

# Statement of Purpose

2019/20

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## 1. Background

IAC – The Centre for Adoption, (registered as Intercountry Adoption Centre) was established in 1997 and was formerly an experimental project funded by the Department of Health from 1992. It was registered as an Adoption Support Agency in March 2006 and is now a registered Voluntary Adoption Agency providing intercountry and domestic adoption services. We are regulated by Ofsted and the Department for Education. For the purposes of this document and operationally we remain known as 'IAC'.

In February 2011, IAC was enlisted by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), India, as an Authorised Foreign Adoption Agency. In January 2012 IAC was accredited by the Inter-Country Adoption Board (ICAB) of the Philippines. In August 2012 IAC received accreditation from the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA), the adoption central authority for China, to offer the China Special Needs Programme in the UK. In November 2016 the Ministry of Education and Science accredited IAC as an adoption agency in Kazakhstan. In 2016, IAC also entered into working agreements with a partner agency in Bulgaria and South Africa respectively, in order to provide an adoption programme in the UK, in partnership.

In November 2017, the Intercountry Regional Adoption Agency was launched in England, for which IAC is the lead organisation, working in collaboration with other voluntary adoption agencies: Adoption Matters, ARC Adoption NE and Nugent Adoption.

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of IAC, as required by the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (Amendment) Regulations 2005.

This document is reviewed at least annually and approved by the Board of Trustees.

The Statement of Purpose, is posted on our website and is readily available to:

- Prospective adopters and adopters;
- Birth parents and guardians;
- Adoptive children and young people;
- Other interested parties and the general public.

The purpose of this Statement is to outline:

- The Agency's status and constitution, the arrangements for control of its operation and the terms of its registration;
- The Agency's management structure and staffing;
- The Agency's aims and objectives and how the services and facilities meet outcomes for children and keep them safe;

- The policies and procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting both domestic and intercountry adoptive parents;
- The procedure for dealing with complaints;
- The system used for monitoring and evaluating the provision of services in order to ensure their effectiveness and quality; and
- The name, address and telephone number of the registration authority.

## **2. Status and Constitution**

IAC operates within the requirements of legislation, regulations, guidance, standards and good practice relating to adoption and will be subject to inspection by Ofsted.

The Agency is a registered charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 1993 and a company limited by guarantee within the meaning of the Companies Act. It is governed by incorporated Memorandum and Articles of Association and regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

IAC is a member of the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA) and our Chief Executive is a Board member; the Consortium of Adoption Support Agencies (CASA) and a member of EurAdopt, a membership organisation of accredited adoption agencies in Europe.

## **3. Registration**

IAC is registered by Ofsted as a voluntary adoption agency under Part II of the Care Standards Act 2000 and is inspected by that registration authority. It is registered to provide intercountry and domestic adoption services including adoption support services to children and intermediary services and birth records counselling.

In relation to this registration,

### **The Registered Provider is IAC.**

The responsibility for the Governance of IAC rests with the Board of Trustees who are also the Directors of the company. The Board meets at a minimum, four times a year, to fulfil its statutory functions.

### **The Responsible Individual for the Adoption Agency is:**

Satwinder Sandhu, 22 Union Street, Barnet. EN5 4HZ

## **The Registered Manager of the Adoption Agency is the Operations Director:**

Ms Irene Levine, 22 Union Street, Barnet. EN5 4HZ

### **4. Organisational Structure**

IAC is governed by our Board of Trustees and managed by our Senior Management Team, which is led by the Chief Executive.

IAC operates from a single site in Barnet, Greater London. However, work is also undertaken by partner agencies based in the North West (Adoption Matters and Nugent Adoption) and North East (ARC Adoption), who act as 'spokes' for intercountry adoption work. In addition, our information, preparation, adoption support and training programmes are commissioned by regional adoption agencies, local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies and other organisations throughout Britain. IAC uses independent social workers in order to enable local service delivery.

The Agency has a properly constituted Adoption Panel central list as required by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, as amended by the Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011, with a medical and legal advisor. An independent Chairperson oversees the function of the Adoption Panel along with the Agency Panel Advisor. An independent, experienced social worker acts as our Agency Decision Maker as does the Chief Executive, who is also a social worker with the relevant experience.

The Agency is assisted by an Advisory Panel, members of whom provide specialist legal, notarial, medical, human resources, research and literature, advice and support.

### **5. Staff**

IAC's professional team comprises social workers and managers experienced in both domestic and intercountry adoption, administrators and support service colleagues. Many have personal experience of adoption (domestic and intercountry) and a significant number were raised overseas and have direct experience of migration. We seek to have our workforce reflect the diversity of the children and families we work with and also use their lived experience to help shape our services and delivery.

The members of staff and their respective responsibilities are as follows:

- The Chief Executive oversees the management of the charity on a day-to-day basis. He manages and supervises the Operations Director and Finance Director and carries responsibility for the administration of the human resources processes.
- Adoption Team Managers, who are managed by the Operations Director, have lead responsibility for intercountry and/or domestic adoption assessments and are

responsible for the supervision of sessional social workers. Additionally, the Adoption Team Managers supervise the Senior Practitioners who are responsible for the Family Finding (domestic), Assessment, Post Approval services, including those which fall under the special intercountry adoption programmes.

- Primarily, the adoption social workers, advisors and trainers are commissioned on a sessional basis to deliver either the Agency's adoption assessment work or the Agency's adoption support activities.
- The managers, senior practitioners, adoption social workers, advisors and trainers have recognised qualifications in social work and therapy, have many years' experience in adoption and/or fostering and are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). All the administrative staff have qualifications relevant to their respective roles.
- The Agency's financial processes are managed by IAC's Finance Director who is a qualified accountant and supervises a Finance Manager and Assistant.
- The Chief Executive carries responsibility for the office buildings and equipment and is responsible to the Chair of Trustees. The Operations Director serves as Health and Safety Officer.
- The administrative support is provided by administrators. Each administrator has administrative oversight of specific agency functions and reports to the relevant Manager or Senior Practitioner.
- The Chief Executive and Responsible Individual is a qualified social worker and has a Diploma in Social Work, BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies and is completing a MBA. He has 24 years' experience of children's social work, including safeguarding, adoption fostering and looked after children. He has Chaired Adoption & Fostering Panels and also designed and delivered training. This experience has been gained in the public, independent and third sectors.
- The Director of Operations and Registered Manager, Irene Levine, has a CQSW and Diploma in Social Work and an NVQ Level 5 in Management. Since qualifying she has specialised in a range of subjects, including child protection training, fostering and adoption and children's rights work. As the Chair of the Children Rights and Advocates (CROA) she was in the forefront of setting up and supporting Children's Rights Services across England, ensuring the voices of looked after children were heard in the development and delivery of children's services. She has over 25 years management experience in both Local Authorities and Voluntary Agencies, at Team and Senior Management levels; as well as being a Child Care Consultant and Trainer in her own right.

## **6. Values which underpin the Service**

IAC fully embraces the values statement below, contained in the National Minimum Standards (July 2014).

### **Values – children**

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the National Minimum Standards to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, Local Government, other Statutory Agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

### **Values – adopted adults and birth relatives**

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved – adopted adults and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may

reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.

- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption relation matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

## **7. IAC's Mission Statement**

IAC's mission is to place children from all parts of the world, both in the UK and overseas, in loving families and to work in a fair, transparent and professional manner with individuals who seek our professional services.

## **8. Aims and Objectives**

IAC aims to ensure that children who are unable to live with their birth families be that in another country or in the UK, grow up in a safe and nurturing family where they can develop to their full potential. The Agency seeks to do this by:

- 1) Providing high quality intercountry and domestic adoption services for prospective adopters and their families and friends, established adoptive families, adopted people and birth relatives and nominated guardians.
- 2) Ensuring that the intake of both intercountry and domestic adopters reflects the needs of children waiting in the UK or in the States of origin for an intercountry adoption placement and complies with the eligibility criteria both domestically and in the State of origin.
- 3) Ensuring that the information service and advice line is available and supported by a sound information database and appropriately qualified and experienced advisors and facilitators.

- 4) Offering a domestic adoption programme that seeks to find families for children in the UK who might otherwise wait the longest for a placement.
- 5) Working in partnership with regional adoption agencies, local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies, through subscription and service level agreements to provide, with a minimum of delay, specialist preparation and assessment for prospective intercountry adopters, those who are adopting again and kinship intercountry adopters and specialist support to those adopting from countries where this agency is accredited to offer such services.
- 6) Providing support to local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies' adoption professionals by annual subscription through a range of dedicated services. IAC's subscription services, focusing on the placement of children where the UK is the receiving State are well established. In April 2018, IAC launched a new subscription service for local authorities, the Outbound Permanence Service, to provide advice, information and consultation for local authority personnel who are planning the placement of a looked after child with a relative of connected person overseas. Each subscribing local authority has access to the Advice Lines, a facility to download publications from the dedicated subscriber pages on IAC's website; a Practitioners' Network which meets to provide for discussion, debate and peer support; and training programmes for adoption professionals and adoption panel members (including legal and medical advisors). Local authorities subscribing to services where the UK is the receiving State also receive a regular bulletin.
- 7) Ensuring that the potential life-long needs of children are understood, and that the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic heritage of the children is fully recognised and positively valued.
- 8) Ensuring that at all times the Agency's services are effective and that its practices are clear, open, honest and fair to services users.
- 9) Promoting the highest standards of adoption practice, informed by the outcomes of research, by practice wisdom, by the perspectives of all parties to the adoption circle and by training which the Agency provides for its staff. Sessional workers are also encouraged in their ongoing learning.
- 10) Lobbying for legislative change, specifically in relation to intercountry adoption, and active involvement in the consultation process of government departments.
- 11) Ensuring that the need to keep all children safe is at the core of everything that we do. Where there are concerns highlighted we follow the guidance issued in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/779401/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard-Children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf)

## 9. Services and Facilities

IAC currently provides the following services and facilities.

- a) Information and advice through its Advice Lines, publications and face to face services to enquirers, prospective adopters, established adoptive families, adopted people, birth relatives resident in the geographical areas of those local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies which either subscribe to or have service level agreements with IAC. These services are also available to their adoption professionals and covers matters pertaining to children entering or leaving the UK on adoption / permanence arrangements.
- b) Information Sessions for people interested in intercountry adoption, or for enquirers who are unsure which “path to go down”. These provide information at an early stage in the process and give prospective adopters the opportunity to consider procedures and requirements both in the UK and States of origin, and the needs of children placed in intercountry adoption, and to hear first-hand intercountry adopters’ experiences.
- c) Country-specific workshops, relating to the countries where IAC is a recognised foreign partner agency, build on the Information Sessions and provide more specific information on procedures relating to one country.
- d) Intercountry adoption preparation courses on behalf of Regional Adoption Agencies, local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies for prospective intercountry adopters, those adopting for a second time, and for those who are related to the children overseas whom they wish to adopt. In addition, IAC offers preparation modules for prospective adopters seeking to adopt a child who is racially or ethnically different from themselves or prospective adopters wanting to adopt siblings, either through the intercountry or UK (domestic) adoption route.
- e) Preparation, assessment and support for prospective intercountry adopters, liaising with them regarding proposed matches with children from States of origin and providing post placement and post adoption reports for the State of origin as required.
- f) Preparation courses for adopters who have previously adopted through IAC, either domestically or internationally, or for prospective adopters approved as suitable to adopt via the intercountry route but who now wish to change to the UK.
- g) The provision of support for children placed domestically and from the registration and/or matching stage through to the child’s arrival in the UK in respect of applications to countries where IAC is accredited to provide such a service. Where commissioned to do so, the Agency supports and monitors the child’s placement and prepares the report for the English court.

- h) A programme of workshops and courses addressing adoption issues for those who are awaiting the placement of a child or who have a child in placement.
- i) Keeping abreast of the profiles of children waiting for domestic adoption and updated on the domestic family finding needs of the Regional Adoption Agencies/local authorities with which IAC has a service level agreement. Prospective adopters engaged with the Agency are welcome to express an interest in domestic adoption at any stage of the process and this is routinely explored at each review of suitability.
- j) Remaining in contact with adopters and their children after adoption, including them in the Agency information mailings and events and providing them with post adoption advice, assistance and support, on request. IAC's adoption support offer includes consultation and face to face counselling on school related issues and therapeutic Life Story Work with children and adoptive parents as well as a range of courses and workshops covering core themes in adoption.
- l) Actively supporting prospective intercountry adopters in their transition to domestic adoption, if that is their wish; presenting their domestic application to IAC's Panel for consideration and variation in matching advice and assisting all approved domestic adopters in the preparation and dissemination of their family profile, advising on and facilitating their access to the range of matching provision locally and nationally as appropriate including, but not limited to, exchange events, Link Maker, photo-listings and regional adoption exchange and activity days.
- m) Hosting and supporting Asha, the India Adoption Group, which was formed in 2003, for families who have adopted from India, those who are in the process of adopting and for children and adults adopted from India. It has also supported adopters with children adopted from Pakistan supporting PANUK, the parent support group and is actively supporting an emergent Africa Adoption Support Group. These groups aim to provide a supportive network for those touched by adoption from India, Pakistan and Africa respectively, and to provide the basis of a life-long network for the children and adult adopted people.
- n) Offering an advice and signposting service to adopted people and birth relatives whose adoption has an international element and who are seeking their records and/or who wish to re-unite. This work involves signposting services users to authorities and agencies in the overseas countries to determine policies and procedures and to locate records and recognised counsellors. The service is from time to time consulted by adoption professionals in the UK who are engaged in intermediary work of a cross border or intercountry nature. IAC hosts the International Searchers' Group along with the Transracial Transnational Adoption Group (TTAG).
- o) Providing advice, information, consultation and training services for adoption professionals, including adoption practitioners and their managers in Regional Adoption

Agencies, local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies; members of agency adoption panels; legal advisors; Adoption Support Services Advisors; Children's Guardians and Officers of Children and Family Court Advice and Support Service (CAFCASS). These services, which include specialist training on intercountry adoption (inbound and outbound) and transracial placements. In addition, peer support is facilitated through IAC's Practitioners' Networks.

- p) Contributing to improving professional practice in the field of intercountry adoption through contribution to Practice Papers and conferences and seminars (both professional and parent led, domestically and internationally).
- q) Offering assessment services to registered and accredited adoption agencies from overseas when working with non-habitually resident prospective adopters.
- r) Supporting the adoption and permanence work of local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies as required through a range of services.

## **10. Policies and Procedures**

IAC's work is informed by, and complies with, current statute, regulations, statutory and good practice guidance, standards and international instruments which provide the legislative framework for domestic and intercountry adoption <https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/the-adoption-process/making-an-application/> and for the delivery of adoption support services.

The IAC management and the Trustees have reviewed and implemented a series of policy documents which cover all the main elements of employment legislation. The Trustees are satisfied that measures are in place to ensure that the Agency deals fairly and equitably with staff in relation to their employment and in relation to their place of work, including objective measures to deal with appeals against decisions made. Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to, employment rights, working time, parental leave, equal pay, minimum wage, pensions, sickness absence, harassment, disability, discrimination, flexible working and human rights.

## **11. Dealing with Complaints**

IAC is committed to resolving complaints quickly and in a sensitive, thorough and non-biased manner which enables service users to make a complaint and protects complainants from any reprisal.

Service users and others with a legitimate interest have the right at any time to complain to the Agency about any aspect of its services, if they believe it has acted in contravention of adoption law, regulation, guidance, standards or codes of practice, or has failed to adhere to its written policies, procedures or undertakings, and they are helped to do so if this is required.

- The Agency seeks to resolve complaints informally, but if this fails there is recourse to an investigation by a member of the Management Team who has had no prior involvement in the case or where this is not possible by the Chair of Trustees and to a review of the resulting adjudication by other Board members.
- A target timescale is specified for dealing with complaints, and a written record is made of any complaint, its outcome and any action taken. Records of all complaints (and allegations) are clearly recorded on the relevant files for staff, volunteers, children and service users – including details of the investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.
- After all steps have been taken, should the complainant consider there has not been a satisfactory response, s/he is advised, that s/he can approach the registration authority. Information about complaints is provided to the registration authority on request.
- The Board of Trustees reviews any complaints received at least annually to check that the complaints procedure is operating appropriately in accordance with the Agency's policies and practices and takes appropriate action in the light of the review. The Chief Executive includes information about ongoing complaints in quarterly Board reports.
- A system is in place for Reflection and Learning when a complaint has been closed to look at what lessons can be learned and how these can be applied.

## **12. Effectiveness of Services and Quality Monitoring**

IAC's Chief Executive reports to the Board of Trustees, providing at each quarterly meeting a written summary of the adoption services provided by the agency and their outcomes.

- The Agency undertakes an in-house evaluation of the Advice Line twice yearly. All those who contact the Advice Line in the given week, whether by phone, email or, post are invited to participate. In respect of telephone callers, the advisor who has received the call explains, at the end of the call, the purpose of the evaluation. The caller is invited to speak, anonymously, on the phone, to a member of the administrative team. The caller is transferred to an administrator who asks the caller questions from a standard interview schedule. Those who contact the Advice Line by email or post receive an electronic or hard copy of the interview schedule and are requested to complete and return it to the administrative team. The responses are evaluated and the numbers who decline to take part in the evaluation, or who do not respond to mailed interview schedule are recorded separately.
- The Outbound Permanence Service Advice and Information Line make contact with all professional enquirers three -six months after the initial contact to request feedback on the service offered and also information on the outcome of the case to inform further learning.

- The Agency also undertakes an in-house evaluation of all its information sessions, preparation courses and support workshops. All participants are requested to complete an evaluation form at the end of each information session or day of a course. These evaluations are reviewed as soon as possible after the course, by either the relevant managers, the Operations Director and the Chief Executive, where appropriate. Were there to be difficulties arising with any aspect of the Information Session or preparation course the Agency would be, thereby, in a position to address these promptly. The Agency collates and analyses participant responses on an annual basis and these inform the in-house evaluation of these services.
- The evaluation of these services also takes account of the facilitators' experience of delivering the courses and feedback from referring authorities (whether given formally or informally). The Information sessions and courses are also reviewed to ensure they are abreast of changes in legislation and procedures in the UK and in respect of the States of origin. Course content is amended, as indicated, following the evaluation. Annual evaluations are conducted by the Advice Line Manager, as appropriate, with the involvement of the Operations Director, Chief Executive and facilitators.
- All Prospective Adopters for whom IAC provides the assessment service are invited to comment on the service they have received, including on the Panel experience. For those whose application is presented to Panel, there is an opportunity for the applicants to give feedback in person on the adoption process. Adoption social workers are also invited to comment on their experience of presenting adoption applications to the Panel.
- The Agency Panel Advisor reports regularly to the Panel and the Chief Executive on the service user feedback, including feedback from commissioning local authorities, and additionally will draw to the Chief Executive's notice any feedback which requires the Agency to review its policies, procedures, practice or performance or to take any other related action.
- When the Agency, is commissioned to provide training for professionals by local authorities, Regional Adoption Agencies, voluntary adoption agencies or other organisations, the process for monitoring will be determined by the terms of the agreement. Wherever possible, IAC requests participants to complete its standard evaluation form at the end of the course. When this is not possible, IAC has access to the completed evaluation forms provided by the commissioning organisation.
- Feedback on the effectiveness and quality of the Agency's adoption services also comes through staff supervision, consultation with and performance review of sessional workers and from team meetings. Additional feedback arising from the investigation of complaints (if any) will be available to the Board of Trustees during the annual review process.

### **13. Approval, Availability and Review of Statement of Purpose**

This Statement of Purpose was reviewed by the Chief Executive / Responsible Individual in July 2019 and agreed by the Board of Trustees at a Board Meeting. It meets the requirements of Adoption Agencies Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

The Chief Executive ensures:

- that the Agency is conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose;
- that the statement is accurately reflected in the Agency's policies, procedures and guidance to staff;
- that it is given to all persons working for the purposes of the Agency and a copy is readily available or can be downloaded from the IAC website;
- that it is made available on request to any person receiving adoption agency and adoption support services, or making enquiries about receiving adoption agency or adoption support services, from the Agency, namely to:
  - people wishing to adopt from overseas and their friends and relatives and to members of established intercountry adoptive families
  - people who wish to adopt within the UK
  - people who are adopted from abroad
  - birth relatives or former guardians of people whose adoption has an international element
  - any Regional Adoption Agency, local authority, voluntary adoption agency, adoption support agency or other relevant organisation;
- that it is provided on request, so far as is practicable, in formats appropriate to the sensory and learning impairments, communications difficulties and language of service users and staff, including having it read, translated or explained to them.

### **14. Details of the Registration Authority**

The registration authority is:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

[www.ofsted.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gsi.gov.uk)

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