to offer the specialist advice and preparation that intercountry adopters require.

Because of this, Suffolk Adoption Agency has entered into an agreement with Parents and Children Together (PACT) to provide this service to Suffolk intercountry adopters on our behalf. This includes advice, assessment and preparation, consideration by the PACT panel and subsequent approval processes with the Department for Children Schools and Families.

Therefore, we redirect intercountry adoption enquirers to PACT. We monitor the agreement with PACT to ensure that the service meets the needs of intercountry adopters.

We assess non-agency (including step-parent) adoptions applications.

We send enquirers written information about non-agency adoption within five working days. We then invite enquirers to an information meeting. These are held three times a year. Following this meeting, enquirers are asked to apply in writing if they wish to proceed. Applicants are asked to complete the forms for statutory checks in line with agency adopters.



The social worker is allocated and begins home visits and other inquiries. The applicants make their application to court.

The social worker must then complete a detailed report for court known as a *Rule 29* report.

Suffolk Adoption Agency commissions independent social workers to complete this work with applicants.

We offer support, information and counselling to birth parents.

Birth parents and birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption.

A social worker explains the adoption process and asks the birth parent's views about the kind of family they would ideally like for their child. Birth parents will also be asked for their views about contact and whether they would like their child placed with siblings.

The social worker will explain the importance to the child of having a full medical history of not only the birth parents but also wider members of the birth family.

The adoption agency will be responsible for providing the birth family with information about local and national support groups and helping them to fulfil agreed plans for contact.

All birth parents will be encouraged to provide information and contribute to their child's life storybook and letter for later life.

In addition, birth parents are offered access to *independent* counselling provided through Post Adoption LINK. We also have information leaflets for birth parents explaining the adoption process.

After an adoption order is made, birth parents are entitled to be assessed for adoption support services by the Agency.

***We help children prepare for placement with prospective adopters. We support them after they are placed and adopted.***

We make every effort to find a placement that meets the child's emotional and developmental needs. This takes into account their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability. However no child should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement. Placements that cannot meet all these needs, but are sympathetic to them, can be considered.

Every child should have a life storybook and a letter for later life. The life storybook provides a simple and age appropriate explanation of what has happened to the child up until they join their adopted family. It includes pictures



of important people and places in the child's life so far, mementoes and other information relevant to the child. The child's social worker does this work with help and advice from the adoption social worker.

We try to provide the child with a full and realistic family history and help maintain their heritage. The letter for later life should include information about the child's birth and early life, and provide up-to-date information about themselves and their situation. The child's social worker writes this letter to be read by young adopted people when they reach their teenage years.

Social workers, foster carers and others work to prepare children for adoptive placement. Work is undertaken with children in regard to their wishes and feelings about adoption and the kind of family they would ideally like to live with.

Once a family has been agreed, we give children appropriate information about their new family in a format they can understand. This often includes photos, books and DVDs prepared by the prospective adopters.

We prepare prospective adopters for the placement of a child. We support them after the child is placed and adopted.



Prospective adopters receive preparation for a child being placed when they attend the preparation course and during their assessment



When a match with a particular child or children is being discussed, the adoption social worker and child's social worker will tell the prospective adopters about the child and give some written information too. If the prospective adopters wish to proceed, they will receive further detailed information including the child's permanence report. The child's foster carer and the two social workers will also visit them.



All prospective adoptive parents have the opportunity to meet with the medical adviser prior to the permanence panel but particularly where children have special needs.

Where the child's case has been considered by court, leave of the court will be sought to disclose specialist written reports about the child that may help adopters.



If, on reflection, the prospective adopters wish to proceed with a match, a placement planning meeting will be called at least three weeks before any match goes to the permanence panel. An agency manager or senior practitioner will chair this. The meeting includes the adopter(s), the adoption social worker, the child's social worker, foster carer(s) and the foster carer's link worker.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the adopters have all the relevant information available about the child. We provide the prospective adopters with a copy of the child's permanence report, matching report and adoption support plan before the meeting. The adopters and the agency are then able to reflect upon the proposed match and the plan to support the placement. As well as seeking the prospective adopters' views about the placement, children's views are sought when they are old enough.

If all parties agree that the proposed match is a sound one, an introductions programme is devised in consultation with the adopters. Adopters have up to 10 days to comment on the plan before the permanence panel considers it.

The permanence panel will then make a recommendation on its suitability.

If the match is agreed, the introduction programme will typically start some 10 days after the panel. We review the programme part way through and revise it if necessary. When we review the introductions programme, we try to gauge how the child is responding. If need be, we adjust the program to suit the child's needs. If all is going well, a date is agreed when the child is placed with the adopters.

Once the child or children are placed, the child's social worker and the adoption social worker continue to visit the prospective adopters to support the placement and help them with their parenting of the child.

After the child is placed with the adopters, the social worker continues to support the child. Where more in-depth work is needed, the child and prospective adopters can be referred to services provided by other agencies as part of an adoption support plan. These include the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and *CONNECT* (the local service dedicated to the mental health needs of children looked after by a council).

We continue to hold reviews chaired by an independent reviewing officer until an adoption order is made. The review first considers the child's progress and then the adoption support plan and whether changes need to be made to it. The



adopter or adopters are informed that they can make contact with the Agency at any time in the future if they wish the adoption support plan to be reviewed.

We have clear criteria for adoption financial support and other payments, the arrangements for review and making these available to adopters.

Suffolk Adoption Agency is able to pay introductory expenses and will meet the costs of legal expenses where the adoption is contested or particularly complex. We will pay the court fees for an adoption application for adopters.

At the point of matching, all children must have an adoption support plan, which highlights any financial implications. We provide adopters with a leaflet¹² setting out what benefits they may be entitled to. When all possible benefits have been claimed and if there is still a financial need, the Agency assesses whether we are able to assist with this. The adoption support plan must be agreed with the adoptive family before being presented to the permanence panel.

Subsequently, the child and adopters circumstances will need to be reassessed before any help is offered. Where there is a specific need for financial help related to the placement for adoption and subject to means testing (which is required by government regulations¹³) Suffolk will consider assisting adopters before and after the child is adopted.

Unless the circumstances are exceptional, most financial help given will be in the form of one-off rather than regular payments. One exception is where existing foster carers are adopting, where the Agency can agree to regular payments for a period up to two years.

The Agency has a scheme for financial support, details of which are provided to adopters and which are available on the Suffolk Adoption Agency website.



We have processes for making, maintaining, monitoring and reviewing contact plans for each adopted child.

Suffolk Adoption Agency recognises the importance of children and young people having suitable contact with their birth families and other significant



people. Such contact is entirely governed by the best interests of the children. Contact can vary from the annual exchange of written information to face-to-face contact with members of the birth family at intervals appropriate for the child.

The agency operates a letterbox contact scheme for the exchange of information between adoptive families and birth families.

Birth families are also supported in arrangements for letterbox and direct face-to-face contact with the child by adoption support social workers.

We believe there are mutual benefits from at least one meeting between the child's birth parent and the adoptive parent or parents around the time of introductions. Other significant birth relatives may also be involved.

Contact plans are first considered at the looked after children reviews and included in the care plan. Permanence panels may advise on contact plans. There may be further work to ensure that these plans are viable at any time between the panel where it was recommended that the child should be placed for adoption, the making of the care order and the panel considering a proposed match for a child with prospective adopters. Children's needs change over time and contact plans may need to alter to reflect the child's changing circumstances and needs.

After placement, contact arrangements continue to be revisited at each review. But we do not review contact arrangements after an adoption order is made. If there are any issues that arise later, these are addressed through the adoption support social workers.



We review disrupted placements, ascertaining the causes for the breakdown to aid future planning for the child.

Very few placements for children do break down. But where there is a disruption¹⁴ the Agency convenes a disruption meeting in order to try to understand the factors that led to the breakdown of the placement. This helps in planning future placements. These meetings are chaired by a safeguarding



manager who does not know the adopters or the child or an independent social worker experienced in adoption. A summary of the conclusions of the meeting are sent to the adoption management team, each member of the adoption teams and the relevant permanence panel to inform future practice.

We make sure that child protection concerns are investigated.

As well as the procedures published by the Suffolk Safeguarding Board the adoption agency has *Guidance for safeguarding children placed for adoption*¹⁵. We also publish a leaflet for adopters explaining how we deal with child protection concerns and allegations entitled *Dealing with an allegation- Information for prospective adopters*.

There is a range of post adoption support services available to all those affected by adoption.

Suffolk Adoption Agency acknowledges that adoption is a lifelong process and, at various times in their lives, adopted children and their families may need support to manage issues or concerns that can arise. In particular, many children may need to make sense of their own identity at key stages in their development.

Suffolk Adoption Agency has social workers dedicated to adoption support within the Ipswich Adoption Team. The team provides an intermediary service to birth families and a service for adult adoptees seeking to access information about their adoption.

The team also provides a range of direct services to adoptive families if they are experiencing any difficulties. The agency is commissioning and developing more specialist services from organisations such as Adoption UK, Family Futures Consortium, and Barnardos LINK.

This is a list of our services:

- ❑ Assessment of family support needs for children adopters and other family members.
- ❑ The provision of relevant information and signposting to other available services and a regular newsletter
- ❑ Support and Advice on parenting and school issues
- ❑ Support with direct and indirect contact arrangements with birth relatives
- ❑ Life Story Work with children and their parents together
- ❑ Access to a programme of training workshops
- ❑ Support Groups for adopters
- ❑ Events including an annual summer picnic and Xmas party



- ❑ Financial support and help to access benefits. Financial support in some specified circumstances (see elsewhere in this guide)
- ❑ LIMK- an independent service providing advice for those involved in any aspect of adoption. Includes family days, counselling etc.

We also provide-

- ❑ Services for adopted people over the age of 18 who are seeking information about their origins through access to their birth records.
- ❑ Support to adopted adults who wish to make contact with birth relatives through our intermediary service. *Please note we are not a tracing agency.*
- ❑ Support to birth relatives who wish to contact an adopted relative through our intermediary service.



We have an equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of adoption.

The Suffolk Adoption Agency works to the Suffolk County Council's Diversity policy. The Agency will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

Suffolk Adoption Agency Policies say clearly that applicants wishing to be approved as adopters will be considered irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability, provided that the agency believes that they can safely meet the needs of children through to independence¹⁶.

Every effort will be made to find the placement which meets a child's emotional and developmental needs, taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability. However the child should not have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

Where to find us



Suffolk Adoption Agency, Suffolk Children and
Version 20 October 20
Comments to Professional Adviser



Principal's House, Thorndon

Our Thorndon Team is based at Principal's House, Stoke Rd, Thorndon, Suffolk, IP23 7JG (Phone: 01379 672769; Fax:01379 672769) ([Map](#)).



St Edmund House, Ipswich

Our Ipswich Team including the letterbox scheme, Adoption Support Team and the permanence panel administrators are based at 1st Floor, St Edmund House, Rope Walk, Ipswich, IP4 1LZ (Phone: 01473 58; Fax: 01473 583402) ([Map](#))

*Endeavour House,
Ipswich*



Sally Stoker, Head of Adoption (Phone: 01473 265206), Professional Adviser (Permanence) (Currently Vacant), Gerard Jones, Head of Corporate Parenting (Phone: 01473 260733) and Rosalind Turner, Director for Children and Young People (Phone: 01473 265353) are all based at Endeavour House, Russell Rd, Ipswich, IP1 2BX.

This is also the usual venue for the permanence panels ([Map](#)).

Our medical advisers Dr Regina Chandraraj and Dr Moira Pinkney are based at St Helen's House, 571 Foxhall Rd, Ipswich, IP3 8LX (Phone: 01473 275309; Fax: 01473 275575) ([Map](#))



Who manages the Agency?

Sally Stoker became Head of Adoption and Adoption Support Services Adviser in April 2007.

Her career in social work started when she qualified at Bristol University in 1982. She has worked for 23 years as a practitioner and manager in children's services. This has included planning for looked after children, managing disabled children's services and working as a child protection manager in Suffolk.

For 2 years, Sally spent time living in Australia and during this time worked for a market research company specialising in social and political research.

Her interest in permanency planning led her to adoption work in Norfolk. Here she worked for 6 years as a manager of an adoption team and for 2 of these was also a professional advisor to panel. Sally's interest in service development and strategic planning led her to return to Suffolk in her current position.



Liz Pardey was appointed Social Care Manager for the adoption team in September 2000. She will be leaving this post at the end of August 2008.

She has a Diploma in Social Studies from Dublin University gained in 1965 and a Certificate in Social Work from the Institute of Medical Social Workers, London in 1966. She also holds a Certificate in Management. She has been employed as a Social Worker by Suffolk County Council since 1978.

Since 1980 she has worked exclusively in child care, both as a field social worker and as an adoption and fostering worker. In 1992, she became manager of a divisional adoption and fostering team and in March 2000 manager of a short term fostering team.

Marie Higgins was appointed Social Care Manager for the Adoption Team Ipswich in December 2005.

She has a Diploma in Social Work from the Open University, gained in 1998. She has a BA Honours Degree in Social Work from Anglia Ruskin University and completed the Post-Qualifying Child Care Award in 2005.



She is a registered member of the General Social Care Council and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). Marie has worked continuously in a variety of social care settings since 1987. Her experience as an adoptive parent triggered her interest in working in the field of Adoption and, since 1999, she has worked exclusively in this area. Prior to joining Suffolk County Council, she worked initially as a field social worker and subsequently as a Senior Social Worker Practitioner, with responsibility for managing the Adoption Resource Centre for Essex County Council.

The Professional Adviser (Permanence) (post currently vacant) deputises as Adoption Support Adviser.

The senior managers with overall responsibility for adoption services in Suffolk are **Gerard Jones**, Head of Corporate Parenting, **John Gregg**, Strategic Commissioner for the Children and Young People Service Office and **Rosalind Turner**, Director of the Children and Young People Service Office.

Our staff's qualifications and experience

Position	Qualifications	Service in child care	Experience of adoption
Annie Stewart Social Worker Full Time	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work Practice Teachers Award Post Graduate Certificate in Applied Organisational Development in Public Services Post Graduate Diploma in Leadership and Public Sector Management Registered with General Social Care Council	18 years	12 years
Andreia Kolozvari Social Worker Full Time	Degree in Social Work Part 1 of Child Care Award	3 years	8 months
Angelika Rohrig Social Worker Part-time	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work Diploma in Counselling. Advanced Diploma in Gestalt Therapy. Therapist accredited by BACP. Parts 1 and 2 of Post Qualifying Child Care Award. Registered with General Social Care Council	20 years	14 years
Cathy Biedul Social Worker Adoption Support Full-time	Diploma in Social Work NVQ Level 3 (Caring for Children and Young People) Registered with General Social Care Council	18 years	3 years
Christine Shackell	BA(Hons) Sociology.	27 years	27 years



Suffolk Adoption Guide 2008/2009**Statement of Purpose**

Senior Practitioner Part Time	Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Diploma in Applied Social Studies. Advanced Award in Social Work with Children and Families. Post Qualifying Child Care Award. Registered with General Social Care Council		
Debbie Slater Social Worker Full Time	BA (Hons) Degree in Early Childhood Studies Registered with General Social Care Council	15 years	5 months
Elizabeth Pardey Social Care Manager Full-time	Diploma Social Studies. Certificate in Social Work from the Institute of Medical Social Workers. Certificate in Management Registered with General Social Care Council	30 years	20 years
Gay Michalak Senior Practitioner Full-time	Diploma in Social Work Post Qualifying Child Care Award	23 years	14 years
Hilary Player Social Work Practitioner Adoption Support Full time	Preliminary Residential Child Care Course	27 years	5 years
Ioana Furcovici Senior Practitioner Full Time	Bachelors Degree in Social Work Masters Degree in Management in Social Work Post Qualifying Child Care Award	11 years	2 year
Irina Morosanu Social Worker Full-time (currently seconded)	Bachelor in Social Work Post Qualifying Child Care Award Registered with General Social Care Council	11 years	2 year
Jan Carley Social Worker Full-time	Diploma in Social Work BSc (Social Work Practice) HNC (Social Care Childhood Studies) Post Qualifying Child Care Award.	21 Years	8 years
Jane Pope Senior Practitioner Part Time	B.Sc Honours (Economics). Certificate of Qualification in Social Work Diploma in Advanced Social Studies. Post Qualifying Child Care Award CQCC Registered with General Social Care Council	25 years	18 years
Julie Burton Social Worker Full-time	Diploma in Social Work Diploma in Higher Education	12 years	6 years
Karen Ferguson Social Worker	BA (Sociology and Development Studies) Diploma in Social Work Post Qualifying Child Care Award	10 years	3 years



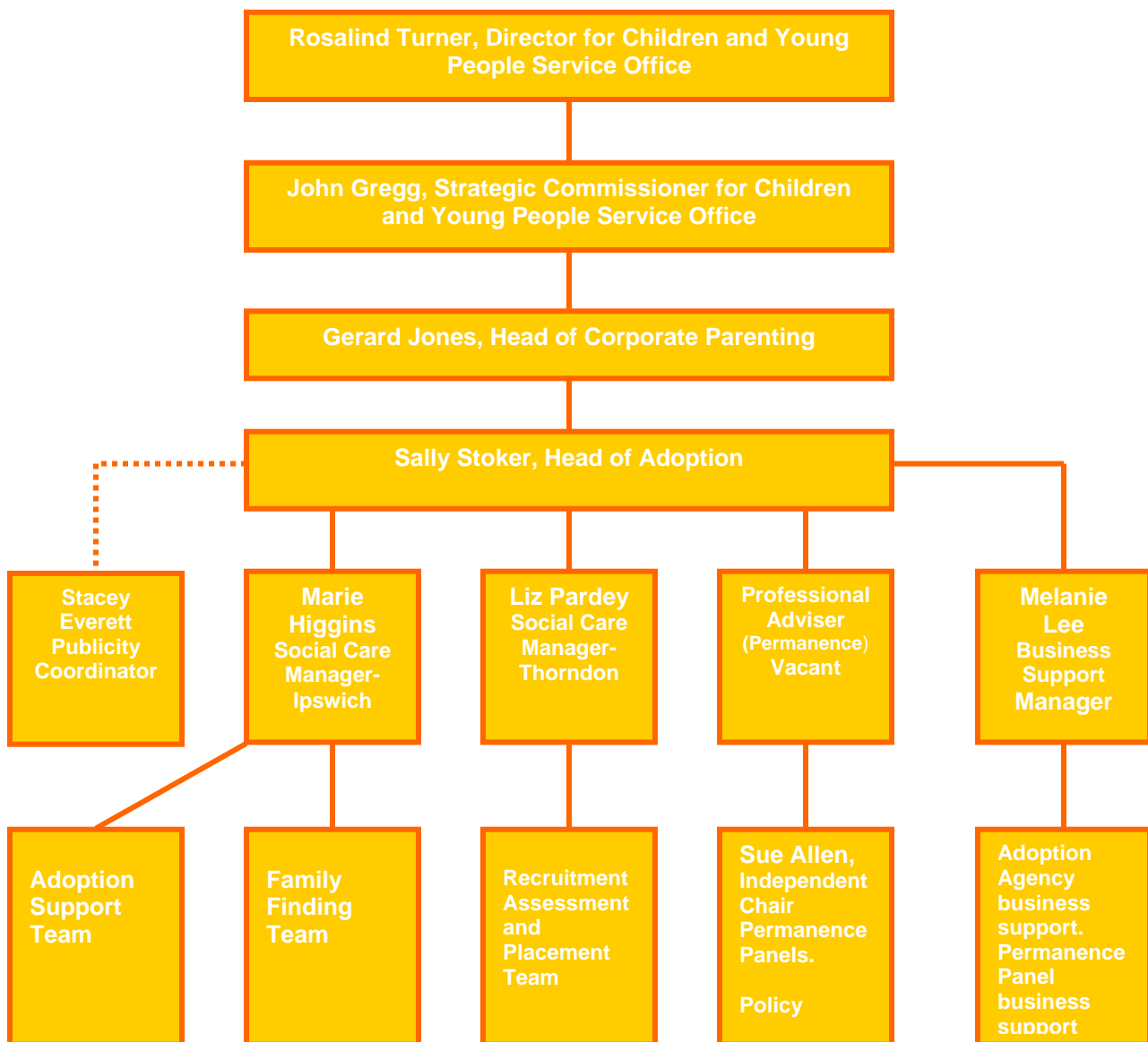
Full-time	MA Social Work Registered with General Social Care Council		
Liz Manning Social Worker Part Time	MA in Social Work Post Qualifying Child Care Award Registered with General Social Care Council.	10 years	2 months
Lorna Williamson Social Work Practitioner Adoption Support Full time	NNEB BA Honours in Early Childhood Studies and Art and Design BTEC (Young Children and Family Support)	20 years	1 year
Lynne King Social Worker Full Time	SRN HNC Social Care (Children and Families) Diploma in Social Work Registered with General Social Care Council	24 years	9 months
Marie Higgins Social Care Manager Full-time	Diploma in Social Work. BA Hons in Social Work. Child Care Award. Registered with General Social Care Council	10 years	9 years
Raz Yusuf Social Worker Full-time	Certificate of qualification in Social Work NNEB	16 years	3 years
Sally Stoker Head of Adoption Full-time	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. Certificate in Applied Social Studies. NNEB. Registered with General Social Care Council.	24 years	7 years
Trudy Roberts Social Worker Full-time	BA (Social Science) Diploma in Social Work Parts 1 and 2 of Post Qualifying Child Care Award.	22	2 year

A full list of staff and their relevant qualifications will be made available to *Ofsted*.



How are we organised?

Here is a chart showing who everyone in the agency answers to.



Who does what?

The **Recruitment Assessment and Placement Team** is based at Thorndon. The Team recruits, trains, assesses and places children with prospective adopters. Liz Pardey is **social care manager** for this team.

The **Adoption Support Team** provides adoption support services. The **Family Finding Team** finds suitable adoptive placements for children with particular needs .

These teams are based at Ipswich. Marie Higgins is **social care manager** for these teams.

Adoption agency business support provides administrative back up to all adoption agency activities. This includes each of the teams, the permanence panels, the county matching meeting, adoption register referrals and non-agency adoptions. Melanie Lee is **business support manager** for Suffolk Adoption Agency.

Sally Stoker, the **Head of Adoption**, is responsible for developing and managing the service as a whole.

The **Professional Adviser (Permanence)** is responsible for the management of the permanence panels and for developing policy.

The **Publicity Coordinator**, Stacey Everett, advises the agency on how best to recruit adopters.

Sue Allen **chairs the permanence panels**.

Regular meetings.

These meetings are designed to manage the agency effectively. We will make the minutes of these meetings available to the public on request unless there are specific legal reasons not to¹⁷.

Adoption management team meeting.Who is involved?

- ❑ Sally Stoker, head of adoption (chair),
- ❑ Liz Pardey, social care manager for adoption team,
- ❑ Marie Higgins, social care manager for adoption support team
- ❑ Professional Adviser (permanence),
- ❑ Melanie Lee, business support manager for adoption and fostering.



What is it for?

- ❑ Strategic planning;
- ❑ Overall monitoring and development of the adoption agency;
- ❑ business plans;
- ❑ approving new policies and procedures.

How often does it meet?

- ❑ Four weekly.

Outcomes?

- ❑ Minutes available within the agency on the shared drive: O/children and families/Adoption/ Management meetings.

*Adoption team meeting**Who is involved?*

- ❑ Liz Pardey, Marie Higgins and
- ❑ members of the adoption teams

What is it for?

- ❑ Managing the work of the team effectively and
- ❑ sharing and discussing practice issues.

How often does it meet?

- ❑ Fortnightly

Outcomes?

- ❑ Minutes

*Business support meeting**Who is involved?*

- ❑ Melanie Lee and
- ❑ All business support staff within the agency

What is it for?

- ❑ Managing the work of each team effectively and
- ❑ Resolving cross-over issues

How often does it meet?

- ❑ Quarterly

Outcomes?

- ❑ Minutes

*Medical issues meeting**Who is involved?*

- ❑ Permanence Advisor
- ❑ Liz Pardey
- ❑ Sally Stoker
- ❑ Marie Higgins
- ❑ Dr Regina Chandraraj, agency medical adviser



- Dr Moira Pinkney, agency medical adviser

What is it for?

- To consider policies, practice and procedures in relation to adoption and medical issues

How often does it meet?

- Quarterly

Outcomes?

- Action points are made available for members of the meeting

Legal issues meeting

Who is involved?

- David White, Assistant Head of Legal Services
- Sally Stoker
- Professional Adviser (Permanence)

What is it for?

- To consider policies practice and procedures in relation to adoption and legal issues

How often does it meet?

- Quarterly

Outcomes?

- Action points are made available for members of the meeting

Panel/ agency liaison meeting

Who is involved?

- Sue Allen, permanence panel chair
- Sally Stoker
- Liz Pardey
- Marie Higgins
- Professional Adviser (Permanence)

What is it for?

- To consider policies practice and procedures in relation to the adoption agency and the panels

How often does it meet?

- Three times annually

Outcomes?

- Action points are made available for members of the meeting

County matching meeting

Who is involved?

- Sally Stoker or Professional Adviser (Permanence) chairing
- a senior practitioner to advise about family finding
- a business support member to minute



- ❑ children's social workers and
- ❑ foster carers.

What is it for?

- ❑ Proposing matches for particular children;
- ❑ Devising family finding plans for children for whom an immediate match is not available;
- ❑ Clarifying the numbers of children requiring adoption and adopters available at any given time.

How often does it meet?

- ❑ Fortnightly

Outcomes:

- ❑ Minutes for individual children including family finding plans;
- ❑ Clarification of demand for adoptive families and availability.

Our permanence panels.*One of the permanence panels at work***The role of the panels**

These panels are set up under government regulations for adoption panels¹⁸. The panels are there to make recommendations to the agency on three main issues-

- ✓ Whether it is in a child's best interest to be placed for adoption.
- ✓ Whether to approve people as suitable adopters.
- ✓ Whether a match for a child with a particular adopter is right for them.

They also comment on-

- ✓ Adoption support plans.
- ✓ Contact arrangements.
- ✓ Issues of concern, which they feel the Agency needs to put right.

A senior person from Suffolk Adoption Agency must then consider the panel's recommendations before making a decision.



Panel arrangements

Suffolk has three panels, each meeting weekly. Each panel has ten members. These include the chair, a medical adviser, independent members with some background in adoption, at least one county councillor and social workers.

They are called "permanence panels" in Suffolk, because plans are being made for them to consider permanent fostering by the end of 2008. This means that the panels are set up so as to comply with the fostering regulations¹⁹ as well. These regulations require a member on each panel who is a foster carer but not registered with Suffolk.

How decisions are made

The two panels have the same independent chair, Sue Allen. She is responsible for helping the panels to reach a recommendation.

She is a qualified social worker with 19 years experience in child care social work and 16 years in adoption and fostering. She will step down as chair in December 2008.



Sue Allen was a social worker in child protection and adoption and fostering, later becoming a team manager and service manager in adoption and fostering.

She was Assistant Director for Barnardos North East for adoption fostering and disability projects until 2002. She is registered with the General Social Care Council.

Panel decision making is mainly shared by two people.

Rosalind Turner, the Director for the Children and Young People Service Office, has overall responsibility for all services for children and families provided by Suffolk County Council including those for adoption and children looked after.





John Gregg is Strategic Commissioner for the Children and Young People Service Office and leads on strategic commissioning for services for Suffolk's vulnerable children and young people.

When they are not available, there are arrangements for others to deputise for them

Involving people in Agency decisions

When the panel is considering whether it is in a child's best interests to be adopted, we try to involve children, young people and their parents as much as possible in the discussion. Birth parents are welcome to attend permanence panel to put their point of view. There are detailed procedures on how we do this²⁰.

Applicants to be approved as adopters are always invited to attend the panel where their approval is being considered²¹.

The panels always give reasons for their recommendations. These reasons are recorded in the panel minutes. They are also included in letters sent to the people affected by them.

When birth parents and applicants attend the panel we let them know what the recommendation is immediately. Otherwise, we tell them within 24 hours.

We always try to ensure that decisions are made within 7 working days of the panel meeting. We tell people about these too within 24 hours.

We make individual decisions about when and how to tell children about panel recommendations and agency decisions that adoption is right for them. We take into account the child's age, maturity and understanding and what they are likely to understand if their future is being decided within care proceedings.

If the decision maker is minded not to approve (or re-approve) an adoptive applicant or not to continue with their assessment, she or he will write to them setting out the reasons and giving them the chance within 40 days to ask for the decision to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism. We closely follow the procedure set out by the government²².



Placements with other adoption agencies

When we cannot meet children's needs by placing them with Suffolk adopters we try to place them with adopters approved by other adoption agencies. Similarly, we assist adopters approved by Suffolk who do not match the needs of a Suffolk child to have a child placed with them from elsewhere.

With the permission of children (where appropriate) and adopters we pass information about their placement needs to our partners in the East Anglian Consortium of Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Register for England and Wales with whom we cooperate fully. We give written information about the Consortium and the Register to adopters when they have been approved.

When we arrange an adoptive placement with another adoption agency, we send them this statement of purpose and a paper setting out our detailed practice on a variety of practical placement issues²³.

How to Complain

We want to know if a service user is unhappy with the service the agency provides. Both adults and children have a right to complain to us. A complaint can also be made on behalf of another person, for example someone who is not able to make a complaint on his or her own.

These are examples of things which may be complained about:

- ❑ staff behaviour/attitude
- ❑ standard of service
- ❑ quality of communication
- ❑ decisions you think are unfair
- ❑ delays in assessment
- ❑ delays in providing a service

In the first place, we encourage service users to talk about the problem with a member of staff to see if it can sort things out there and then.

But if a service user is not satisfied with the outcome, they can ask for a formal investigation.

If the complaint is from an adoptive applicant about the panel and agency's recommendation not to approve them then this is dealt with separately. The applicant can ask for their case to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (see Involving people in agency decisions above).

A leaflet called "*Having Your Say*" has full details of the complaints process. It is available from any of our offices. Alternatively, the leaflet can be obtained by



writing to the Customer Care Manager, Social Care Department
St Paul House, Rope Walk, Ipswich, IP4 1LH. (Phone: 01473 583405).
Another way of getting this information (and complaining online) is from the
Suffolk Social Care website at
[http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing
.htm](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm)

We are regulated by Ofsted and you can contact them to complain or express
concern about the safety or welfare of children served by the Agency.

Their contact details are as follows:

Their phone number is 08456 404045.

Their address is Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square,
Manchester, M2 7LA.

Their email address is enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Their website is at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Children's guide

We provide each child for whom adoption is the plan with a booklet explaining
What adoption is, how they will be involved in it, how the adoption process works
and how they can express their wishes and feelings or make a complaint.

The small print

¹ The information in this statement is prescribed in Schedule 1 of the National Minimum
Standards for Adoption. This statement has also been informed by the following key documents:
Adoption and Children Act 2002; all associated Regulations and Adoption Guidance.

Local Authority Circulars

The Policies of the Suffolk Adoption Agency.

Care Standards Act 2000.

National Minimum Standards for Adoption and guidance 2003.

Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

UN Convention on the Right of the Child.

Human Rights Act 1998.

Freedom of Information Act 2000.

² We want to thank colleagues in the following adoption agencies who have allowed us to use
material from their statements: Essex County Council; Norfolk County Council; York City Council.

³ The Government's aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances to have
the support they need to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution;
and achieve economic well-being. For more information see the Every Child Matters website
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/> .

⁴ See General Introduction, National Minimum Standards for Adoption, Department of Health,
March 2003.

⁵ This means any application to adopt a child who has not been placed for adoption by the
Agency from care. This includes application by step-parents to adopt.



⁶ Here is a fuller list of general policies which apply to Suffolk adoption staff: Access to Records Policy; Code of Conduct; Conflict of Interest; Domestic Violence; Equalities; Lone Workers; Personal Relationships; Handling Correspondence; Recording; Security of Confidential Information; Staff Supervision; Violence at Work.

⁷ Available electronically to Suffolk intranet users only at Children and Families/Adoption/Publicity Strategy. A hard copy available on request to members of the public.

⁸ <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

⁹ In recent years we have increased the range of checks we make following a serious case (called a "Part 8 Review") in Brighton and Hove.

¹⁰ Also available on the website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

¹¹ The agency's *Practice directive regarding physical chastisement* is given to applicants and can be found on the website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

¹² You can find a copy of this leaflet on our website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

¹³ The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.

¹⁴ This means the end of a placement for a child that was meant to be permanent. The procedures following a disruption are at <http://www.suffolksocialcare.org/uploads/8.1/8.1.10.pdf>

¹⁵ The Guidelines for safeguarding children placed for adoption can be found on the internet at <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm> or on the Suffolk intranet at O/Children and Families/adoption/docs4all/website documents/documents on website.

¹⁶ The Policies are on our website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

¹⁷ Some minutes will not be shared, for example, minutes which contain information about particular children or families. We are guided by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

¹⁸ These are the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005. There is a whole page of further information about the permanence panels including detailed procedures on our website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

¹⁹ Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

²⁰ These procedures are on our website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

²¹ An information leaflet is sent to adopters when they are invited. You can see it on our website at <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

²² You can find more information and links to the key documents on our website at

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CareAndHealth/FosteringAndAdoption/Adoption/Listing.htm>

²³ This is called "Inter agency placements FAQs".

