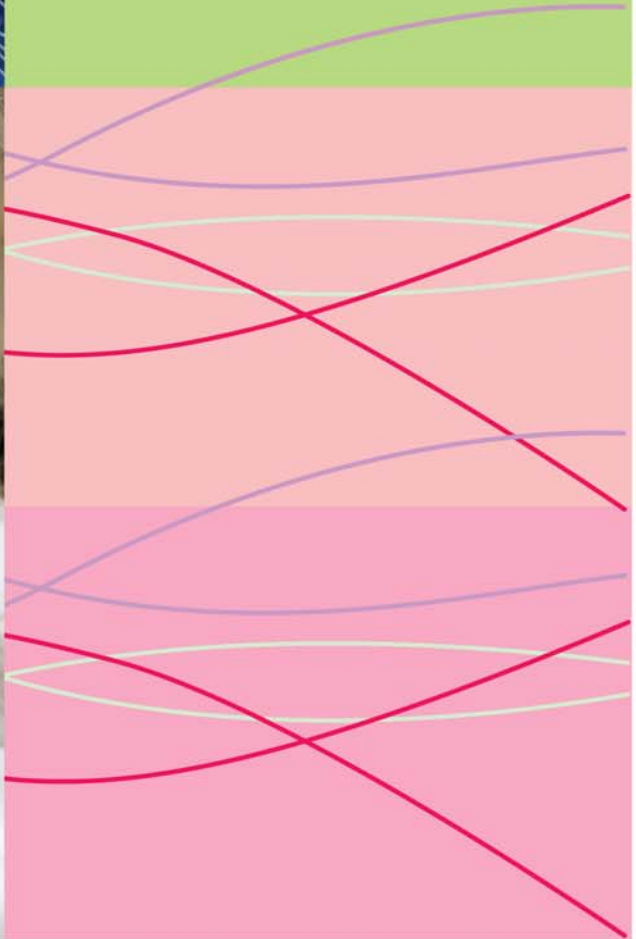




# Statement of Purpose

East Riding Adoption Service

# 2017/18



**EAST RIDING**  
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

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## 1. Introduction

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

This document is the statement of purpose for the adoption agency of East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

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

## 2. Values of the agency

The adoption service operates as part of the Children and Young People's Support and Safeguarding Service.

The values below explain the important principles which underpin the requirements under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children & Families Bill 2013.

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond and where possible this should be within their own family
- The child's welfare, safety and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be fully taken in to account at all stages
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of a child and should be avoided wherever possible
- The child'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 organisations, professionals and individuals who have to work together to meet the needs for services.
- Birth parents and birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process and offered a support service once the adoption process is complete.

## 3. Principles of the agency

The principles which underpin the policies and practice of the adoption service are consistent with the vision and values of the Council, the Children Act 1989, the Adoption & Children Act 2002, the Care Standards Act 2000, National Minimum Standards (Adoption) and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2013.

These principles are consistent with the basic premise of the Human Rights Act 1998: that all individuals have the right to family life.

## 3.1 Children

The adoption service applies the following principles in relation to children receiving a service:

- The welfare, safety and needs of children are placed at the centre of the adoption process. Such considerations must, therefore, take precedence over those of anyone else involved in the process.
- Children have the right to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs in childhood and beyond.
- All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential irrespective of their gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability, culture, race, religion or language.
- Children have the right to understand what is happening to them and why, to know what is proposed in their care plan and to understand the implications for their future.
- Children have the right to express their wishes and feelings and participate in discussions about their future, to make representations and complaints and to receive help to do so. Consultation with children is recorded on their individual case file.
- Children are properly prepared for adoption and kept informed at all stages of the adoption process.
- For each child for whom adoption is identified as the plan, delay in achieving an appropriate match is minimised and timescales set out in the relevant legislation, regulations and guidance (see Introduction) are adhered to.
- Early Permanency Placements (EPP) to be considered where appropriate to increase stability and reduce moves for children where adoption is the likely outcome.
- The adoption service and the agency decision-maker will promote and safeguard children's welfare without delay in processes or decision-making.
- Delay is regarded as being detrimental to a child's health and development, so decisions will be made in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary delay.

## 3.2 Birth parents

- The service provided to parents will recognise the lifelong implications of adoption.
- Parents/legal carers will be treated with respect and fairness irrespective of their gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability, culture, race, religion or language.
- Parents have a right to full information regarding the plan for their child, to participate in the decision-making process, to have account taken of their wishes and views and to have their views about adoption and contact to be accurately recorded.
- Parents are provided with access to independent support from the time adoption is identified as the plan for the child.
- Parents have the right to make representations and complaints and to be provided with information on how to do so.
- Parents are entitled to request an intermediary service when their adopted child reaches 18 years of age.

### 3.3 Adopters, prospective adopters and their families

- Adopters, prospective adopters and their families have the right to be considered equally and with equal rigour, irrespective of their age, race, ethnic origin, gender, culture, language, religion, disability or sexuality, consistent with the needs of children requiring adoption and their experience and understanding of adoption.
- Adopters and prospective adopters have the right to make representations and complaints and to be supported to do so. These will be recorded on their individual case file.
- Prospective adopters will receive clear information about the preparation, assessment and approval process and will be informed of the prioritisation that takes place in the assessment of prospective adopters who are most likely to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption.
- Statutory checks, personal references and enquiries are made on prospective adopters along with enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks on all adult members of the household of prospective adopters.

## 4. Recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters

East Riding of Yorkshire Council Adoption Team has a recruitment strategy to attract prospective adopters who can meet the needs of children requiring adoption. Recruitment activities include publicity and advertising within local newspapers and the Council's website as well as targeted recruitment for specific children as required.

The fostering & adoption marketing officer is responsible for the preparation of recruitment activities, developing recruitment materials, placing adverts, maintaining displays and delivering presentations.

The adoption recruitment strategy is amended as required and at least annually by the fostering & adoption marketing officer.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council believes that no person has a right to become approved as an adopter. It is recognised, however, that people from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of personal circumstances can be effective and loving adoptive parents.

The council, therefore, will not act in a discriminatory manner in relation to issues of gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnic origin, religion or marital or employment status. Applicants will not be automatically excluded on the grounds of age, health or other factors except for certain criminal convictions. All applicants will be assessed on their ability to care for children through adoption: safely, effectively and in a way that will meet the children's developmental needs now and in the future.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council reserves the right to prioritise, at certain times, those applicants most likely to match the specific needs of children in need of adoption in East Riding of Yorkshire and nationally. For example, prospective adopters who will consider sibling groups, older children or children with disabilities may be prioritised over applicants who will only consider healthy babies. If adopters are not required at any point in time, they will be signposted to other local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies and the National Gateway for Adoption.

### **Enquiries**

Enquiries are directed initially to the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Family Information Service Hub who will record basic details from the enquirer and post out an information booklet. This information is then forwarded onto the adoption service to carry out a follow up telephone call by an adoption social worker within 48 hours of the initial contact.

This follow up contact is to provide the enquirer with a further opportunity to ask any further questions and for the adoption service to provide further details on adoption and on forthcoming information events.

After the information event if enquirers wish to proceed a social worker visit will be arranged to their home.

- **Initial visit**

An adoption social worker will visit the enquirer in their home to discuss adoption in more depth. A detailed report of this meeting will be completed by the adoption social worker and passed to the adoption manager who will make a decision as to whether a registration of interest should be accepted. A letter will be sent to the enquirer informing them if their application to adopt is proceeding or detailing the reasons their registration of interest has not been accepted.

## ▪ **Stage I - pre-assessment process**

This begins the day the East Riding of Yorkshire Council adoption team accepts the registration of interest. The service is committed to completing this stage within the governments suggested time frame of two months. This process includes

- Allocation of an adoption social worker to the prospective adopter
- Attendance at a three day 'preparing to adopt' training course
- Completion of all statutory references including
- DBS
- Probation
- Local authority Children's Services Department
- Community Health
- Employers' references
- Interviews of the prospective adopters' personal referees.
- The completion of an adoption medical by the prospective adopter which will be shared with the agency medical advisor for advice on any medical issues.

The purpose of these checks and enquiries is to reassure East Riding of Yorkshire Council that there are no factors which preclude someone from adopting, e.g. a criminal offence against children. A full medical is required for anyone who wants to adopt to ensure that prospective adopters are medically fit to parent a child into adulthood and to meet their developmental needs.

The aim of the preparation course is to equip prospective adopters with an understanding of the complexities of adoption. The preparation course is an integral part of the process of raising awareness and informing prospective adopters of the challenges and difficulties they may face as well as the rewards of adoption. In this way, prospective adopters are helped to make informed decisions about whether they can make the lifelong commitment to adoption. The course content is regularly evaluated and reviewed. It is planned within an equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory framework and is organised to facilitate the attendance of prospective adopters.

At the end of stage one, the East Riding of Yorkshire Council adoption team manager will decide whether the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt and progress to stage two of the process. This decision will be provided in writing and were a decision is taken that they are not suitable detailed information about this will be provided. If a prospective adopter is unhappy about this decision they can access the East Riding of Yorkshire Council complaints process.

## • **Stage two – the assessment process**

Once stage one has been successfully completed by the prospective adopter, stage two can begin. This starts when the East Riding of Yorkshire Council adoption team receives notification from the prospective adopter that they wish to progress to stage two.

An agreement will be drawn up between the assessing adoption social worker and the prospective adopter at the commencement of stage two. The service is committed to completing this stage within the governments suggested time frame of four months.

In assessing the capacities of prospective adopters, their approach to providing safe and responsible care in meeting a child's developmental needs is fundamental.

The adoption service has a clear policy that corporal punishment in any form is not permitted. Prospective adopters

are also not permitted to deprive children of food or restrict contact as punishment and should be sensitive to the child's past experience in determining the most appropriate sanctions.

The adoption service is opposed to bullying in all its forms. It believes it is the right of all young people to live in an environment where they feel safe and are free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. Adopters are expected to create an anti-bullying and anti-discriminatory climate in their homes and to set a positive example to young people in their attitude, helping them to develop strategies for dealing with any form of discrimination they may encounter.

The prospective adopter will receive a copy of the assessment report before it is presented to the adoption panel and are invited to provide their own comments, in writing, on the contents of the report.

The completed assessment is presented to the East Riding of Yorkshire Adoption Panel. The prospective adopters are invited to attend the panel. The panel makes a recommendation as to whether their approval is recommended. Their recommendation is discussed with the agency decision maker who makes the final decision on their suitability to adopt.

- **Adoption by existing foster carers**

For foster carers wishing to adopt a specific child already placed with them, there is a fast-track process which bypasses stage one and begins at stage two. The required statutory references, checks and medicals will still be undertaken and training will be provided based on their existing knowledge and future needs. The service is committed to completing this stage within the government's suggested time frame of four months.

- **Second and subsequent adopters**

Families who have previously adopted with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council can apply to adopt again if there is a one year gap following the child's adoption order being made and a potential two year gap between that child and a potential new child. If it is appropriate to proceed and a registration of interest form is accepted they can progress straight to stage two. The service is once again committed to completing this stage within the government's suggested time frame of four months.

If their interest is in relation to a sibling or half sibling already adopted, these timescales may not apply. Assessments in this respect will be given priority and any home visit would include the adoption and the child's social worker.

## 5. Adoption support

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council Adoption Team provide a range of services for all those affected by adoption

- Adoptive parents
- Adopted children and young people under 18 years of age
- Birth parents
- Adopted adults over 18.

Services to adopted adults, birth relatives and adoptive families are also provided by After Adoption who has a service level agreement with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Adoption Team.

The adoption support service provides advice, support and a range of groups and activities for adoptive parents and their children according to their individual needs and circumstances. These include

- Facilitating the 'Family Links Nurturing Programme' to prospective adopters and connected persons.
- Targeted advice/consultation on attachment issues, education issues and therapeutic parenting techniques to adopters.

- Therapeutic services for the child assisted by access to the Adoption Support Fund.
- The post box scheme that enables birth and adoptive families to exchange letters to maintain contact throughout their children's childhood. This service is confidential and is usually agreed as part of the adoption planning for the child.
- Supporting direct contact (including supervised contact) between the adopted child and their birth family where this has been agreed and is deemed to be in the child's best interests.
- Collaboration with the East Riding of Yorkshire Sports, Play and Arts Development Team in the development of supporting adoptive families in activities to assist in building peer group relationships; informal support networks; and child led ensuring child led service development.
- Facilitating a connected persons group for grandparents and extended family members involved in the adoption process.
- Facilitating the 'Care Bears' group for adoptive parents and their children aged 0-4 years.

All adoptive families have the right to request an assessment of adoption support services at any time following the making of an adoption order. They are therefore directed initially to the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Early Help, Advice and Safeguarding Hub to request this service.

## 6. Adoption panel

In line with the Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012, East Riding of Yorkshire Council's adoption panel currently meets fortnightly to make recommendations to the agency decision-maker (Head of children and young people support and safeguarding) in respect of all matters concerning adoption. Additional panels are convened as necessary.

The composition of the panel is in line with the Adoption Agencies Regulations and includes independent members as well as council officers. The current chair of the panel is an independent person with substantial experience of chairing adoption panels. An established central list for membership of the adoption panel comprises people from a variety of experiences and backgrounds.

Panel recommendations are conveyed orally to all those involved on the day of panel. The agency decision-maker makes a decision within seven working days of receipt of finalised panel minutes. Decisions are conveyed orally to all those involved within two working days and confirmed in writing within seven working days.

Approved adopters who have not had a child placed within one year will be reviewed annually.

## 7. Monitoring and evaluating service quality

East Riding of Yorkshire Council is committed to providing services which comply with regulations and national standards.

The adoption team are provided with regular professional supervision, which is used to monitor the quality of services provided and the progress of individual cases.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has good quality management information systems that are used to track both children for whom adoption is the plan and prospective adopters. The object of tracking is to ensure that, wherever possible, delay is avoided so that children are placed and prospective adopters assessed within national standards timescales. Any potential or actual delay can be identified and action taken to remedy the situation.

The adoption panel has quality assurance and monitoring functions in relation to children and prospective adopters.



The panel monitors the quality of reports presented to the panel and the quality of work carried out. It advises the Council about practice issues and the Head of children and young people's support and safeguarding services and the adoption team manager feed back to both the adoption team and children's social care services on issues raised by the panel.

The adoption panel members undertake regular panel training in order to ensure that their knowledge is updated in response to changes in regulation and guidance. Adoption panel members will be subject to an annual review by the chair and panel advisor of their individual contribution to the adoption panel.

Further mechanisms are in place to monitor the performance of the service:

- A full annual report on the agency's performance is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Group.
- The service has information systems to capture key milestones in the adoption process. Performance reports have been developed to monitor progress over the year.
- Quality issues are addressed through regular supervision and file auditing.
- Feedback from users and other stakeholders is obtained on a regular basis and informs the strategic development of the service.
- Feedback questionnaires are sent to adopters at key stages through the adoption process seeking their views on all aspect of the adoption process.
- Disruption meetings are independently chaired by someone outside of the council to ensure independence and the report of the findings presented to the adoption panel.

## **8. Safeguarding personal information**

Children's services and the Education department issue guidance to staff on the keeping, storage and handling of personal information in relation to both electronically and physically recorded data.

Children's services operate a confidentiality code of practice applicable to all people, including adopters and prospective adopters and professionals in other agencies working to effect the placement of children. Prospective adopters are advised in relation to confidentiality matters as part of the preparation and approval process.

## **9. Management, staffing and structure**

East Riding of Yorkshire Council's children and young people support and safeguarding services are responsible for the arrangements for children and families within East Yorkshire who require a service and those children who become 'looked after'. The adoption service is part of child care resources which also includes the fostering service. The agency provides all the services required under the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2005. Please see Appendix for a summary of the structure of the adoption service.

- The registered provider of the adoption service is East Riding of Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Cross Street, Beverley.
- The registered individual is Kevin Hall, Director of Children, Families and Schools, who is based at County Hall, Beverley and he has overall responsibility for the adoption service.
- Children's services are a section of the Directorate. The Head of children and young people support and safeguarding service is Pam Allen, who is based at County Hall, Cross Street, Beverley. Pam Allen has delegated responsibility as the adoption agency's decision maker and also acts as the adoption support service advisor on matters where there needs strategic management advice and input.

- The adoption service is part of children's services which is managed by the service manager for corporate parenting Paul Johnson who is based at County Hall, Cross Street, Beverley, HU17 9BA.
- The manager with responsibility for the adoption service on a day to day basis is Ian Wilson. He is based in the adoption team at County Hall, Cross Street, Beverley. HU17 9BA.

## Qualifications of the manager

- The national minimum standards for adoption require that the people involved in carrying out and managing the service:
- Possess the necessary knowledge and experience of child care and adoption law and practice.
- Have management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure that it is run on a sound financial basis and in a professional manner.

Pam Allen has extensive experience and knowledge to fulfil each of the requirements outlined above.

The national minimum standards for adoption require that the manager has:

- A professional qualification relevant in child care.
- A qualification at level 4 NVQ in Management.
- At least two years of experience of working in a child care setting within the past five years.
- 

Mr Wilson has a professional qualification (Certificate in Social Services) and 23 years post qualifying experience in child care work and an NVQ Level 5 Qualification in Management.

The adoption service consists of an adoption team manager, senior adoption social worker, adoption social workers, adoption support social workers, adoption care co-ordinator and clerical support staff.

The adoption service has a wide range of experience in children and families work including child protection, preventative work, risk assessment, fostering and adoption. The team is experienced in providing a variety of adoption services, including the family finding and placement of children, the assessment, preparation and approval of adoptive parents, facilitating training and preparation groups and presenting cases to court and adoption panels. All social workers in the adoption team hold a professional qualification in social work, are HCPC registered and have an enhanced CRB/DBS check. New social workers and managers are subject to a six month probationary period. The details of these staff are appended to the Statement of Purpose in appendix I.

The clerical support staff are managed by a separate support manager who is also based at the same office.

## 10. Statement of purpose availability

This statement of purpose can be made available in a format that is appropriate to the physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties and language of children, birth parents, adoptive parents and staff. The East Riding of Yorkshire Council will make arrangements for those who are unable to understand the document to have it read, translated or explained to them.

The statement of purpose will be circulated for all staff within Child Care Services to ensure full awareness.

## 11. Review of Statement of Purpose

This statement of purpose 2016 was prepared in February 2016 and will be reviewed again in 2017.

This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed at least annually by the Head of children and young people support and safeguarding service and presented to the executive members of the council for approval. The Statement of Purpose will be amended to incorporate changes in the adoption service.

## 12. Complaints

The complaints procedure is provided to all staff and is readily available on request. The procedure informs how to make a complaint, does not restrict the issues that may be complained about and specifies how they are handled. Information is also provided on other avenues of complaint where appropriate. The complaints procedure is accessible to people with a disability or sensory or learning impairment and to those whose first language is not English.

Any complaints, representations or compliments about the adoption service are dealt with through East Riding of Yorkshire Council's customer care procedures. The Council is interested in dealing positively with any concerns that are raised about the service delivered by the adoption service.

Initially, complaints will be dealt with on an informal basis but if this does not achieve resolution, complaints may proceed to Stage 1 (problem-solving) or Stage 2 (formal investigation). If these processes do not resolve the situation, a complaints review panel may be convened. East Riding of Yorkshire Council's customer services manager keeps a record of complaints made about the adoption service.

Children's services welcomes comments, complaints and suggestions about services from service users, their families, carers or representatives. A simplified procedure is available to children and young people who can fill in a pro-forma and send it to the customer services manager.

Complaints about any part of the service can be made direct to the service or through the following:-

**Email:** [customer.relations@eastriding.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:customer.relations@eastriding.gcsx.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 01482 396422

By Post to:

Customer relations team

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

County Hall

HU17 9BA

Adopters and prospective adopters are clearly entitled to use the complaints procedure if they feel they cannot resolve a difficulty with the individuals concerned or their managers. Adoptive applicants who are dissatisfied with the agency's decision regarding their suitability to adopt can apply for a review of their case via the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

Information on the IRM can be obtained from the agency or the IRM website [www.irm-adoption.org.uk](http://www.irm-adoption.org.uk)

The IRM may be contacted at:

Contract Manager

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park

Royds Hall Road,  
Wortley,  
Leeds, LS12 6AJ.  
Tel: 0845 450 3956  
Fax: 0845 450 3957  
Email: [im@baaf.org.uk](mailto:im@baaf.org.uk)

### 13. Registration authority

Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills inspect Local Authority Adoption Services.

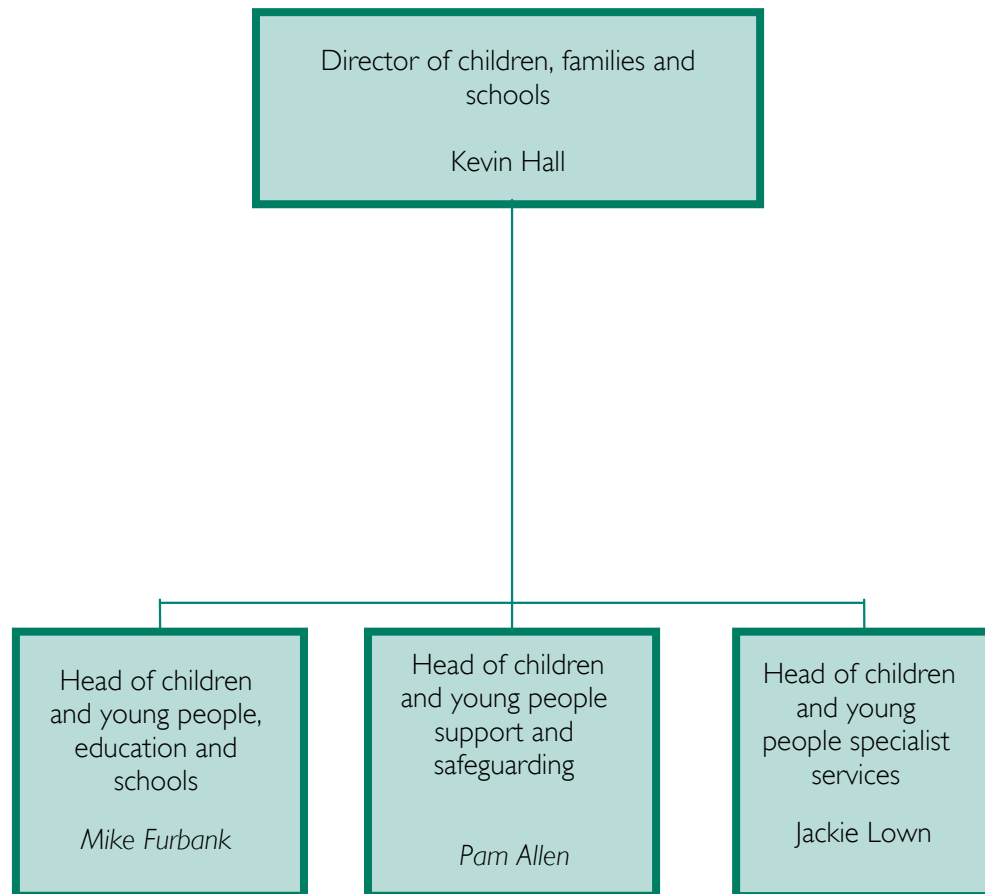
The office relating to East Riding of Yorkshire Council Adoption Service is:

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

Tel: 0300 123 1231  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Customers can make complaints direct to Ofsted directly by email, letter or phone.

# Appendix



# Directorate of Children, Family and Adult Services

