

Information for AAA-NORCAP Service Users

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Introduction

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of AAA-NORCAP (hereafter called 'The Organisation') as required by the Adoption Support Agencies Regulations. A large print version is available on request.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually by the Management Team and presented to the Board of Trustees for confirmation or revision. The Organisation, through the responsibility delegated to the CEO by the Trustees, undertakes to provide a range of adoption support services. The organisation is registered with the Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) as an Adoption Support Agency and operates within the requirements of the following primary and secondary legislation and guidance:

- The Adoption Act 1976 until 30/12/2005
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 from 30/12/2005
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The National Adoption Standards 2002
- The National Minimum Standards for Adoption Support Agencies
- Other relevant Legislation and Regulations and Guidance issued to Local Authorities that highlight good practice relating to services provided by both the Statutory and Voluntary Sector.

1. THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANISATION

Aims

To provide information, assistance, support and specialised services as appropriate to adopted adults, birth relatives of adopted adults, and adopters whose sons and daughters are now adults, in response to needs arising as a consequence of adoption (or an experience that is identical to adoption apart from the making of an adoption order).

To make available specialist services that will alleviate distress that can result around the reunion of an adopted adult with members of his/her birth family or when such reunion is sought but unattainable.

To increase the understanding of professionals who may encounter the people AAA-NORCAP supports in the course of their work and provide information about the needs and concerns of people affected by adoption to the general public, in particular those involved in the media.

The aims of the organisation inform the organisation's Policies, Procedures and Practice Guidance.

Objectives

To further the aims of the organisation AAA-NORCAP undertakes:-

To respond to requests for assistance from adopted people and their adult relatives to either provide the appropriate adoption support service needed or signpost the enquirer to another provider.

To provide information and practical assistance to service users on the safe and responsible opportunities to locate people related to them.

To provide a skilled and effective intermediary service to facilitate renewed contact between people who were separated from each other by adoption.

To continue to maintain an adoption contact register that enables enquiries from people affected by the same adoption to be linked to one another within a supportive framework provided by the AAA-NORCAP intermediary service.

To address the need of adults affected by adoption for broader and deeper understanding of the impact of adoption.

To provide a wider public information service that increases understanding of the lifelong impact of adoption and the needs of people affected by adoption.

To provide Training and Consultancy Services on a range of adoption support issues relating to the needs of adults and the

lifelong impact of adoption to Local Authorities, Adoption Agencies, other Adoption Support Agencies and to other bodies that appropriately need our services, including undertaking work on behalf of other agencies that is appropriate and in line with this statement of purpose.

To recruit, prepare, train and support volunteers who will deliver these services.

To enhance the sense of their identity amongst adopted adults by respecting their personal histories, cultures, languages, religions and race.

To develop new and innovative services related to the core work of the organisation.

To develop professional skills and understanding and disseminate this knowledge widely.

To influence positively public and national policy relating to the promotion of best interests of adults affected by adoption and to influence current adoption practice to enhance the lifelong outcome for those affected.

To support the work of the organisation by developing links that provide access to professional advisers in the field of law, medicine and mental health, and also to those who can address the particular needs of our service users arising from racial, religious, or cultural needs or any other specific need of a service user.

To support the provision of AAA-NORCAP services by an efficient and effective administrative support service.

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of services provided by the organisation.

To actively involve service users in the provision and development of services.

To work to the organisation's Policies, Procedures and Standards in relation to child protection; equal opportunities; complaints; finance and administration; health and environmental safety, security and management of risk; monitoring and evaluation; staff development and training; staff management; staff recruitment; service-user involvement and volunteers.

To advise, support, assist and counsel the service users.

To support, assist and counsel the people who are contacted by the organisation at the request of service users and also those members of the public who seek assistance from the organisation when contacted directly by a relative from whom they were separated by adoption.

To ensure that the services offered by the organisation address the lifelong implications of adoption for all concerned.

To seek to ensure that other providers of adoption services recognise the lifelong implications of adoption for all concerned.

2. THE REGISTERED PROVIDER

The Registered Provider is AAA-NORCAP, registered charity number 1063428, registered Limited Company number 2744523.

The Registered Office of the provider is:

112 Church Road
Wheatley
Oxon
OX33 1LU
Telephone: 01865 875999

The Responsible Person acting on behalf of the Trustees of the Charity is:

Dr Trevor Rothwell OBE
112 Church Road
Wheatley
Oxon
OX33 1LU
Telephone: 01865 875999

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3. CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF ANY) UNDER PART 2 OF THE CARE STANDARDS ACT 2000

- Adoption Support Services to adults affected by adoption
- The provision of intermediary services
- The Charity is Registered with Ofsted with the Certificate of Registration being issued on 25 April 2006.

4. THE REGISTERED MANAGER

Pamela Joan Hodgkins MBE
112 Church Road
Wheatley
Oxon
OX33 1LU
Telephone: 01865 875999 ext 205
Email: c.e@norcap.org
Fax: 01865 875686

The Registered Manager holds a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and is currently studying for the Post Graduate Certificate in the Leadership and Management of Voluntary Organisations. The Registered Manager has been working in Statutory and Voluntary Adoption Services for 26 years and has 20 years post qualifying experience in a specialist post adoption setting. She was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours of 1995 for services to adoption.

5. AAA-NORCAP STAFFING

The management team of the organisation comprises the CEO, the Specialist Services Co-ordinator, the Office Manager and the Special Projects and Development Manager. Together they have over 75 years experience in this specialist area of work and each holds qualifications directly relevant to the post held.

Professional services are provided by a team of qualified and experienced social workers specialising in Birth Records Counselling and Access to Adoption Records. The intermediary service is managed by the Specialist Services Co-ordinator and supervised by two workers, one a qualified counsellor and the other a qualified social worker, who bring over 40 years experience to their roles. Intermediary work and advice and support services are provided by two office based team members who have been trained by the organisation and over 75 trained and experienced volunteers whose qualifications range from personal experience enhanced by training and close supervision of case work through to doctorate level academic study and a wide range of professional qualifications notably in education, health care and social care.

6. ORGANISATION AND OPERATIONAL CONTROL

The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Chair of the Trustees is Mrs Margaret Hille MA MSc.

The Trustees delegate the day-to-day management of the organisation to the CEO who delegates particular responsibilities through the Management Team. A protocol exists to ensure management presence at all times in the organisation.

The CEO holds responsibility for the efficient management of the organisation and its services, taking a lead in the development and maintenance of the income of the organisation. The Specialist Services Co-ordinator holds lead responsibility for allocation of intermediary work and the management and progression of work under Section 98 Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the management of day-to-day work relating to the provision of adoption support services including the supervision of office based service delivery staff. The volunteer Intermediaries are supervised by the Intermediary Services Supervisors. The Office Manager is responsible for managing finance and the administration of services including the Adoption Contact Register of the organisation and line management of all administrative staff. The Special Projects and Development Manager undertakes discreet pieces of work as determined by the CEO and the Board of Trustees. These have recently included the upgrading of IT systems, the development of protocols to expedite the

administration of Section 98 work, and the redesign of the website.

7. SERVICES OFFERED

AAA-NORCAP offers services that will support and assist adults whose lives have been affected by adoption. The organisation also provides services that increase the knowledge, skills and resources of professionals working in adoption agencies and adoption support agencies to enhance their capacity to work effectively with adults affected by adoption.

The services provided to the general public are:

- Enquiry line
- Information leaflets
- Website
- Provision of information, testimony and direct input to newspapers, magazines, radio and TV programmes directly related to the work of AAA-NORCAP.

The primary function of all these is to explain how AAA-NORCAP can assist those who choose to use its services to safely locate relatives from whom they were separated by adoption and to facilitate contact and/or communication with located relatives. The Enquiry line also provides, where possible, a signposting service for people whose needs cannot be addressed by AAA-NORCAP.

For individual service users AAA-NORCAP offers to provide:

- An advice and information service
- A UK wide network of 'Contact Leaders' who offer information and assistance by telephone or email and provide a supportive 'listening ear' service
- The opportunity to attend informal groups throughout the UK held regularly or occasionally
- Registration on the AAA-NORCAP contact register and **facilitation of any link that is made through the register**
- A personal copy of the Searching for Family Connections Action Pack
- Assistance in identification of the appropriate adoption agency
- Use of the AAA-NORCAP Search Room at Wheatley
- **Specialist intermediary services**
- **Access to information service where appropriate**
- **Access to birth records as defined in Schedule 2 Adoption and Children Act 2002.**

For professional member agencies AAA-NORCAP provides:

- **Professional enquiry helpline**
- **Professional enquiry email service**
- Open mornings with presentations and a question and answer forum
- Opportunity to register details of own service user on AAA-NORCAP Contact Register and be advised of any link
- **Training events developing intermediary and access to information skills**
- Newsletters and other mailings
- Discounts on the charges made for AAA-NORCAP contracted, training and consultancy services.

Under contract or through 'spot purchase' AAA-NORCAP provides:

- **Work under Schedule 2 Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Access to Birth Records)**
- **Work covered by Section 98 Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Provision of intermediary services)**
- **Access to information services for pre-commencement adoptions**
- Location Only Service
- **Consultation on areas of practice or policy relevant to the charitable purpose of AAA-NORCAP that focuses upon improving services for and understanding the needs of adults affected by adoption.**

(All services highlighted in bold above are those which the Trustees consider to be services that are regulated under the Adoption Support Agency regulations 2005; services not in bold are considered to be peer support and information services.)

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8. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE REQUESTING ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

The majority of service users self refer. Some are referred by staff in adoption agencies or regional adoption support services or through the contracted services.

Individuals may request a specific service, for example assistance with location of adoption records or intermediary service. There is a prima facie assumption that the service requested will be provided. To qualify for provision of any service there may be a number of pre-requisites. These are explained on an individual basis to prospective service users verbally or in writing and it will be their responsibility (with assistance where necessary) to demonstrate that the requirements are met before or during provision of the service, as appropriate. If the organisation considers the needs of a service user may be better served by the provision of an alternative or additional service to that requested, or if a service user makes an unspecified request for assistance, the options will be explained to the service user and the reasoning of the organisation in offering any service fully explained.

If AAA-NORCAP is unable to comply with a request it will explain its reasons to the service user. Service users declined service will be encouraged to use the complaints procedure if unhappy about this decision. Service users will be made aware, during their initial contact with AAA-NORCAP, that the regulations governing our work require the organisation to take account of views expressed by other organisations and the impact that service provision to an applicant may have upon a subject in determining whether to provide intermediary service or to continue with provision of any such service that has been commenced. Where possible AAA-NORCAP will advise people who ask for a service AAA-NORCAP cannot provide, of organisations or other contacts that may be able to support or assist them. AAA-NORCAP will also ensure all potential service users are made aware of the range of options through which they may receive the service sought such as the appropriate adoption agency, local authority and any regional post adoption service applicable.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The organisation strives to ensure that its services are effective and efficient, and continually monitors and evaluates its operations and administrative procedures. Systems currently in place ensure that the services provided by the organisation are effective and the quality of those services is of an appropriate and high standard.

Service Users

The organisation is committed to seeking feedback from service users in order to inform future service provision and to assess the efficiency and quality of its service provision. All service users are provided with a leaflet that explains the Comments, Complaints and Compliments process as soon as they are in touch with AAA-NORCAP. This indicates that feedback - positive, negative or innovative - will be welcomed by AAA-NORCAP and taken into account in reviewing all services.

Systems are also established to seek feedback from people who are affected by services provided by the organisation e.g. people who are contacted by the intermediary service. Users are represented within the Trustee body, and as Volunteers.

Employees

In the recruitment process, the views of potential applicants are sought where job description, person specification and information packs are sent and no application is received from the potential applicants.

Exit interviews are carried out with all employed staff leaving the organisation, where practicable and with their agreement and, if possible, with any volunteers who give up their roles. The information and views gathered in this process are taken into consideration in all aspects of the organisation's services and HR Policy and Procedure.

Children

The organisation does not provide adoption support services to children, providing appropriate onward referral to enquirers who are seeking service to meet the needs of a child. Nevertheless the organisation is mindful that the provision of its services may have implications for children, including the children of service users; their specific needs, including particularly child protection issues, are addressed in our training of all service providers and in supervision.

Service evaluations and development

As stated above all new service users receive a copy of the leaflet that explains the organisation's Comments, Complaints and Compliments procedure.

All service users who receive intermediary services from the charity are sent a questionnaire at the conclusion of the work seeking their views about the quality of the service they received. This information is evaluated to improve the planning and delivery of future services.

10. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The organisation positively encourages comments and criticisms concerning its services. The organisation has a formal Complaints Procedure, details of which are made available to all service users at their first point of contact with the organisation.

If the complainant and the staff member involved are unable to resolve any dissatisfaction, then the formal Complaints Procedure will be implemented without delay.

Complaints may also be directed to Ofsted, www.ofsted.org.uk

Stage 1: Informal Complaint

A service-user can tell the people who run the service about his/her dissatisfaction.

If a service-user is not happy about the service that has been offered, s/he can tell the person who is working with him/her. That member of staff should then tell his/her manager or supervisor about the complaint and also explain how it has been dealt with. This helps AAA-NORCAP to make sure that the matter has been handled properly. The manager will keep a written record of the complaint, because it is necessary for the organisation to take an overview of all concerns and complaints, in order to ensure that it offers the best possible services.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If a service-user is not satisfied that a problem has been solved informally, s/he can ask senior AAA-NORCAP staff to investigate further and for the complaint to be reviewed.

If a service-user feels that the person s/he is working with cannot help with the matter, or if s/he is not happy with the answers given, then s/he should contact the Specialist Services Co-ordinator or the Office/Membership Co-ordinator.

They can be contacted:

- by telephone
- by letter
- by asking to see them.

Most problems can be resolved by discussing them with the people who manage the service. The Co-ordinator will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days, will look into the matter and, wherever possible, the outcome of the investigation will be provided within 15 days. If that is not achievable, the Complainant will be informed immediately it becomes evident that the 15-day deadline may not be met.

Stage 3: Unresolved Formal Complaint

If a service-user is not satisfied that the problem has been solved, s/he can ask for a further investigation and for the complaint to be looked at again by the CEO.

All such complaints must be put in writing to the CEO who is not directly involved in the day-to-day management of the service provision and administration of the organisation.

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The CEO can be contacted:

- by letter addressed to the CEO at AAA-NORCAP
- or by e-mail: c.e@norcap.org

A service-user can ask a friend, family member, or advocate for help to think through what s/he wants to complain about and how s/he wants to share those views.

The CEO will let the Complainant know within five working days that the complaint has been received.

The CEO will need to make sure that the complaint is legitimate and valid, and that it should be directed to the organisation.

The CEO may:

- telephone the service-user and ask for more details
- arrange to meet with the service-user to discuss the concerns
- talk to other people who are involved.

When it is established that further investigation is needed and requested by the Complainant, the CEO will confirm this to the Complainant, and will conduct an investigation.

The CEO will look into all the circumstances that led to the complaint and may interview the Complainant or other members of staff, may look at all the records concerning the matter being complained about, and will recommend what should be done.

The CEO will aim to complete the Investigation within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. The CEO's findings and recommendations will be given to the person who made the complaint. Should an investigation take longer, the Complainant will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Investigation, s/he should notify the CEO within 28 days.

Stage 4: Review Panel

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the CEO's response to the formal complaint, s/he can proceed to a Review Panel.

Under these circumstances, the complaint will then be considered by a Review Panel. The Panel will aim to meet within 28 days of the CEO receiving a Complainant's request to move to Stage 4. The Review Panel will be made up of at least three Trustees of the organisation including the Chair of the Trustees.

The Complainant will be informed of the date of the Panel ten days before the meeting. The Complainant will be welcome to attend the meeting of the Review Panel and to bring someone, if s/he wished. The person the Complainant chooses to bring may be a relative, friend, or a professional advocate who may help the Complainant to decide what to tell the Panel, may attend the meeting with the Complainant and, if the Complainant wishes, may speak on his/her behalf. The advocate or Complainant may present concerns in a written statement to the Panel or they may be conveyed verbally.

After the meeting the Panel members will decide what action should be taken and advise a full meeting of the Trustees of this. The Trustees will identify the steps necessary to implement the action determined by the Panel and, having heard any representations from the CEO, shall instruct the action to be followed.

The CEO will write to the Complainant to advise the outcome, within five working days of the Review Panel meeting.

Any changes or action that it is decided should be taken, will be implemented as soon as possible.

If the Complainant is still not satisfied s/he can contact:

Ofsted Regional Office

Freshford House

Redcliffe Way

Bristol

BS1 6LX

Telephone 08456 404040, fax 08456 404049.

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Other independent advice can be obtained from other organisations, such as The Citizens' Advice Bureau.

11. THE NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY

Ofsted National Business Unit

Royal Exchange Buildings

St Ann's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Telephone 08456 404040, fax 08456 404049.

Ofsted Regional Office South

Freshford House

Redcliffe Way

Bristol

BS1 6LX

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

12. AVAILABILITY OF SERVICE FROM AAA-NORCAP AND OTHER AGENCIES

AAA-NORCAP's services are available to all adopted adults, birth relatives of adopted adults and adoptive parents of adopted adults. There is no geographical restriction on service provision. No central government funding is provided to fund service provision therefore whilst a charity and not for profit organisation AAA-NORCAP does charge for the services provided to cover the costs of those services. Some potential service users may be able to access similar services from their local authority directly or through a regional post adoption service supported by their local authority. Some adoption agencies may also offer services to adults affected by adoption. These agencies may be able to provide services free of charge or at lower cost than the charge AAA-NORCAP needs to make. AAA-NORCAP will advise people of other options known to be available and encourage potential service users to consider other services before commissioning its work.

13. TIMESCALES

AAA-NORCAP seeks to avoid any delay in service provision but wishes all service users to be aware that the statutory requirements of many services result in completion of work often taking around one year. Target service delivery timescales are:

- Commencing service within 20 working days
- Acting upon information received within 15 working days
- Offering appointments within 20 working days
- Issuing reminders to third party organisations within 20 days of expiration of time allowed for response.

All team members are committed to providing all service users with a prompt service and will proactively expedite work when there is recognised additional or exceptional need. The team recognise that service users are anxious for the work undertaken on their behalf to be resolved and that distress can be caused by delay. They aim to eradicate any avoidable delay.

If there is a major influx of work, requests for service will be prioritised as follows:

- Priority one: applicant or subject aged 75+ or suffering terminal illness
- Priority two: applicant or subject aged 65-74 or suffering a life limiting illness
- Priority three: all other applicants involving an adoption order made on or before 12 November 1975
- Priority four: all other applications.

All service users will be advised if prioritisation of work becomes necessary and they will be notified of the priority status allocated.

Confidentiality

AAA-NORCAP takes great care to protect the confidentiality of personal information pertaining to service users and their relatives. The organisation complies with Regulation 15 of the adoption agency regulations 1983 (retained) and ISR SI 890 2005. It is mindful of the principles of data protection and is registered with the Data Protection Agency, conforming to all those requirements of data protection legislation that are applicable to it.