

Adoption Service
Annual Report
2010/2011



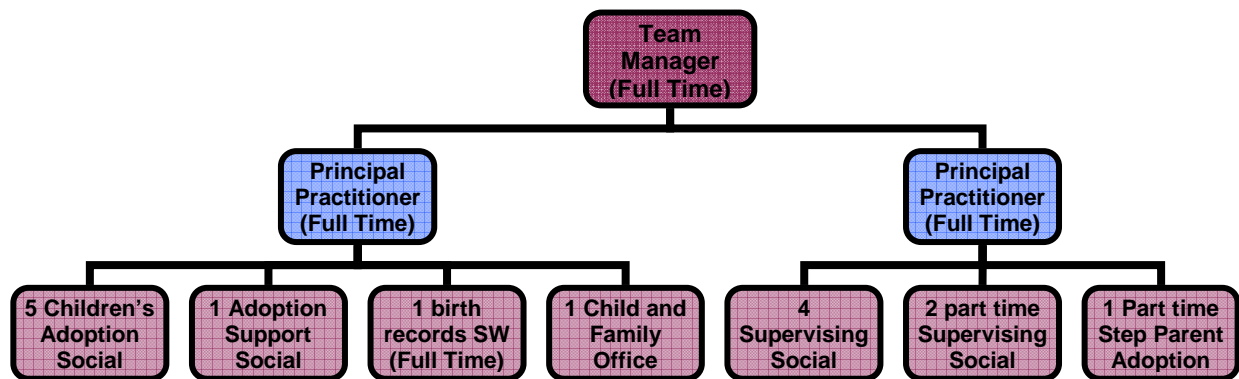
(Please note all photographs at the back of this report should be removed and shredded before this report is made a public document on any forum)

Introduction

The Adoption Service provides services to children, adoptive family members and birth family members as required by the National Adoption Minimum Standards 2003, National Adoption Minimum Standards 2011, Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

The Adoption Team is a discreet countywide service with office bases at Lincoln, Sleaford and Louth.

Service Structure Chart.



The service includes a Team Manager, two Principal Practitioners, five children's Adoption Social Workers, four full time and two part time Supervising Social Workers, one birth records Social Worker, one full time Adoption Support Social Worker and one part time Step Parent Adoption worker. There is also a part time therapy therapist.

The Children's Adoption Social Workers progress children's plans for adoption, the Supervising Social Workers recruit and assess prospective adopters, as well as completing step parent adoption assessments. Supervising Social Workers also deliver preparation training courses for adopters and therapeutic parenting courses for adoption support. The intermediary Social Worker carries out the agency's statutory duties of birth record counselling for adopted adults and some intermediary trace and introduction services for adopted adults and birth relatives. An Adoption Support Social Worker completes specific requests by adopters for assessment of need, and also delivers support to families. In addition she organises groups to support adopters and adopted children. The Children and Family Officer coordinates the contact arrangements for adopted children and birth relatives together with the completion of life story work for the preparation of children placed for adoption.

Adoption Performance 2010/2011

Adoption Orders granted April 2010 – March 2011

- C23 at March 2011 54
- Included 14 SGO (Special Guardianship Orders)
- 9 SGO's were from former foster carers
- NI 61 (placement of children within 12 months of best interest decision adoption) = 90%

This performance is an increase in adoptions by Lincolnshire County Council for the year and builds on the steady increase each year since the service was founded as a discreet stand alone adoption service in 2008. There has been a rise in the use of Special Guardianship Orders to secure long-term families for children and this is a positive move forward which is reflected in an increase this year in the number of children over 10 years in the adoption figures.

Progress in relation to identified Development Goals from Annual Report 2009/2010

1. Continued recruitment of adopters sufficient to meet the needs of Lincolnshire children.

Lincolnshire as a county is fortunate in that there is always a positive response to adoption recruitment campaigns in the area and the Adoption Service have been able to recruit adopters that in the large part meet the needs of the children identified for adoption. Both nationally and locally the cohort of children proposed for adoption has changed from single children under five, to sibling groups of two and larger, with a make up of young children under five but also one or two older children.

This change has been due historically to a decline in relinquished babies, and the increase resources available to focus support on maintaining children at home, hence they tend to be older and belong to a sibling group when identified for adoption.

Lincolnshire Adoption Service has incorporated these national and local statistics into the recruitment strategy of adopters. As a result there has been a targeted campaign to recruit adopters of a wider age range of children and of more than one child. This strategy has yielded positive results and is evidenced by the picture that most Lincolnshire children with an adoption plan are placed within county, sibling groups are kept together and that the speed of place is high with the majority of children being placed within twelve months of a best interest decision of adoption.

2. Consideration of the resourcing of adoption support to comply with the number of adoptions taking place in Lincolnshire

As the numbers of adopted children have seen steady growth in Lincolnshire so has the requirement for increased adoption support services. This has been enhanced by the typography of the children being placed i.e. sibling groups and older children who have more complex needs due to their longer experience of neglectful care with birth family.

Staffing for Adoption Support services has been increased to one full time Adoption Support Worker, one part time Adoption Support Worker and a temporary seconded Adoption Support worker. An additional resource has been the part time theraplay worker who carried out theraplay clinics for families at high risk of disruption, three days a week.

3. Development of adopter support groups and adopted children support groups

The adopter support and adopted children support activities have continued to take place to promote networks and contact amongst these groups to create a stronger adoptive community in Lincolnshire. Consultation with adopters via the Lincolnshire Adoption website revealed that rather than regular groups meeting throughout the year, Adopters preferred activities and special days to meet up especially in the school holiday periods as this was more practical. The service has taken these messages on board and support groups have been organised in these parameters. Attached to this report are pictures and feedback from the organised adoption activity day in Hill Holt Wood March 2010 with more to come in 2011.

4. Consultation with Adoptive parents and adopted children regarding delivery of support services.

Given the size and geography of Lincolnshire County the adoption website has proved to be an invaluable source of consultation and views. There are now many contributions and articles on the site. Consultation took place on the site with adopters about adoption support services and this has informed planning of services this year. The support strategy is outlined in the latter part of this report.

5. Pilot of direct placement scheme for relinquished babies

The direct placement scheme for relinquished babies is now in place and 2 children have been placed via this route. The scheme involves the dual approval of parents as adopters/foster carers enabling the placement of children directly with adopters from point of relinquishment and eliminates any delay in placement with adoptive parents, and any change in placement.

6. Continued development of theraplay support for adopters.

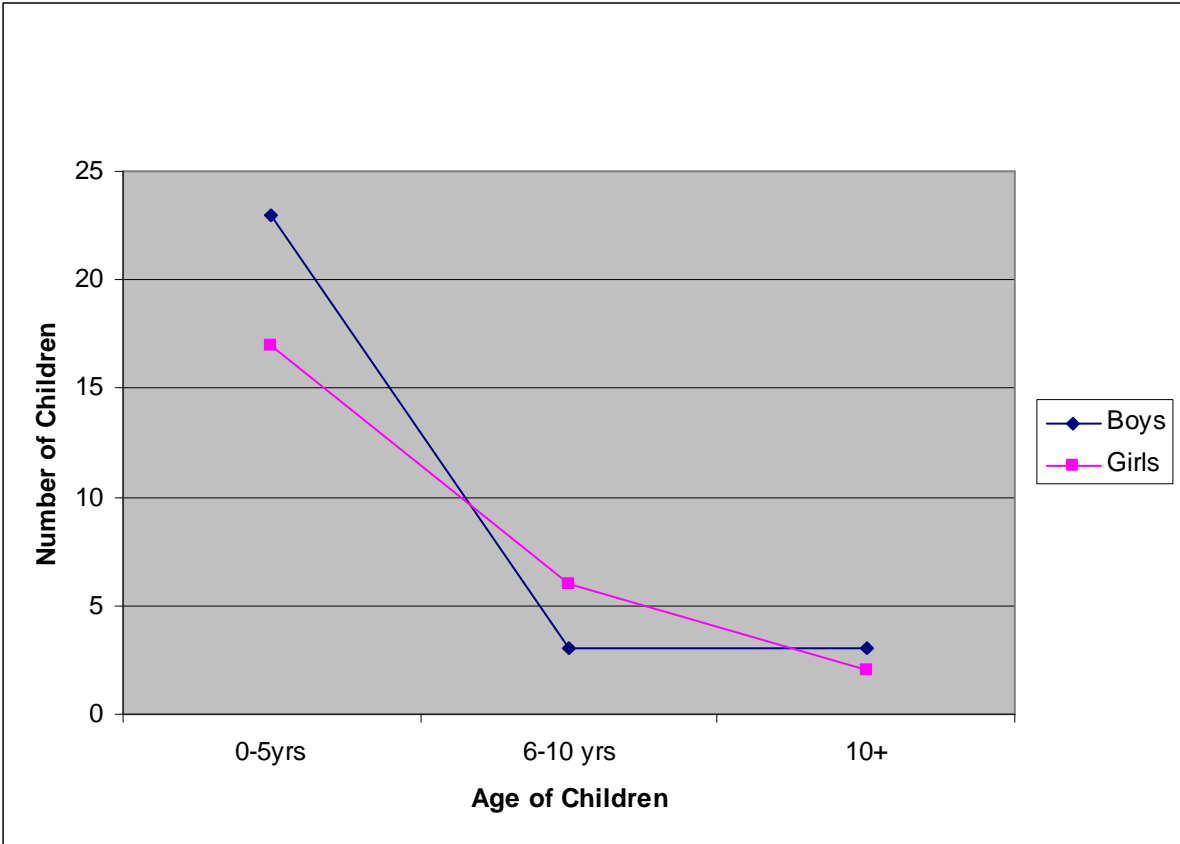
Theraplay is a nationally recognised intervention, composed of clinically designed activities with children and parents to promote attachment, child's emotional and behavioural regulation. If successful it leads to greater stability of placement and a

child's ability to become balanced individuals able to achieve potential both in school and socially.

All members of the Adoption Service have been trained in theraplay techniques. Members of staff are able to begin demonstration of theraplay to adopters at point of placement thus enhancing attachment and the likelihood of successful attachment. The service also has a dedicated theraplay worker who completes theraplay clinics weekly with adoptive families at risk of disruption.

Adoption activity for 2010/2011

Profile of children adopted 2010/2011:



Lincolnshire Adoption Agency achieved 54 adoption orders during 2010/2011 an increase of 6 from the previous years figures 48. In this cohort 14 were Special Guardianship Orders, counted by the DfE as adoptions because they have secured permanence for children unable to live with birth family relatives. The group of adoptions included 27 male children and 27 female. The largest group consists of 0-5 years with 23 boys in this category, and 17 girls. Although this is the largest group the main characteristic is that there is usually more than one child in the family to place and the children are often related to an older sibling. Both of these factors can pose a greater challenge to adoptive placement. As a single child 0-5 years remains a strong preference for many members of the public making enquiries about adoption. There are 9 children in the 6-10 years category, 3 boys and 6 girls. Finally there are 5 children in the 10 years plus category and this is an increase in previous

years figures and it is heartening to note that permanent families are being found for children over the age of 10 years.

One of the children was a relinquished baby, and the service tends to average between 1 and 3 each year. The children were predominantly white British, two were dual heritage British/Polish.

There were a number of sibling groups in this cohort and the service is seeing an increase in groups of children coming forward for adoption. This does inevitably impact on timescale for placement, cost of placement, adoption support and financial implications for adoption allowances.

19 children were part of a sibling group

2 siblings = 5 groups

3 siblings = 3 groups

Profile of children with a best interest plan of adoption 2010/11

During April 2010 to March 2011 51 children received a best interest decision of adoption this is a considerable increase of 10 from the previous years figures of 41. Of these children there were the following groups of siblings:

2 children 7 groups

3 children 3 groups

4 children 1 groups

It is notable that in the previous year 2009/2010 this cohort consisted of 6 sibling groups. In this reporting year there has been an increase to nearly double that amount.

Age Ranges:

0-5 years = 41

6-10 years = 9

10 plus = 1

The predominant ethnicity of the children is white British. However, there is a small change in dual heritage children

British/Polish 1

Lithuanian 2

White British 48

Whilst children under 5 years continues to be the largest age group placed for adoption. These children often come as part of a sibling group with older children and this can make it difficult to find adoptive placements, as adopters continue to show the greatest interest for one child in the 0-5 age group. The recruitment strategy does take this factor into account and the target for campaigns has been for adopters willing to consider a sibling group that does include a wide age range.

There are 34 children of 0-5 years with an adoption plan and 8 of 5-10 years. There are currently no children over 10 years with an adoption plan.

This represents a slight reduction in numbers of children with an adoption plan in comparison to 2008/2009. Two of the children are non white British, one with dual heritage of British and Fijian, and one Polish child. There are six sibling groups among this cohort, only one less than the previous years figures. This information reflects the need to continue to maintain sufficient numbers of adopters for the under fives age group, whilst also ensuring adopters are available to meet the needs of sibling groups.

Placement of Children within 12 months of the best interest decision for adoption 2010

Adoption is subject to one national indicator NI61 that measures the length of time it takes to place a child with their adoptive family once a best interest decision for adoption has been made by the Agency Decision Maker.

As shown in the comparison table below Lincolnshire has shown a steady increase in performance of this indicator. Performance is high in both statistical group and national comparison:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
All England	75.1%	75.6%	75%	72.4%
Stat neighbour	76.3%	68.2%	69%	70.4%
Lincolnshire	91.9%	87.2%	84.6%	89.7%

Current performance = 90%

36 of 40 children were placed within 12 months of best interest decision

Of those outside of timescale delay has been due to difficulties in finding placement due to special needs or sibling groups.

During 2010/11 30 children have been linked with adopters.

Children Awaiting Placement at the close of 2010/11

There were 21 children awaiting placement at the end of 2010/11

All of these children bar two received a best interest decision during the 2010/11 year. Two children had been waiting for a placement from 2009, these were sisters one of whom was a white British female 7 years old and the other a dual heritage British Fijian female 3 years old.

Of the children remaining for placement at the end of the year, there were three sibling groups of children. This cohort included one sibling group of four and two

sibling groups of three. The placement of sibling groups presents by far the greatest challenge for the service.

Adopters approved as suitable to adopt during 2010

A total of 26 adoptive parents were approved to adopt children during 2010.

Number of children approved for:	
Adopters approved for 1 child	8
Adopters approved for 2 children	9
Adopters approved for 3 children	2

The ages of children approved for ranged from 0 to 8 years. There is a lack of public interest in adopting children older than 8 – 10 years despite extensive recruitment campaigns directed at recruitment of adopters for this age range. The older children adopted tend to be adopted by foster carers who have had a relationship with the child for some time. It would seem prudent to pursue this as a strategy for adopting the older age range of children in care.

In addition to these adopters two direct placement adopters were approved for the direct placement of relinquished babies and one inter-country adoption was approved by panel.

During 2010/11 the service received 33 enquiries to adopt, with 46 applications to adopt (some from second time adopters) 11 were approved within the 8 month timescale, 13 were not progressed due to issues not compatible to adoption and the remaining are ongoing assessments in 2011/12.

Panel Activity

The Adoption and the Adoption/Permanence panels have met on 31 occasions between 1 April 2010 and the 31 March 2011. Three extraordinary panel meetings have also taken place to consider specific cases and comply with court timescales.

Panel Development and Training

Training

18 October 2010 Joint training event panel and adoption service with BAAF look at diversity in assessments.

Planned training event for 7 April 2011 Adoption National Minimum Standards

Adoption Support

Adoption Support is now organised on a tier level as follows:

Tier 1	Wide minimum support to adopters includes: Contact co ordination, helpline advice, information via the Lincolnshire adoption website. Birth records counselling for adults. Also included in this tier is counselling for birth relatives whose children have been adopted.
Tier 2	All of tier 1 and in addition adoption support groups/activities for adopters and for children affected by adoption.
Tier 3	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support include assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, theraplay clinic sessions to promote attachment.

Tier 1

The Lincolnshire adoption website is a valuable resource of support to adopters and adopted children. The site has chat postings with advice re parenting an adopted child, information re theraplay techniques, safeguarding information including how to help a child access the internet safely. The site advertised adoption activities and groups and enables the adoption service to consult users about planned future services. In addition to the website service users can contact the adoption helpline for advice and guidance.

The service received 98 referrals for Birth records counselling and 34 enquiries from Birth Relatives seeking advice and support in tracing. The Service currently has a contract with Tracemart to complete additional tracing for those seeking relatives. However this is a limited service as Lincolnshire does not provide intermediary services.

Birth Ties service delivered by After Adoption, supplies counselling to birth relatives who have lost their children to adoption. The contract is at capacity and provided counselling to 22 birth parents/relatives during this year.

Contact

Indirect Letterbox contact activity

April 2010 - March 2011

Area team adoptive family from	No. of new cases added	No. of cases removed**	No. of exchanges	No. needing reminder	Total no. of current cases
West Lindsey	4	4	72	0	63
East Lindsey	3	1	39	39	36
Lincoln	2	1	35	8	29
North Kesteven	7	1	71	18	63
Boston	4	0	25	0	24
South Kesteven	4	1	75	15	71
South Holland	1	1	27	13	25
OOC*	5	3	77	79	64
TOTAL	30	12	421	172	375

Direct Contact

8 = Direct contacts between adopted children and birth parents

15 = Direct contacts between adopted siblings

14 = Direct contacts between adopted children and their non adopted siblings

8 = Direct contacts between adopted children and birth grandparents

Tier 2

Lincolnshire Adoption Service had offered adoption support groups across the county, coordinated by adopters supported by the service. Attendance by adopters at these groups has been sporadic and often low. However, service user feedback via the website indicated a preference for social activities to be organised during the school vacation to enable adopters and children to meet and network when there is practical space. It is with this in mind that the service now seeks to provide these activity points and the first took place in March 2011 at Hill Holt Wood (photographs and feedback are appended to this report) Further groups are planned for 2011/12 as outlined in the recommendations for action.

Tier 3

This tier provides support to those families who require adoption support assessments and tailored plans of support intervention.

During 2010/2011 the support service had 21 open cases in addition they received 27 new referrals that became support cases under tier 3. The requests for support covered the following areas:

Behavioural difficulties children
Attachment difficulties
Life story work
Contact issues
Requests for funding for support
Requests for respite care.
Request for therapy input
Mediation adoptive families to maintain the adoptive placement.

Therapy clinic is currently working with 8 cases and has 25 awaiting work.

Recommendations for 2011/2012

Targeted recruitment strategy aimed at:

- Reducing the number of application for under 5's
- Prioritising assessments of carers who can offer a home to:
 - older children 5-10
 - sibling groups
 - children with complex needs including disabilities
 - adopters who reflect the ethnicity of children awaiting placement

Further development of adoption support services in consultation with adults and children affected by adoption.

Increase of direct placement scheme to meet the needs of relinquished children.

Adoption Panel Training:

Guidance regarding impact of health factors on assessment of adopters
Panel Induction training
Event sibling placements 'together or apart'

Implementation of National Minimum Standards Adoption 2011

Hill Holt Wood Adopters and Adopted Children Activity Day March 2011

I made some
new friends
who are adopted



Met some
new friends
Liked pond
dipping &
sugaring

Plate Spinning at Hill Holt Wood



Janice Spencer	Barbara Starns
Head of Regulated Services	Adoption Team Manager