

Section 2

FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN TRUST

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2015

1. Mission Statement and values

MISSION STATEMENT

Families for Children is a Voluntary Adoption Agency, approved and regulated by OFSTED.

We believe that the best place for children to grow up is within their family of origin. Where this is not possible, we endeavour to find adoptive families for children who need them. We place a high value on offering these children and families ongoing support.

We recognise the diverse society in which we live and, in the services we offer, seek to meet the complex needs of children, valuing and respecting their culture, identity and personal history.

As a Christian organisation concerned with the welfare of children, parents and families, our attitudes and practices are shaped by Christian values and we therefore aim to uphold the importance of love, marriage, family life and the dignity of each individual.

If you have difficulty in understanding this document or would like to see the contents in a different format, please contact the Business Manager or Chief Executive.

2. The Aims and Objectives of the Agency

Families For Children was established in 1993 as a Joint Venture between Exeter Diocesan Board for Christian Care and Plymouth Diocesan Catholic Children's Society.

In January 2003 the Agency became a separate registered charity.

Families For Children will provide a full range of adoption services for all those affected by adoption through the Agency, who live in the counties of Devon, Dorset and Cornwall, including the Isles of Scilly, as encompassed by the Anglican Diocese of Exeter and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth.

2.1 Families For Children works within the principles laid down by the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption & Children Act 2002 and considers:-

- The welfare of the child is of paramount importance.
- The principle of parental responsibility should be upheld.
- Services to all our families and their children must take into account religion, ethnicity, culture, language and any special needs, such as physical and learning disabilities.

2.2 The priorities of the Families For Children Adoption Agency are:

2.2.1 To ensure the child's needs are paramount at all times.

2.2.2 To provide high quality and safe permanent placements through adoption

2.2.3 To recruit, prepare and assess prospective adoptive applicants applying to the Agency who are likely to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally and nationally.

2.2.4 Applications will be prioritised from applicants who appear to have the potential to meet the parenting needs of:

- Children who are likely to display significant emotional or behavioural difficulties
- Children who are significantly developmentally delayed and who may require educational support
- Children whose background history includes physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Children who have identified health or medical problems and who are likely to need a significant level of ongoing health/medical care
- Children who have an identified physical or learning disability
- Children whose background histories include having a parent diagnosed as having significant mental health difficulties

- Children from minority ethnic groups
- Single children aged 4 years or over
- Sibling groups of two or more children

Local Authorities are increasingly seeking adoptive families from the Agency for children under the age of 4 years, and we welcome enquiries and applications for these children.

2.2.5 All applicants will be expected to be able to accept the placement of children with complex backgrounds and children for whom there is not complete background and/or health information. Where Families for Children is unable to accept a Registration of Interest from prospective adopters because we do not have the capacity to undertake the work, we would refer the prospective adopters to another Adoption Agency locally who could proceed with their assessment or would refer them to First4Adoption who would seek to link them with another agency.

2.2.6 The Agency is committed to providing adoption support services to all approved adopters who achieve the placement of a child(ren). This may be in conjunction with the placing Local Authority or the Local Authority in which the child is placed.

2.2.7 Families For Children is committed to providing adoption support services for all those whose lives have been affected by adoption, recognising the lifelong implications of adoption for adopters, adopted children, birth relatives and adult adoptees. Please see the Agency Adoption Policy for details of support to adopters, adopted children, birth relatives, and adult adoptees. It is recognised that the level of services provided may be limited by the financial constraints within the Agency.

2.2.8 Families For Children is committed to providing an Access to Information and Intermediary Service to adopted adults and their birth relatives where we hold the records relating to the adoption. The services provided to those within these groups include assistance to:-

- Any person directly affected by adoption who requires counselling or support
- Adopted persons requiring access to birth records
- Persons requiring information as to the use of the Adoption Contact Register, in particular adopted persons, birth parents and other relatives.
- Adults seeking to establish contact with birth family members separated via adoption and requesting an Intermediary Service.

2.2.9 Families For Children does not provide an Intercountry Adoption Service but this is provided by all the Local Authorities across the South West and information about these are available.

2.2.10 Families For Children is committed to maintaining effective systems for recording, managing and keeping safe information about children placed for adoption, adopters and information received from people affected by adoption. (Please see the Agency's Adoption Policy for details re storage of records).

3. The Name and Address of the Registered provider, the Adoption Agency Decision Maker, the Responsible Individual and the Registered Manager.

3.1 Families For Children Trust
Southgate Court
Buckfast
Buckfastleigh
Devon TQ11 0EE

3.2 The Adoption Agency Decision Maker: The Chief Executive, Families For Children Adoption Agency, Southgate Court, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0EE.

3.3 The Responsible Individual: The day-to-day management of the work of the Adoption Agency is undertaken by the Chief Executive of Families For Children, Caroline Mary Davis, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Practice Managers.

3.4 The Registered Manager: The Deputy Chief Executive, Graham Pellew, is the nominated manager who provides specialist knowledge and skills in adoption to ensure timely and effective provision of services to Service Users. The Deputy Chief Executive works closely with the Chief Executive, Practice Managers and Business Manager to ensure provision of a consistent, coherent and flexible service.

4. Registration

Families For Children Trust is registered with OFSTED (SC049026). No conditions are in force in relation to this registration.

The Agency is a Registered Charity – **Registration Number 1093131** and the work is overseen by a Board of Trustees. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure that Trustees are provided with information about the working and finances of the Agency at their regular meetings.

5. Qualifications and experience of the Registered Manager

Name: **Graham Richard Pellew**

Date Appointed: **18th October 2010**

Qualifications: Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (1980)
Post Graduate Certificate in Public Services Management
(2006)
PQ1

Relevant Experience: The Registered Manager has been employed in Statutory and Voluntary Child Care Services for over thirty nine years and has twenty seven years experience working in a specialist adoption setting.

6. The number, relevant qualifications and experience of the staff working for the purposes of the Agency

6.1 The qualified social work staff at Families For Children Adoption Agency provides the adoption service.

6.2 Staff Team

Southgate Court (Head Office)

Chief Executive

Caroline Davis CQSW (1980)
NVQ Management Level 5

Deputy Chief Executive

Graham Pellew

Business Manager

Nigel Backhouse
MA in Personnel and Development
NVQ Operational Management Level 5
BSc(Hons) Computer Studies

Social Work Practice Manager (Family Finding)

Katharine Drescher CQSW (1983)

Social Work Practice Manager (Adoption Support)

Janet Smith
BA Social and Economic Studies
Post Graduate Certificate in Education and Training in Post-Compulsory Sector (2002)
NVQ Management Level 5

Panel Manager

Jackie Saunders CQSW (1980)

Fundraising Co-ordinator

Allison Colton

Family Finding Social Workers

Donna Love
Andrea Mitchel (PQ1)
Cheryl Morgan (PQ1)
Penny Palmer
Angela Payne (PQ1 & Child Care Award)
Isabel King (PQ1)
Catherine Gifford
Wendy Van Den Heuvel
Pauline Whiter
Barbara Wick (Placement Assistant)

Adoption Support Social Workers

Rory Crimmins
Eric Merriott
John Randall
Claire Windmill (Maternity Leave)
Sally Hebler (PQ1 & Diploma in SW)

Nigel Hinks – Step Parent
Sue Jones (PQ1)
Lisa Pitcher

Administration Support 9

Dorset Office

Social Work Practice Manager

Venessa Collins
Diploma in Social Work (1996)
PQ1 & Child Care Award

Family Finding Social Workers

Julie Gilbert (PQ1)
Rosie Hale – Independent Birth Relative Service (IBRS)
Jane Poore

Adoption Support Social Workers

FF (p/t) ← Carly Barratt (PQ1) → AS (p/t)

Alice Holman
Katharine Lane
Gail Martin
Lucy Blows

Administration Support 2

North Devon (inc. Cornwall and Somerset)

Social Work Practice Manager

Jakki Parsons
Diploma in Social Work (1996)
NVQ Leadership and Management Level 5

Family Finding Social Workers

Adoption Support Social Workers

Cornwall Office

Jane Phelan (PQ1 & Child Care)

Carol Wood

Somerset Office

North Devon Office

Jim Fitton

Barbara Hollis

Karen Horsnell

Administration Support 0

6.3 All Social Work staff employed by Families For Children Trust hold a professional Social Work qualification i.e. **CQSW, CSS or DipSw.** or the equivalent as approved.

6.4 Families For Children Trust is committed to supporting appropriately experienced staff to achieve the Post Qualifying Award. At the current time eleven social workers have obtained PQ1. Three social workers have the BSc Hons PQ Child Care Specialist Award.

7. The Organisational Structure of the Agency

Please see diagram attached.

8. Systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure that the services provided by the Agency are effective and the quality of those services is of an appropriate standard.

8.1 Families For Children is committed to seeking feedback from Service Users in order to inform future Service provision. The content of information provided by Service Users is evaluated by the Management Team and the Professional Issues Sub-Committee of the Board of Trustees and is used to inform developments in the Agency's practice.

8.2 At the current time a robust system is in place to seek feedback from adoptive parents at key points in the adoption process.

8.3 We have systems in place to obtain feedback from users of the Agency's adoption support services including:

- Adoptive parents

- Adopted children
- Adult adoptees (Section 51 counselling)
- Birth relatives

8.4 Feedback from adoptive parents:

8.4.1 Adoptive parents are consulted on their view during the adoption process and are given the opportunity to attend the Agency’s Adoption Panel when their application to be approved to adopt is considered.

8.4.2 All applicants who are engaged with the Agency are also asked to complete a questionnaire:

- After their application has been considered by the Adoption Panel.
- After the Adoption Order(s) has been granted – looking at the process from assessment through placement to Adoption Order and beyond.

8.4.3 The Agency approaches prospective applicants who request an information pack but do not then request a follow up visit. This informs the planning for our on-going recruitment of adoptive parents.

8.4.4 Where applicants decide not to proceed at any point in the assessment process (pre-Stage 1, during Stage 1 or Stage 2), the reasons for this are sought.

8.5 Feedback from Birth Parents

8.5.1 Parents who previously relinquished a child to adoption through the Agency are supported and counselled for as long as necessary. This extends many years beyond the child’s adoption.

8.5.2 Support may also be offered to grandparents or other members of the extended family.

9. Procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters

9.1.1 Recruitment of adopters

Families For Children is mainly a provider of adoptive parents. The Agency is a member of SWAC (South West Adoption Consortium) and the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA). Families For Children works alongside the various Local Authorities in schemes to promote adoption and the recruitment of adopters.

- 9.1.2** Families For Children has experienced a consistently steady level of enquiries/applications in recent years. The Agency undertakes localised recruitment on a regular basis. Families For Children always use National Adoption Week as an opportunity to promote adoption through the media. This will often involve working closely with other agencies.
- 9.1.3** The Agency has always been mindful of the length of time that children with special placement needs can wait for placements. In order to prevent ‘undue delay’ in placing children, the Agency has pursued specific initiatives in order to attract interest from appropriate families.
- 9.1.4** All enquiries from prospective adopters are welcomed without prejudice, responded to promptly and given clear information about recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval and the subsequent matching and placing process.
- 9.1.5** The Agency’s information pack is reviewed on an annual basis.
- 9.2.1** All prospective adopters are required to attend training during both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the assessment process. The material used is designed to provide prospective adopters with information about the adoption process, to prepare them for the potential issues they will face in parenting adopted children and to provide information about the range and needs of children who need adoptive parents.
- 9.2.2** The purpose of the training is to provide prospective adopters with the information that they need about adoption in general, the Adoption Agency and the profile and needs of children requiring placement. In Stage 1 this will assist them to make an informed decision as to whether or not to proceed with the more detailed Stage 2 assessment and prepare them for the adoption task.
- 9.2.3** Families For Children coordinates sufficient training sessions each year, depending on need.. All prospective applicants are given the opportunity to meet with existing adopters during the preparation and assessment process.
- 9.2.4** The material currently used in the training sessions is reviewed annually and a comprehensive pack of information is provided for all applicants.

9.3 Assessment of Applicants

- 9.3.1** Prospective adopters wishing to be assessed by Families For Children are expected to undertake Stage 1 of the assessment process before requesting to proceed to the full assessment in Stage 2. Second time adopters commence the assessment process at Stage 2.

- 9.3.2** The Agency will use the Information Session, Initial Visit and Stage 1 to determine whether prospective adopters are likely to have the capacity to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption. If the Agency deems an application as being unlikely to succeed, this is acknowledged to the prospective adopters at an early stage and the reasons for this explained.
- 9.3.3** Families For Children's decision as to whether or not to proceed with an application will be based on the minimum legal requirements and the Agency's criteria.
- 9.3.4** When Families For Children decide not to proceed with an application; applicants will be informed in writing and advised of the options open to them.
- 9.3.5** Families For Children seek to offer an assessment and approval process that is comprehensive, thorough and fair. Consideration will be given to all the areas of the applicants' lives, detailed within the BAAF Form Prospective Adopters' Report (PAR).
- 9.3.6** **During Stage 1 of the assessment process the prospective adopters will have a named worker to guide them. If they progress to Stage 2 then a worker will be allocated to undertake the detailed assessment with them. The Agency uses written agreements with all prospective adopters at both stages of the assessment process to confirm and clarify expectations and timescales.**
- 9.3.7** Applicants are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets their health and developmental needs – physical, emotional, intellectual and social.
- 9.3.8** Prospective adopters are encouraged through both the training sessions and the social work assessment to identify the competencies and strengths that they have and those that they will need to develop if they are to be able to provide for both a child's short and longer term needs.
- 9.3.9** A range of status, health and statutory checks as well as personal references are taken up on all prospective adoptive applicants during Stage 1 of the assessment process, these include Enhanced DBS checks.
- 9.3.10** Prospective adopters are kept informed of progress throughout. Families For Children seeks to balance the need to give prospective adopters time to consider and adjust to new information and ideas and in some cases to demonstrate a capacity to change, whilst avoiding unnecessary delays.
- 9.3.11** Whenever possible the Agency seeks to complete Stage 1 of the process within 2 months and Stage 2, which includes presentation of the applicants to the Agency's

Adoption panel for consideration, within a further 4 months. Prospective adopters may take a break of up to 6 months between stages 1 and 2.

9.3.12 Families For Children is sometimes asked by a Local Authority to assess a foster carer for a specific child. Foster carers who make such an application to adopt children in their care will be entitled to the same preparation and information as other prospective adopters.

9.3.13 All prospective adopters receive a copy of their assessment report and are provided with at least 5 working days to consider and comment on the contents.

The Adoption Panel

9.4 All prospective adoptive applicants seeking approval will have their application presented to the Families For Children Adoption Panel for consideration.

9.4.1 The composition of the Adoption Panel is in accordance with the Adoption Agency Regulations.

9.4.2 The Adoption Panel is held monthly and additional Panels may be arranged if needed.

9.4.3 The overall functioning of the Adoption Panel is managed by the Professional Adviser. (Deputy Chief Executive)

9.4.4 Panel members and the Adoption Agency's Decision-Maker are supplied with copies of all the reports to be considered by the Panel on each agenda item, at least one week prior to the Panel meeting.

9.4.5 The social worker for the applicants, or if necessary the supervisor/line manager will be present when an application is considered to answer the Panel's questions and to enable them to reach a decision.

9.4.6 Applicants are given the opportunity to attend the Adoption Panel meeting at which their application is considered and ask questions.

9.4.7 The Recommendation of the Panel is conveyed to the applicants on the day of Panel. The Adoption Agency Decision-Maker considers the Recommendation having read the relevant report and the Minutes of the Panel Meeting.

9.4.8 The Decision-Maker reaches the final decision in relation to any application within 7 working days of the Panel meeting.

- 9.4.9** The Agency Decision-Maker will convey her decision in writing (e-mail, fax or memo) to the applicants' social worker and Panel Administrator.
- 9.4.10** The Deputy Chief Executive ensures letters confirming the Agency's Decision are sent to the adoptive applicants.
- 9.4.11** In the event of an application not being recommended for approval, the prospective adopters are informed of their right to make representations or a complaint and details are provided on the role of the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).
- 9.4.12** Approved adopters are reviewed every 12 months, where a placement has not been achieved.
- 9.4.13** Approval relates only to the placement of children from within the UK.
- 9.4.14** All approved adopters are invited to join the South West Adoption Consortium and the Adoption Register for England and Wales. Information on approved families awaiting placement is regularly circulated to Local Authorities nationally. The Agency has specific arrangements in place to assist Local Authorities in the South West to achieve local placements for the children waiting for adoption.
- 9.4.15** Approved adopters are encouraged to be proactive in homefinding through subscribing to Be My Parent and Adoption Today publications and on-line services. In addition Families For Children will notify approved adopters of information about children received via frequent fliers from Local Authorities through their social worker. Adopters are invited to Adoption Activity Days where these are held in the region.

9.5 Support to Prospective Adopters

- 9.5.1** Approved adopters will be given clear written information about the matching, introduction and placement process.
- 9.5.2** All approved and waiting adopters will continue to have a named social worker. The social worker will provide regular support throughout the post approval period and assist in considering the specific needs of children awaiting placement.
- 9.5.3** Where information regarding a child is complex or requires specialist knowledge to evaluate the implications, Families For Children will seek to ensure that the prospective adopters have access to professional guidance to help them clarify and explore the implications of the information, thereby helping them to make an informed decision for themselves as to whether to proceed. Where there are significant medical issues, a meeting with the Agency's Medical Adviser may be arranged.

- 9.5.4** Families For Children will assess any apparent risks there may be to the adoptive family in pursuing an identified match, alert the prospective adopters to any risks and give advice on these.
- 9.5.5** Families For Children will advise and support adoptive parents in preparing children within their household or wider network for the impending placement and adoption. This is likely to include the involvement of a separate worker from the Agency. (See research undertaken in the Agency regarding the impact of adoption on birth children in the family)
- 9.5.6** Where adopters do not directly reflect the ethnicity or heritage of the child to be placed, Families For Children will provide advice, training and support aimed at enabling the prospective adopters to promote the child's racial and ethnic identity in a way that is likely to lead to a positive self-image, and knowledge about the connection to their origins. Families For Children will seek to help adopters, to understand the need for, and to develop strategies to help the child address racism or other forms of discrimination. Support from appropriate professionals may be obtained.
- 9.5.7** Families For Children will ensure that adoptive parents are informed prior to a placement about support services that are available within the area, should they or the child require specialist support after the Adoption Order has been made and how they might access these services.
- 9.5.8** Families For Children will work with the placing Local Authority to ensure that there is a robust Adoption Support Plan in place prior to a placement being made. This will include the provision of any financial support which may be payable in respect of the child and the process by which the payment of this allowance will be reviewed. Families For Children will also ensure that adopters are aware of any welfare benefits to which they or the child might be entitled and how they might claim them.
- 9.5.9** Following the placement of a child, all prospective adopters approved by the Agency will continue to receive social work support until such time as the Adoption Order is granted.
- 9.5.10** It is the expectation of the Agency that all children placed with Families For Children approved adopters will have a named social worker from the Local Authority who will be responsible for supervising the child's welfare and supporting him/her within the placement.
- 9.5.11** Families For Children will encourage adopters to indicate their agreement in writing to sign up to any plan for direct or indirect contact with birth family members that

was proposed at the time of placement and will support the adopters in facilitating these arrangements.

Support will be made available to the adoptive parents to help them to establish an open acknowledgement of the child's adoptive situation within the family.

9.5.12 Families For Children will provide advice and support to the prospective adopters along with the Placing Authority social worker on progressing the application to adopt to the appropriate Court at the appropriate time.

9.5.13 Families For Children recognises that timely and effective support will help to avoid placement breakdowns. However, the complexity of children's needs, the impact of any neglect or maltreatment and the interaction with the adoptive parents' patterns and ways of managing these difficulties, may threaten placement, whatever services have been made available.

9.5.14 Should a placement experience difficulties, whatever the level of severity Families For Children will seek to ensure that:

- Separate support is available to the prospective adopters and the child.
- The child's welfare remains the paramount consideration.
- The Review process in respect of the placement acknowledges the difficulties within the placement and identifies/agrees interventions and supports focused on achieving a positive outcome for the child.
- The possibility of placement disruption is acknowledged and planned appropriately.

9.6 Adoption Support Services

9.6.1 Where adoptive parents approved through Families For Children contact the Agency seeking information/advice/support due to difficulties with an adoptive placement, they will be offered an interview and an assessment of their support needs completed with them. Families For Children will wherever possible seek to provide information and support in order to achieve a positive outcome and prevent the breakdown of the placement, but this will need to be managed within existing staffing and budget constraints. It may be necessary/appropriate to negotiate the provision of adoption support services with the Placing Local Authority or the Local Authority where the adoptive family reside.

9.6.2 Where the difficulties in a placement are such that the adoption breaks down, Families For Children will seek to provide reasonable support to the adoptive parents in order to enable them to remain positively involved in the planning for their child.

9.6.3 Any adoptive parents contacting Families For Children for support at any stage following the granting of an Adoption Order, will be made aware of other support

services available, both locally and nationally and how they might access these. Support will be given in this process.

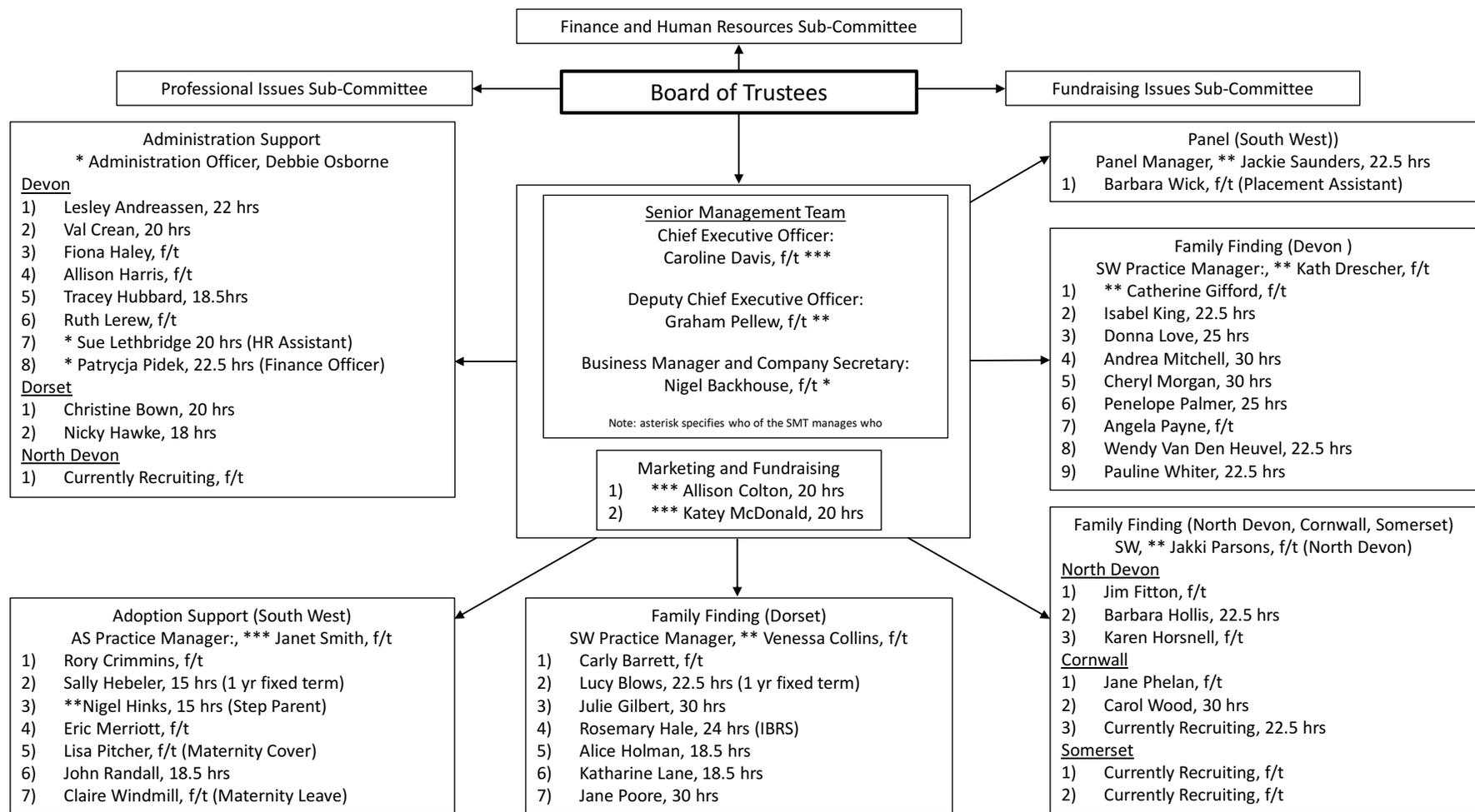
10. The Complaints Procedure

- 10.1** All prospective adopters engaging with the Agency are provided with written information about Complaints Procedures, including contact details for the Representations Officer.
- 10.2** All children and young people who are placed for adoption through Families for Children are provided with a copy of the Agency's Children's Guide, which contains details of how to make a complaint.
- 10.3** Other service users such as adults requesting birth record counselling are also provided with details of the complaints process on engagement.
- 10.4** The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive together with the Business Manager will monitor all complaints received in respect of any aspect of the work undertaken by the Team.

11. Details of the Registration Authority Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, MANCHESTER M1 2WD Telephone Number: 0300 123 1231

Caroline M Davis, Chief Executive

January 2015



Adoption Support (South West)

AS Practice Manager:, *** Janet Smith, f/t

- 1) Rory Crimmins, f/t
- 2) Sally Hebler, 15 hrs (1 yr fixed term)
- 3) **Nigel Hinks, 15 hrs (Step Parent)
- 4) Eric Merriott, f/t
- 5) Lisa Pitcher, f/t (Maternity Cover)
- 6) John Randall, 18.5 hrs
- 7) Claire Windmill, f/t (Maternity Leave)

Family Finding (Dorset)

SW Practice Manager, ** Venessa Collins, f/t

- 1) Carly Barrett, f/t
- 2) Lucy Blows, 22.5 hrs (1 yr fixed term)
- 3) Julie Gilbert, 30 hrs
- 4) Rosemary Hale, 24 hrs (IBRS)
- 5) Alice Holman, 18.5 hrs
- 6) Katharine Lane, 18.5 hrs
- 7) Jane Poore, 30 hrs

Family Finding (North Devon, Cornwall, Somerset)

SW, ** Jakki Parsons, f/t (North Devon)

North Devon

- 1) Jim Fitton, f/t
- 2) Barbara Hollis, 22.5 hrs
- 3) Karen Horsnell, f/t

Cornwall

- 1) Jane Phelan, f/t
- 2) Carol Wood, 30 hrs
- 3) Currently Recruiting, 22.5 hrs

Somerset

- 1) Currently Recruiting, f/t
- 2) Currently Recruiting, f/t

Note: All staff work in Head Office, Devon unless indicated otherwise

19/01/15