

## Recruitment Strategy Adoption East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency Updated: April 2024

### Overall Objective

Adoption East Midlands seeks to meet the need to place the children of Derby, Nottingham, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire who have an adoption plan with adoptive families, who can meet their needs throughout childhood, including the additional needs of children who have suffered childhood trauma. The aspiration for Adoption East Midlands is that we place at least 80% of our children with Adoption East Midlands adopters. We aim to have choice for children via a pool of adopters.

### Numbers of Children

Adoption East Midlands expects to be asked to find adoptive families for approximately 160 children a year. Adoption East Midlands also expects to support these children and their families, throughout childhood, as needed.

Adoption East Midlands has a large Adoption Support team, and where possible will seek to place children within the geographical boundary of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.



Adoption East Midlands feels confident there is a robust support offer within the region.

## **Sufficiency**

It is expected that Adoption East Midlands will not provide enough adoptive families for all the children, and that for some children, the right match may not be available within Adoption East Midlands families. Then AEM will work with partner RAAs across the Midlands, and nationally, and with VAAs to place children.

Adoption East Midlands aims to recruit at least 90 families per annum, which would meet 80% sufficiency and leave approximately 30 children who would be placed by other agencies.

However, where there are large numbers of single children within the 160, more families are needed, in 23/24 there were 88 single children.

A small number of AEM families will take placements of children from other RAAs in the Midlands, or nationally, if the right match is not available to them within AEM.

In recruiting adopters to meet the needs of children waiting families able to offer the right placement match for AEM children will be prioritised.

One third of the children AEM place, are in sibling groups,

Half are single children, under the age of two,

One fifth are aged over 5 years old

One fifth are not white British, and of these, most children have a mixed ethnicity.

## **Methods used to identify matches**

- Linkmaker
- Homefinding meetings, inviting regional RAA partners
- Regional Profile exchange with Regional Adoption Agencies; and VAAs
- National Profile events offered by Coram BAAF.
- Local profile events organised by Adoption East Midlands.
- Adoption Activity Days.
- Possible use of Local activity events e.g., stay and play.
- Tracking of children to ensure sufficiency of adopters and identify any significant themes.

All Adoption East Midlands adopters are placed on Link Maker under Adoption East Midlands parameters. During assessment of adopters there is a strong and consistent message re the benefits of Adoption East Midlands adopters adopting Adoption East Midlands children, there are 150- 160 children needing adoptive homes in any one year.

Where necessary, if adopters are waiting for specific characteristics of child, adopters offering a broader matching criterion may be prioritised, for registration of interest, assessment and preparation.

Currently AEM needs more adopters, and there is no waiting, nor prioritisation. All applicants are taken through the preparation process, as quickly as is possible.

If Adoption East Midlands has adopters waiting 3 months after approval, Adoption East Midlands will support families to identify children from other geographical areas.

## **Adoption East Midlands Adopter Recruitment**

- National Adopter recruitment campaign
- Annual recruitment activity plan
- Website.
- Local publicity campaigns.
- Regional publicity campaigns.
- Tweets and Facebook posts.
- Media statements.

## **Recruitment Principles**

Adoption East Midlands will accept applications from:

- Single people, or couples, same sex or mixed.
- There is no upper age limit, but adopters must be over 21.
- Homeowners, or tenants.
- People who already have children – we will discuss the recommended age gap with you.
- People living within the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Boundary.
- People outside this boundary where that meets the needs of waiting children.
- People in employment or unemployment.
- People with disabilities.
- People living a healthy lifestyle.

Adoption East Midlands will particularly welcome applicants who can consider:

- Black Children, and mixed heritage children.
- Brothers and sisters
- Older children.
- Children with complex health needs.
- Children with uncertainty, or development delay.

## **Early Permanence**

Once applicants are approved as adopters, it is possible to place children as fostered children, thus enabling children to be placed much earlier, and have less changes of carers. AEM encourage all adopters to consider this and wish to increase the number of children placed this way, currently around 15 placements a year are made this way.

## **Preparation**

Adoption East Midlands offers a comprehensive preparation offer during Stage One. In addition, to support the needs of local children seminars regarding early permanence (foster for adoption) and caring for brothers and sisters are offered. We use Virtual Reality headsets as an additional resource to assist understanding of attachment trauma and for applicants who wish to adopt siblings.

We have a welcome to adoption support seminar before you have an adoption order.

We also offer a year's membership to **CATCH - Children And Trauma Community Hub**.

In addition, we are developing our peer group, and peer support offer, and now have experienced adopters in post, to support peer networking.

Children currently waiting for placements are, brothers and sisters, single children over the age of four, children of mixed ethnicity, and children with developmental uncertainty or additional needs.

Due to the recent increase in children with Placement orders, needing adoptive families, AEM are seeking adopters for all children, with no priority groups.

## **Adoption Support:**

AEM provide a range of services for adoptive families, adopted adults and birth families, designed to offer the right level of support at the right time throughout their individual adoption journey.

Many adopted children need help to navigate different points in their life, whether in their early years, at adolescence or even as young adults. Adoptive Parents may also find that at times some guidance and support is needed throughout their child's development.

At AEM we want to make sure that families can access the right support at the right time whether that be during preparation to become adoptive parents, in the early days of becoming an adoptive parent or at key points during a child's development as they come to terms with what it means to be adopted. Our aim therefore, is to:

- provide informed and timely support for adoptive families from the start of their adoption journey and through all stages of development post order
- deliver excellent customer service which is proportionate to the level of need and with the aim of empowering families to go on to help themselves
- support adopted adults and birth relatives with a clear service pathway

AEM ensure the right support is provided in a number of ways:

- Providing Information and advice
- Signposting to relevant and helpful groups and organisations
- Providing regular & relevant training seminars and access to peer support
- Access to therapeutic services utilising the Adoption Support Fund where necessary
- Delivering packages of therapeutic / parenting support to families

It is our aim to empower adoptive parents by providing the right level of support when it is needed. It will always be our aim to support access to the services and support immediately available to families which is sustainable and will include from family and local support networks as well as universal services and community support. We recognise however that over time, the level of need experienced means that more targeted support is needed. To ensure that we offer the right level of support to as many families as possible across the Region, we offer a pathway system of support which is easy to navigate:

We have a comprehensive range of universal adoption support that can be accessed by all families and which includes our on-line 'support hub' which hosts informative information and resources for families, as well as a range of seminars and training which include Therapeutic Parenting, Theraplay, Life-Story work and an Education workshop which is run in partnership with our 4 Local Authority Virtual Schools.

Where there is a more challenging need or a more bespoke support service is needed, we have developed a 'Circular Pathway' to support which allows families to access the right support when needed at different stages in the child's & families adoption journey without the need to wait for a service or having to undertake multiple assessments prior to getting the support they need.

### Helpdesk

Our team of helpdesk social workers offer their time 5 days per week to triage incoming pathway assessments and then make direct contact with families. Having background information already supplied by the family means that when they make contact, our social workers are immediately able to start to support families through therapeutic listening & reflection. A range of support interventions can take place and include signposting to our universal support offer (training, activity days, young people's groups, peer mentoring) as well as being able to offer an agreed package of regular therapeutic listening consultations (TLC) to offer support during periods of difficulty.

### Adoption Assessment & Support

Where difficulties are more challenging or complex our Helpdesk can decide to refer on for a social worker within the wider support team to carry out an assessment of adoption support needs and develop an adoption support plan. Our social workers carry out home visits and can offer direct work and support to both parents and child(ren). If more specialist therapeutic support is identified as a need, our social workers can commission a therapy package from our in-house therapists (systemic family therapy, DDP, Theraplay, Therapeutic Life Story Work, Therapeutic Parenting) or via our therapeutic providers commissioning framework.

## Multi-disciplinary team support

Sitting alongside our social work team is our developing multi-disciplinary team (MDT) which incorporates specialist, trauma informed knowledge & practitioners from education, health, youth work and representatives from the adoption community. These roles within the MDT enable a more holistic support offer to be delivered to meet the multiple needs of young people and families in one place with a particular focus on early intervention, complex trauma and young people transitioning to adulthood and / or on the edge of care. Consultation is provided to families and professionals with opportunities for deeper reflection, understanding and planning.

**Shelagh Mitchell**  
**Head of Service, Adoption East Midlands**

**Lisa Drummond**  
**Service Manager, Adoption East Midlands**

**Jane Bolan**  
**Service manager Adoption East Midlands**

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