



**Aspire Adoption**  
**Statement of Purpose**  
**2024- 2025**

## ***Introduction***

Aspire Adoption is a Regional Adoption Agency, established in July 2017, with delegated responsibility for discharging most of the adoption functions of Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and the Borough of Poole. From 1 April 2019, because of local government reorganisation, the councils funding Aspire are Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council and Dorset Council. Aspire Adoption working in partnership with the Voluntary Adoption Agency Parents and Children Together (PACT).

Families For Children were another partnership agency, however, they closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

This statement of purpose has been written in accordance with the Adoption & Children Act 2002 and associated Regulations, and the Adoption Statutory Guidance 2013. It fulfils the requirements of Regulations 2 and 4 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003; Regulations 3 and 24B and Regulations 4 and 24 C of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003; and of Regulations 5 and 6 of the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005. It also fulfils the requirements of Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014. The 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards can be accessed at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/336069/Adoption\\_N](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/336069/Adoption_N)

[MS July 2014 for publication.pdf](#)

The 2013 Statutory Adoption Guidance can be accessed at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-statutory-guidance-2013>

## ***Principles and Value Statement***

The principles of the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, the Adoption & Children Act 2002 and accompanying Regulations and Statutory Guidance, the Children and Families Act 2014, the Education and Adoption Act 2016, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, and the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014, all underpin the work of Aspire Adoption. The values statement in Appendix A is adapted from the 2011 and 2014 National Minimum Standards and sums up the important principles which underpin all adoption work within Aspire and within the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and Dorset Council in their permanency planning for children for whom adoption is the care plan. These values are equally applicable to children for whom special guardianship is the care plan.

Aspire is committed to promoting diversity and non-discriminatory practice.

## ***Aims and Objectives***

In accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, all local authorities have a duty to establish and maintain an adoption service in their area, to meet the needs in relation to adoption, of children who have or may be adopted, of adults who have been adopted, parents and guardians of such children and persons who have or may adopt a child. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council have delegated most of those functions to Aspire Adoption, a Regional Adoption Agency. Further information can be found about this in the Schedule of Responsibilities in Annex B, part of the Inter Authority Agreement between the local authorities. It explains in more detail what functions remain in the local authority and which have been delegated to Aspire. Aspire Adoption is hosted by Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council.

Aspire Adoption aims to ensure that children who are unable to live with their birth family and for whom adoption or special guardianship has been agreed as the plan, can live in a permanent, stable and loving family in which their needs will be fully met throughout their lives. This can only be achieved if the needs of all of those touched by adoption are also supported, including adoptive parents, adopted adults and birth relatives of those who have been adopted or made the subject of Special Guardianship Orders

The name "*Aspire Adoption*" reflects the aspiration to learn, to build on existing good practice and achieve practice improvements in the delivery of services for children, adopters and others who benefit from or need adoption and special guardianship services in the area covered by Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council and Dorset Council.

Aspire's vision and the objectives aimed for are to achieve excellent outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption and special guardianship by:

- Working closely with our partner local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure that children's best interests are at the heart of placement decisions which will fully meet their needs.
- Targeted recruitment and the establishment of a wide and diverse pool of prospective adopters.
- Matching so that children are placed without delay in secure, loving families.
- Undertaking special guardianship assessments which are thorough, evidence based, and timely.
- Providing creative and outstanding adoption and special guardianship support services.
- Investing in our workforce to ensure they have the right skills and capacity to deliver excellent services.
- Continually seeking to apply best practice and innovation to our ways of working.

- Actively listening to and learning from children, adults and staff with whom we work to develop and improve the services provided.

***The Registered Manager/Responsible Officer***

The Registered Manager for Aspire under regulation 5 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 is Allan Charlton, Adoption Manager, Aspire Adoption Services.

The Responsible Officer for Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council is Nicole Mills, Director of Corporate Parenting & Permanence, BCP Council.

The Responsible Officer for Dorset Council is Paul Dempsey, Corporate Director Children's Services, Care and Protection Dorset Council.

There are five Agency Decision Makers (ADMs).

Nicole Mills Director of Corporate Parenting & Permanence and Aleksandra Zabielskia Service Manager CHAD are ADMs for decisions about whether BCP Council children in the care of the local authority should have a plan for adoption, and for matches for those children.

Paul Dempsey (Corporate Director Care and Protection) and Louise Drury (Head of Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers) are ADMs for decisions about whether Dorset children in the care of the local authority should have a plan for adoption, and for matches for those children.

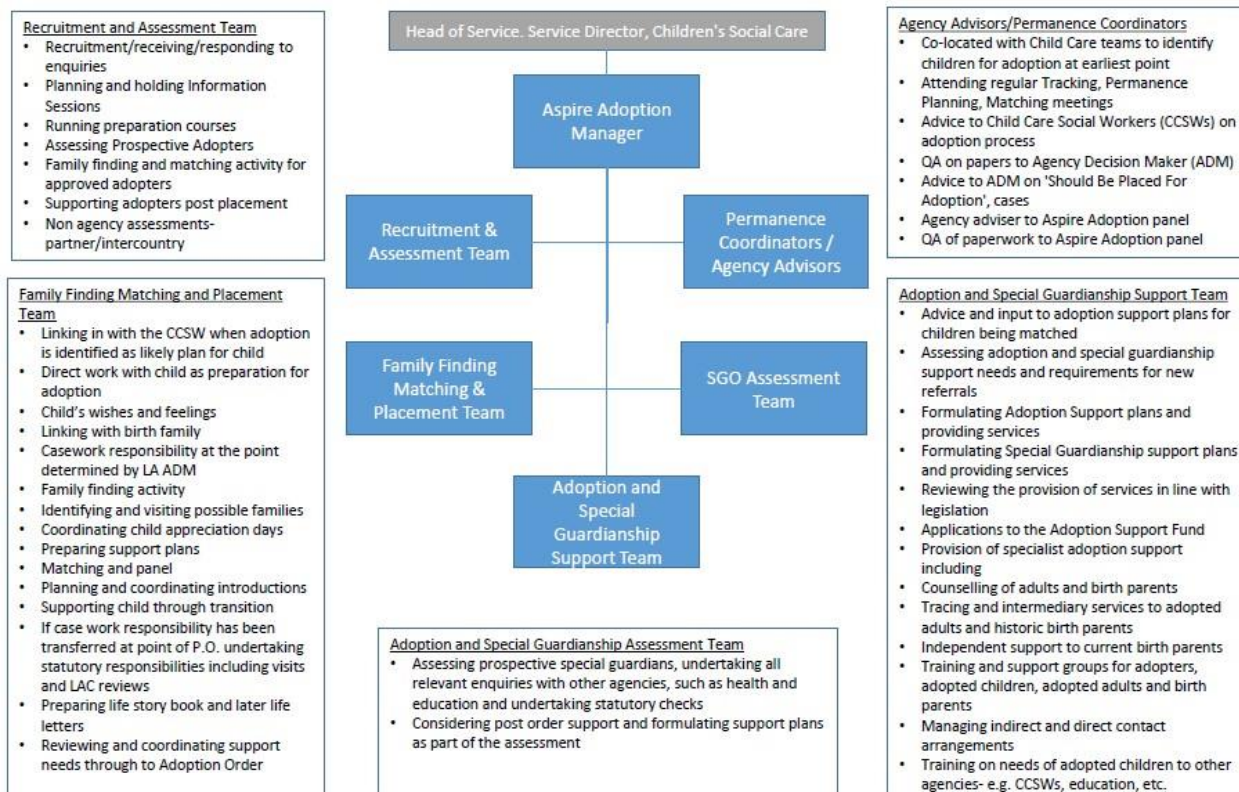
The ADMs in each of the authorities are also responsible for decision making in respect of the temporary approval of adopters as foster carers for early permanence placements.

Allan Charlton, Service Manager for Aspire Adoption, is ADM for decisions about the suitability of prospective adopters.

All have social work and management qualifications and are registered with Social Work England.

## Organisational Structure of Aspire Adoption

### Aspire Adoption - Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) – Organisation Structure



The service is led and managed by the Aspire Adoption Manager, Allan Charlton. Allan Charlton is a qualified social worker, has a relevant management qualification and is registered with Social Work England as a social worker.

The Recruitment and Assessment Team comprises of a team manager, practice manager, 7.44 FTE social workers. All are registered with Social Work England as social workers.

The Family Finding, Matching and Placement Team comprises of a team manager, 1 FTE practice manager and 4.3 FTE social workers, all of whom are registered with Social Work England, and 3.64 FTE family support workers.

The Special Guardianship Assessment team has a team manager, practice manager and 5 FTE social workers. All are registered with Social Work England as social workers.

The Adoption & Special Guardianship Support team consists of 1 Team Manager, 1 Assistant Team Manager, and 2.75 FTE Social Workers, all of whom are registered with Social Work England, and 4.5 FTE Family Support Practitioners.

There are 2 full time equivalent Permanence Coordinators, who also act as Agency Advisors to the Aspire Adoption Panel and Aspire Agency Decision Maker, and to the Agency Decision Makers in the local authorities in relation to decisions as to whether a child should be adopted.

The service is supported by 6 FTE business support staff including a senior business support officer, a panel administrator and a marketing, media and monitoring officer.

All staff are based at the Aspire Adoption headquarters which is at the Kinson Hub, 1599 Wimborne Rd, Bournemouth BH11 9AW. Social workers and support workers have lightweight laptops and smart phones and can work from home or from touch down points across Bournemouth, Christchurch Poole and Dorset or further afield.

### ***Roles and responsibilities***

The successful delivery of the services provided by Aspire is dependent on a high level of joint working between Aspire and Aspire’s partner local authorities. The table below sets out how Aspire and the two local authorities will ensure that all the agencies work together effectively in the best interests of children and families affected by or created through adoption or special guardianship. More detail is provided in Appendix B in the Schedule of Responsibilities which forms part of the Inter Authority Agreement between the local authorities.

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
<b>RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT</b>		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters	✓	
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
<b>PERMANENCE PLANNING</b>		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption		✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓
Support and advice to childcare social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	✓	
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓

Agency Decision Maker for “Should be placed for Adoption” decisions		✓
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM	✓	
<b>MATCHING AND PLACEMENT</b>		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓
Shortlist and visit potential families	✓	
Organising child appreciation day	✓	
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child	✓	
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book	✓	
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child’s care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter	✓	
<b>ADOPTION AND SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP SUPPORT</b>		
Assessment for adoption or special guardianship support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption and special guardianship support plans	✓	
Agree and administer financial support to adoptive families pre and post Adoption Order		✓

Adoption and special guardianship support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support groups</li> <li>• Social events</li> <li>• Post adoption/special guardianship training</li> <li>• Independent Birth Relative services</li> <li>• Support with ongoing birth relative contact</li> <li>• Specialist Life Story practitioners</li> <li>• Adoption counselling and training</li> </ul>	✓	
Financial support to adopters and special guardians including adoption and special guardianship allowances		✓
<b>SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS</b>		
Receipt of application or court request for special guardianship		✓
Assessment of applicants for Special Guardianship	✓	
<b>NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS</b>		
Step parent/partner adoption assessments	✓	
Intercountry adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	

### ***Aspire Adoption Panel***

Aspire Adoption operates an Adoption Panel, constituted in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance. The panel has an independent chairperson, 21 members on a Central List from which each panel is drawn and two medical advisers who share the Panel attendance. There is no legal maximum number of panel members at each panel but in practice, usually a maximum of six attend each panel. To be quorate, the panel needs to have a minimum of five members present, which must include the chair or vice chair, an independent person (who could be the chair or vice chair) and a social worker. One of the agency medical advisers for the two local authorities attends the Aspire Adoption Panel where possible and is a full member of the panel when they do so. The panel is serviced by a panel administrator and has access to legal advice if needed. The professional advice to the panel is provided by the Permanence Coordinators/Agency Advisers, one of whom will attend each Panel to ensure the smooth running and to advise on policies and procedures.

Current membership includes adopters and adopted adults with personal experience of adoption. It also includes experienced social workers with direct experience of adoption work, a psychotherapist with experience of working in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services setting, a former magistrate, and a social worker with experience as a CAFCASS guardian. The Central List reflects the diversity of modern society, with some panel members in a same sex or heterosexual relationship, others who are single with experience of bringing up children as single parents. Most of those on the Central List are white British, with two panel members who are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic



(BAME) background. One panel member has a registered disability, another has a relative with Down's Syndrome. There are more women than men on the Central List, with proactive efforts being made to recruit more men.

The functions of the panel in relation to adoption matters are

- to recommend whether prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child;
- to recommend whether a proposed match between a child and prospective adopters is a suitable one.
- In circumstances where a child is relinquished for adoption and no Placement Order is applied for, the panel will recommend whether the child should be placed for adoption.

The panel can also give advice about the numbers and ages of children in relation to prospective adopter approval, also about post adoption contact, delegated parental responsibility and adoption support. The panel has a consultative role regarding the agency's policies and procedures, and a monitoring role regarding quality assurance and ensuring that the time scales set out in the Adoption & Children Act 2002 are met.

The Aspire Adoption Panel makes recommendations based on detailed written reports prepared by the child's social worker and adoption social worker, and the social worker's attendance at panel to clarify details if needed. When considering the approval or deregistration of prospective adopters or a match between prospective adopters and a child, adoptive applicants have the option of attending panel in person, to provide scope to discuss and expand on any issues relevant to the application. Applicants who decide not to attend in person are not disadvantaged in any way and no judgement is made from their decision not to do so, although every effort will be made to assist their attendance.

The venue of the panel meeting is in a modern purpose -built building with disabled access. During the period since March 2020, in response to the Coronavirus restrictions, Aspire Panel has met virtually using Microsoft Teams.

The recommendations and advice of the panel are referred, along with the final agreed minutes of the meeting, to the relevant Agency Decision Maker, for a decision to be made and conveyed to all parties within the time scales laid down in the Adoption & Children Act 2002.

### ***Systems for the monitoring, quality assurance and evaluation of services***

The Aspire Adoption Service undergoes regular internal and external scrutiny to ensure that services are robust and of good quality. This will be achieved by:

- Collection and scrutiny of data, recording outcomes for children and adopters, including data as required by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Secretariat and Ofsted.
- Tracking systems, internally and in conjunction with the local authorities, to measure the timescales involved in providing services.

- Aspire Adoption's Operational Management Board meets 6 weekly and reviews outcomes against key performance indicators and national standards. It also reviews budgets and the financial state of the agency. The Board consists of representatives from both local authorities at Service Director and Service Manager level. Others attend by invitation, and there is a standard Focus on Practice agenda item at each meeting.
- The Aspire Strategic Partnership Board meets quarterly, and membership consists of the Executive Corporate Directors in BCP Council and Dorset Council, and the lead members/portfolio holders for Children and Families representing elected members. A representative of the CCG attends, also the panel chair, a service user representative and the Service Director of a Voluntary Adoption Agency Parent and Children Together. The role of the Board is to oversee and review the service from a performance and financial perspective, also, to attempt to resolve disputes between the Councils under the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement.
- The Permanence Coordinators/Agency Advisers and the Aspire Adoption Panel chair provide quality assurance feedback every six months on the quality of reports being presented to the panel. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the proposed placement.
- Quarterly performance reports are provided by the Aspire Adoption Service Manager to the Aspire Strategic Partnership Board and to the executive officers of each Council. The local authorities still retain corporate responsibility for their own Looked After Children, even where they have delegated functions to Aspire. These reports address the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency, and monitor the management and outcomes of the service, to satisfy the local authorities delegating adoption functions to Aspire that the agency is effective, achieving good outcomes for children and other service users, and complying with the conditions of registration.
- Each team has regular team meetings and there are staff meetings for all of those working in Aspire every 6 months, to analyse performance across the service and take part in practice development sessions.
- Service user feedback is sought at different stages of the adoption process, and in relation to special guardianship services.
- A Service User Consultative Forum meets every 3-4 months to feedback to the agency on specific issues. The chairperson of the Forum sits on the Strategic Partnership Board.
- Second opinion visits to prospective adopters take place where there are issues arising during the assessment.
- Statutory Child in Care reviews, chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers, and planning meetings provide a structure for the agency to record progress in individual cases where a child is looked after by either of the local authorities.
- Where Aspire has case responsibility for children with adoption plans, the local authority audit schedule includes these cases. Aspire has also set up an audit schedule to audit a sample of cases in each of the four teams on a rolling monthly basis, with feedback to the case holder, team manager and Aspire Service Manager. Themes from the audits are drawn together every 3 months by the Permanence Coordinators/Agency Advisers.

- Staff performance is routinely monitored during regular supervision sessions and appraisals with line managers.
- Appraisals for Aspire Adoption Panel members, including the chair take place annually.
- Annual updates take place of the *Statement of Purpose* and *Children's Guides to Adoption* and *Children's Guide to Adoption Support*.

### ***Complaints and compliments***

All of those receiving a service in relation to adoption or special guardianship by Aspire Adoption are advised of their right to make representations or complaints.

The complaints officer for Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole (BCP) Council collates and progresses all complaints and compliments according to Local Authority procedures and produces reports on an annual basis. The Aspire Adoption Service Manager monitors the progress of all complaints and compliments specifically relating to the service. There is a protocol in place which defines how complaints are managed which are received by or about the services provided by staff in Aspire's partner local authorities. Details of this can be found in one of the Schedules to the Inter Authority Agreement, attached as Appendix D.

A *Children's Guide to Adoption* is given to all children where the decision has been made that they should be placed for adoption. This contains local information about adoption, a summary of what happens at each stage of the adoption process, including at court, how long each stage should take, how a child can find out about their rights, how to contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, how to secure access to an independent advocate, how to make a complaint and how to contact the Children's Rights Officer and Ofsted.

A *Children's Guide to Adoption Support Services* is given to all children at the time of placement dependent on age and understanding and those in receipt of adoption support services, and contains the information laid down in the Minimum Standards about how a child can find out about their rights, how they can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted, if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors and how to secure access to an independent advocate.

### ***Contact details for Aspire Adoption***

Aspire Adoption,  
First Floor,  
Kinson Hub,  
1599 Wimborne Road,  
Bournemouth BH11 9AW

Tel - 0300 123 9868

Email - [enquiries@aspireadoption.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@aspireadoption.co.uk)

### **Contact details for complaints**

Tel 01202 458712

[acomplaint@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:acomplaint@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Freepost RTKS-LEBR-YTAR

W. BCPCouncil.gov.uk/complaints

### **Contact details for Ofsted**

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

General enquiries 0300 123 1231

Contact form <https://contact.ofsted>.

Contact Ofsted about concerns on 0300 123 4666

The helpline is open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm.

### **Appendix A**

The values statement below is adapted from the 2011 and 2014 National Minimum Standards for Adoption and reflects those of Aspire Adoption.

#### **Values - children**

- The child's welfare, safety & needs are at the centre of the adoption process
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, & benefit from excellent parenting & education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents & skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes & feelings are important & will be actively sought & 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 & 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 & sexuality need to be properly recognised & positively valued & promoted.
- The particular needs of disabled children & children with complex needs will be fully recognised & 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 & families & adoptive parents will be valued & 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 & Adoption Support Agencies.

***Values- adopted adults & birth relatives***

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved- adopted adults, & birth & adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate & resurface at different times & stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information & services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that consider the welfare of all parties involved & should consider the implications of decisions & actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views & wishes in decision making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances & have established policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded & the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

***Values - adopters***

- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child will be valued and respected.

- All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process. No applicant will be discriminated against on grounds of disability, ethnicity, culture, language, sexuality, gender, financial status or marital status.
- All applicants are entitled to know what issues will be considered in their assessment and will be kept informed of progress throughout. They will receive a copy of their assessment report before an adoption panel meeting, have the opportunity to comment on the report and to attend panel and be heard if they wish.

## Appendix B

### Schedule of Responsibilities

The successful delivery of the services provided by Aspire will be dependent on a high level of joint working between Aspire and Aspire's partner local authorities of Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. This document summarises respective roles and responsibilities, to ensure that all the agencies work together effectively in the best interests of children and families touched by or created through adoption or special guardianship.

### **Aspire Adoption, Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council, and the Borough of Poole**

This document summarises the respective roles and responsibilities between Aspire Adoption and partner local authorities which are Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council regarding the delivery of adoption and special guardianship services.

### **The Vision**

Aspire's vision is to achieve excellent outcomes for children and adults whose lives have been touched by adoption and special guardianship by:

- Working closely with our partner local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure that children's best interests are at the heart of placement decisions which will fully meet their needs.
- Targeted recruitment and establishment of a wide and diverse pool of prospective adopters.
- Matching so that children are placed without delay in secure, loving families.
- Undertaking special guardianship assessments which are thorough, evidence based, and timely.
- Providing creative and outstanding adoption and special guardianship support services.
- Investing in our workforce to ensure they have the right skills and capacity to deliver excellent services.
- Continually seeking to apply best practice and innovation to our ways of working.
- Actively listening to and learning from children, adults and staff with whom we work to develop and improve the services provided.

### **Summary of roles and responsibilities**

The successful delivery of the services provided by Aspire will be dependent on a high level of joint working between Aspire and Aspire's partner local authorities which are Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council. This document summarises respective roles and responsibilities, to ensure that all the agencies work together effectively in the best interests of children and families touched by or created through adoption or special guardianship.

### **THE CHILD**

<b>SERVICE AREA</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Case responsibility</b>	The local authority will take primary casework responsibility for all children for whom adoption or special guardianship is being considered to the point of Care and Placement Orders. In the case of relinquished babies, the local authority will take primary casework responsibility until the formal witnessed CAFCASS consent has been obtained.	Aspire will provide specialist advice and support to help the local authority workers to understand the adoption process, influencing and promoting best practice. This will be via the Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser and allocated Aspire social worker and support worker.	
	The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in each local authority may make a decision, at the time of making a Should Be Placed for Adoption (SBPFA) decision about a particular child, as to the point of transfer of case responsibility for that child to Aspire. For the majority of children, this will be at the point of Placement Order or formal witnessed CAFCASS consent.	Aspire will take primary casework responsibility for all children for whom the ADM in that child's authority has decided that the case should transfer to the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). For those children not transferring to Aspire, the role of the Aspire workers will be primarily family finding and providing specialist support and advice via the allocated workers and the Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser.	The funding formula used to establish the Aspire budget has been calculated on 100% of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council's children transferring to Aspire at the point of Placement Order and 20% of Dorset children. If the proportion of Dorset children transferring in to



SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
			Aspire exceeds that percentage, additional funding will be required.
<b>Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)s</b>	Where a child is Looked After, the IRO in the local authority will remain responsible for monitoring and overseeing the child's care plan to the point of an Adoption Order or Special Guardianship Order regardless of whether case responsibility has transferred to Aspire or not.		
<b>Early identification of children with adoption plans</b>	The local authority is responsible for care planning and for identifying the children who may require an adoptive family, and of then notifying the Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser at the earliest possible stage. For some children, this will be pre-birth.	Aspire will provide support to the local authority in the care planning process via the Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser. Aspire will allocate a social worker and support worker from the Family Finding and Placement team within 48 hours of notification by the local authority of a child with a possible adoption plan.	
	The local authority will keep the Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser informed of progress in care planning and will invite the Permanence Coordinator to relevant meetings such as legal gateway meetings, permanency planning meetings, and tracking meetings where adoption is being considered for a child.	The Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser will attend relevant local authority planning meetings about a child where adoption is being considered. The allocated Aspire social worker or support worker will draft a profile of the child and begin to identify suitable adopters as early as possible.	
<b>Early Permanence</b>	The local authority will consider whether an Early Permanent (Fostering for Adoption) placement	The Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser and the	

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
	<p>would be appropriate for any child for whom they are considering adoption, in line with Section 22c (9B) (c) of the Children Act 1989.</p> <p>If so, they will notify the Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser and the allocated Aspire family finding social worker.</p>	<p>allocated Aspire social worker will provide advice and support to the local authority in identifying which children are suitable to be considered for an Early Permanent (EP) placement.</p>	
		<p>Where available, a suitable family able to provide an Early Permanent placement will be offered to the local authority for a named child, with ongoing support to the carers.</p>	<p>In recruiting, assessing and preparing prospective adopters, Aspire will encourage those applying to adopt to positively consider the benefits for the child of Early Permanence.</p>
	<p>The local authority social worker will prepare the relevant paperwork for the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in the child's authority to agree to a placement under Regulation 25a of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.</p> <p>They will also progress this paperwork to the ADM in the child's local authority via the Aspire Permanence Coordinator for consideration and will be responsible for any formal notifications to their fostering service, the prospective foster carers/adopters, birth parents and court.</p>	<p>The Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser and allocated family finding social worker will support and assist the local authority social worker in completing the relevant paperwork for the ADM decision under Reg 25a. The Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser has responsibility for the quality assurance of reports to the ADM.</p>	
	<p>The local authority social worker will set up all payments to the prospective adopters/foster</p>		

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
	carers whilst the placement remains an Early Permanent one.		
<b>Tracking</b>	The local authority will continue to maintain tracking systems in relation to all children in care proceedings or accommodated under Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act.	Aspire will maintain tracking systems for all children notified to them by the local authority with a plan for adoption or for whom initial information suggests that adoption may become the plan (children in the pipeline) for that child. Aspire will also maintain tracking systems of all children in placement up to the Adoption Order and tracking systems of assessments and prospective adopters approved and either waiting or with a child in placement.	
<b>Adoption Medicals</b>	The local authority social worker will be responsible for obtaining completed CoramBAAF M and B reports (Obstetric and Neo Natal Reports), CoramBAAF PH reports (reports on the birth parents' current and family health history) and liaising with the Agency Medical Adviser to arrange the Adoption Medical. The child's social worker should arrange with the foster carer to take the child to the medical and should also attend in person.		
<b>Completion of Adoption Reports</b>	The local authority social worker will be responsible for the completion of the Child Permanence Report (CPR) for the Agency Decision as to whether a child should be placed for	The Aspire family finding social worker will support and assist the local authority social worker in the completion of the CPR for the agency decision.	It will be necessary for the local authority worker and Aspire worker to work closely

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
	<p>adoption. They will also be responsible for updating the CPR following the making of Care and Placement Orders, prior to any transfer of primary responsibility for the child to Aspire.</p> <p>The line manager of the allocated social worker is responsible for reading and signing off the CPR prior to submission to the Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser.</p> <p>The local authority social worker will be responsible for updating the CPR eg for matching if case responsibility remains with the local authority.</p>	<p>The Permanence Coordinator, in their role of Agency Adviser, will be responsible for the QA of all reports being presented to the local authority or Aspire ADM, and it is for them alone to decide whether the report is adequate for submission to the panel and to the ADM. The Aspire family finding social worker will be responsible for updating the CPR e.g. for matching, if case responsibility for the child is transferred to Aspire post Placement Order.</p>	<p>and collaboratively to ensure that all relevant information is included in the CPR and that the report is of a high standard.</p> <p>Cases will not be transferred into Aspire until the Case Management System (CMS) is up to date and the CPR has been updated.</p>
	<p>The local authority social worker will be responsible for completing a draft support plan for the child at the point of ADM decision (SBPFA) based on the assessed needs of the child in line with the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005, and for obtaining 'in principle' agreement from the child's local authority to any financial support post placement. This plan will be reviewed and updated as further information becomes available about the child's needs.</p>		
	<p>If casework responsibility has not been transferred to Aspire at the point of Placement Order, the local authority social worker will collaborate with the Aspire social worker in reading Prospective Adopters' Reports (PARs), shortlisting and visiting potential families as soon as legally possible.</p>	<p>The Aspire social worker will lead on identifying potential adoptive families and will shortlist and visit potential families as a priority as soon as legally possible.</p>	

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
		<p>If casework responsibility has not been transferred to Aspire at the point of the Placement Order, the Aspire worker will collaborate with the local authority social worker in shortlisting PARs and visiting potential families as soon as legally possible.</p>	
	<p>The local authority social worker will be responsible for obtaining agreement, prior to the matching panel, from the child's local authority to any financial support identified for the placement and included in the support plan, if casework responsibility has not transferred to Aspire.</p> <p>This should include any one off or setting up costs specific to the proposed placement, any ongoing financial support in the form of an adoption allowance, the cost of accommodation for prospective adopters who live too far to travel on a daily basis for introductions, the cost for the submission of the adoption application to court and any costs in relation to the management of direct contact.</p>	<p>The Aspire social worker will be responsible for obtaining agreement, prior to the matching panel, from the child's local authority to any financial support identified for the placement and included in the support plan, if casework responsibility has transferred to Aspire.</p> <p>This should include any one off or setting up costs specific to the proposed placement, any ongoing financial support in the form of an adoption allowance, the cost of accommodation for prospective adopters who live too far to travel on a daily basis for introductions, and the cost for the submission of the adoption application to court and any costs in relation to the management of direct contact.</p>	<p>The ADM in each local authority will need to agree to any financial support included in the support plan, or to delegate responsibility for that decision to a budget holding senior manager within the local authority.</p> <p>The funding of any finance to support an adoption placement, whether a one-off payment or ongoing payments remains the responsibility of the child's local authority.</p>
<b>Direct work with children</b>	<p>The local authority social worker is responsible for all statutory duties and direct work with the child in relation to permanency planning and care proceedings.</p>	<p>The allocated Aspire family finding social worker and support worker will advise and support the local authority social worker in planning any direct work with</p>	

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
		the child, to ensure that they understand why they are in care and the court process (dependent on their age and understanding).	
	Post Placement Order, if the primary responsibility for the child has not transferred to Aspire, the local authority social worker will undertake all stat visits and all direct work with the child, to prepare them for placement, with advice and support from the Aspire social worker and family support practitioner.	Post Placement Order, if the primary responsibility for the child has transferred to Aspire, the allocated Aspire social worker will undertake all stat visits and the Aspire social worker and Aspire family support practitioner will take responsibility for all direct work with the child, including life story work, to prepare them for placement.	
<b>Life story book</b>		The Aspire support worker will prepare the life story book for all children moving to an adoptive placement. The first draft will be handed to the prospective adopters at the latest by the second review with the final version being handed over within 10 days of the Adoption Hearing. An electronic version of the life story book will be made available to adopters as well as a paper copy.	
<b>Later life letter</b>	If casework responsibility is being transferred to Aspire, the local authority social worker will complete the first part of the later life letter prior to transfer.	If casework responsibility is transferred to Aspire at the point of Placement Order, the allocated Aspire worker will complete the later life letter and handing it to the	

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
	<p>If casework responsibility is not being transferred to Aspire at the point of Placement Order, the local authority social worker will be responsible for completing the later life letter and handing it to the adopters within 10 days of the Adoption Hearing.</p>	<p>adopters within 10 days of the Adoption Hearing.</p>	
<b>Adoption Panel</b>	<p>There are no Adoption Panels remaining in the local authorities.</p> <p>For quoracy, Adoption Panels require the attendance of a social worker as a member of the Panel. Social workers from the local authorities are welcome to approach the Agency Advisers if they are interested in becoming a panel member and should talk with their line manager in the first instance.</p>	<p>Aspire will take on all responsibility for the setting up and running of an Adoption Panel to consider the suitability of prospective adopters, matches between prospective adopters and children, and whether adoption should be the plan for the child in the case of a relinquished baby where there are no court proceedings to scrutinise the planning for the child.</p> <p>Aspire will appoint a Panel chair and maintain a Central List to ensure that at all times the Aspire Adoption Panel is set up and run in accordance with regulations and guidance and that it is quorate for all meetings.</p> <p>Aspire will take responsibility for the minuting of all panels and for the distribution and storing of those minutes securely.</p>	
<b>Agency Adviser</b>	<p>There will be no Agency Adviser post in the local authorities.</p>	<p>The Aspire Permanence Coordinator is a combined role with that of Agency Adviser. The Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser will act as the Agency Adviser to the ADM in both</p>	

SERVICE AREA	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE	NOTES
		local authorities in relation to SBPFA decisions and matches, and to the Aspire ADM in respect of approvals and as Agency Adviser to the Aspire Adoption Panel, with responsibility for the QA of all reports being presented to the local authority or Aspire ADMs. It is for them alone to decide whether the report is adequate for submission to the panel and to the ADM.	
<b>Panel Administrator</b>	There will be no post of panel administrator within the 3 local authorities.	Aspire will be responsible for providing business support in the role of panel administrator to service the Aspire Adoption Panel.	
<b>Formal notifications following ADM decisions</b>	The local authority will take responsibility for informing birth parents of SBPFA decisions, within statutory timescales.	Aspire will be responsible for the written notification of birth parents in relation to BCP SBPA decisions and the referral to the independent birth parent service. Aspire will be responsible for informing prospective adopters of ADM decisions re their suitability as adopters. Aspire will also be responsible for informing birth parents and prospective adopters of matches agreed by the Aspire ADM.	
<b>Formal notifications prior to the</b>		Regardless of whether casework responsibility transfers to Aspire at Placement Order, the Aspire panel administrator will take responsibility for	



<b>SERVICE AREA</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>placement of a child</b>		sending out formal notifications of a child's placement in advance of that placement to health, education and to the local authority where the child will be living post placement.	
<b>Access to child's CMS</b>	The local authority will provide access to an individual child's record in their CMS to the Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser and the allocated Aspire social worker, support worker, their business support worker and team manager, for any children for whom adoption is likely to be the plan.	Aspire workers will record all activity in relation to the child on the child's CMS.	Case recording will be completed within the timescales of each local authority's policies and procedures.

## **ADOPTER RECRUITMENT**

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Adoption enquiries</b>	The local authority will ensure that the Council website contains information about Aspire and a weblink to the Aspire website. The local authority will signpost any adoption enquiries which are in scope for Aspire, including enquiries about adopter recruitment, whether domestic or intercountry, adoption and special guardianship support, and partner (step-parent) adoptions to Aspire, within 24 hours.	Aspire will maintain a website giving general information about adoption and special guardianship and outlining the services which Aspire provides. The website will have clear contact details including a dedicated telephone number and an email contact address. Within office hours, a duty worker will be available to respond directly to enquiries from other professionals and from members of the public.	
<b>Pre-assessment stage</b>		Aspire will hold regular information events for prospective adopters at	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
		geographic locations across the Aspire region.	
<b>Stage One</b>	The local authority will provide all information required for statutory checks of prospective adopters currently resident in the local authority or previously resident in the local authority within 15 working days.	Aspire will carry out all stage 1 functions, including running the preparation course for prospective adopters.	
<b>Stage Two</b>		Aspire will carry out all stage 2 functions and be responsible for the preparation of the Prospective Adopter's Report.	
<b>Approval of suitability</b>		The Aspire Adoption Panel will consider the suitability of prospective adopters and the Aspire ADM will make the decision. Aspire will be responsible for all formal notifications to the prospective adopters of suitability, including where prospective adopters are not seen as suitable. Aspire will have responsibility for appeals against qualifying determinations and for any case referred to the IRM.	

### **POST ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES**

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Adoption support</b>	The local authority will signpost enquiries and referrals for adoption support to Aspire within 24 hours.	Aspire will maintain a daily duty service to ensure that all of those making an enquiry about adoption support or requesting an adoption support	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	This might be an adoptive family in need of support, an adopted adult, or a birth relative.	assessment are responded to within 24 hours.	
	If the primary reason for the referral is that the child is at risk of significant harm and/or the child is on the edge of care, the local authority will retain primary responsibility for the case, to undertake S47 enquiries and allocate a social worker where LSCB thresholds are met.	<p>Aspire will provide core adoption support to the family in the form of newsletters, invitation to support groups, and access to Aspire’s therapeutic support services including clinical psychology support. The following are the core services on offer to all adoptive families for whom Aspire, undertaking the function as a delegated function from the local authority, is responsible for offering services to–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telephone or email advice and information services;</li> <li>Liaison, short-term counselling, assessment and social work or support worker support, referral to in house clinical psychology or other specialist services if appropriate;</li> <li>Access to training, workshops support groups for adopters and adopted children;</li> <li>Access to and information about resources such as DVDs, books and specialist services;</li> <li>Opportunities for networking with other adoptive families, including social events for adoptive families;</li> </ul>	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
		Agency updates for adoptive families, e.g. newsletters and other communications whether digital or paper.	
<b>Out-of-hours services</b>	Adoptive families will have the same access to the Dorset, or Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Out of Hours service, as other families living in the area.	Aspire will operate a daily duty service within office hours but will not operate an Aspire Out of Hours service.	
<b>Indirect/ letterbox contact</b>		Aspire will operate the indirect exchange of information between birth families and adoptive families including arrangements set up before July 2017.	
<b>Supervised direct contact</b>	<p>The local authorities will remain responsible for funding any direct post adoption contact arrangements agreed prior to July 2017 but can delegate the responsibility to Aspire to supervise those arrangements in individual cases, if the funding is provided by the local authority for Aspire to do so.</p> <p>Arrangements for direct post adoption contact made after July 2017 should form part of the adoption support plan at the time of matching, with the funding for these arrangements agreed by the local authority prior to presentation to the Aspire Adoption Panel for matching.</p>	<p>Responsibility for the management of direct post adoption contact arrangements set up after July 2017, provided that the funding has been agreed at the time of matching.</p> <p>Aspire will supervise direct post adoption contact arrangements made before July 2017 if the funding is provided.</p>	
<b>Adoption allowances and other financial support to</b>	The agreement to, means testing, administration, payment and review of adoption allowances or other financial support to adoptive families, including costs incurred in managing direct contact		Harmonisation of adoption and special guardianship allowances across the local authorities will be

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>adoptive families</b>	<p>arrangements will remain the responsibility of the relevant local authority.</p> <p>The local authority will be responsible for setting up costs and for costs incurred during introductions between a child and prospective adopters, including the costs of providing accommodation if the prospective adopters live too far from the foster carers to travel daily, if agreed by the local authority as part of the support plan at the time of matching.</p> <p>The local authority will remain responsible for the costs of lodging adoption applications.</p>		undertaken at some future point.
<b>Adoption Support Fund</b>	<p>The pan Dorset therapeutic provider list will continue to be maintained by Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council (BCP) as host authority. Any new providers will be checked out by the BCP Access to Resources (ART) team, prior to their addition to the list.</p> <p>The ART team will also set up and monitor contracts to providers of services funded by the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).</p>	Aspire is responsible for all applications to the Adoption Support Fund, based on assessments of need undertaken by Aspire social workers.	
<b>Independent support to birth parents</b>	<p>The local authority will include details of the independent birth relative support service (Birth Family Matters) in their formal letter to birth parents notifying them of an ADM decision that their child should be placed for adoption.</p> <p>It will be an opt out approach i.e. birth parents will be contacted if they do not inform Aspire within 4</p>	Aspire commissions an independent birth relative support service (Birth Family Matters) from Families for Children. The panel administrator will refer all birth parents who have not opted out of contact with the BFM services following an SBPFA decision to the service.	<p>The Birth Family Matters (BFM) service is a support, advice and counselling service.</p> <p>It is not an advocacy service.</p>

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	<p>weeks that they do not wish to be contacted by the BFM worker.</p> <p>A copy of the letter will be sent to the Aspire Permanence Coordinator/Agency Adviser</p>	<p>The panel administrator will refer all birth parents who have not opted out of contact with the BFM worker following a match.</p> <p>The BFM worker will contact all birth parents who do not opt out and any other birth relatives who self- refer or who are referred by other professionals, to offer support, advice and counselling.</p>	<p>The BFM service will be funded from the Aspire base budget and is not an additional charge to the local authority.</p>
<b>Birth Records Counselling and intermediary services</b>	<p>All requests received by the local authority via the General Register Office or directly from a service user, for access to birth and adoption records, will be signposted by the local authority to Aspire within 24 hours, as will requests by adopted adults for counselling, advice and support or for intermediary services.</p> <p>Requests for independent support from birth parents or other relatives received by the local authority pre or post Adoption Order and including requests for support from birth relatives whose children were adopted in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s, will be signposted to Aspire within 24 hours.</p>	<p>Information about access to records and services for adopted adults and birth relatives will be available on the Aspire website, with links to relevant organisations.</p> <p>The daily duty worker will respond to all referrals, via the General Register Office or directly from a service user, for access to birth and adoption records, within 1 working day.</p> <p>The daily duty worker will respond to all requests by adopted adults or birth relatives for counselling, advice and support or for intermediary services within 24 hours.</p>	
		<p>Aspire will not offer a tracing service unless in exceptional circumstances e.g. terminal or hereditary illness. Service users will be given advice and information about tracing and</p>	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
		signposted to Adoption Support Agencies who undertake tracing services.	
<b>Intermediary services</b>	All requests by adopted adults or birth relatives for intermediary services to establish contact with their birth relative will be signposted by the local authority to Aspire within 24 hours.	All requests by adopted adults or birth relatives for intermediary services to establish contact with their birth relative will be responded to by the duty worker in Aspire within 24 hours.	
		Aspire will offer support and advice but will not offer a tracing service unless in exceptional circumstances e.g. terminal or hereditary illness. Service users will be given advice and information about tracing and signposted to Adoption Support Agencies who undertake tracing services.	

## **NON-AGENCY PLACEMENTS**

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Partner (step-parent) adoptions</b>	All enquiries about partner (step-parent) adoptions and all formal notifications of intent to adopt in such cases which are received by the local authority will be signposted to Aspire within 24 hours.	Information about partner adoptions will be available on the Aspire website, with links to relevant organisations. The daily duty worker will respond to all enquiries and referrals about partner adoptions within 24 hours.	
	The local authority will respond to requests, from Aspire or other local authorities or Regional Adoption Agencies, for local authority statutory checks on those living in their area who have	Aspire will be responsible for the formal written response to notifications of intent to adopt in partner adoption applications. Aspire will allocate a social	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	applied to adopt, including in respect of non - agency placements, will be responded to within 15 working days.	worker to counsel and advise the family, and to complete the Annex A report for court if an application is lodged.	
	If legal advice or support at the court hearing is required, the local authority legal team where the child and family live will be responsible for providing advice to or support to the Aspire social worker at the court hearing if this is required.	The allocated Aspire social worker will be responsible for attending all court hearings in relation to the application.	
<b>Intercountry adoption</b>	All enquiries from prospective adopters about intercountry adoption received by the local authority will be signposted to Aspire within 24 hours.	Information about intercountry adoption will be available on the Aspire website, with links to relevant organisations. The daily duty worker will respond to all referrals about intercountry adoption within 24 hours.	Local authorities will need to identify who in the local authority will respond to these requests in a timely way, as currently these are undertaken by their adoption team staff.
		Aspire will be responsible for all intercountry adoption assessments, preparation and support for prospective adopters living in the geographic area of the 3 local authorities of Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.	
		The Aspire Adoption Panel will consider all applications for suitability to adopt from overseas and the Aspire ADM will make the Agency Decision.	



## DATA COLLATION AND SUBMISSION, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Data collation and reporting	<p>The local authority will retain responsibility for collating and reporting internally and to external bodies such as the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board on information about children in need and children in care.</p> <p>If Aspire has primary responsibility for a child, the Case Management System (CMS) in the child's authority will be the CMS for the Aspire social worker to record any information relating to the child. This will enable reports to be run by the child's local authority from their own CMS.</p>	<p>Aspire will take responsibility for collating and reporting, internally and to external bodies such as the Department for Education, Ofsted and Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board on information about prospective adopters, adopters, adoption support.</p> <p>If Aspire has primary responsibility for a child, the Case Management System (CMS) in the child's authority will be the CMS for the Aspire social worker to record any information relating to the child. This will enable reports to be run by the child's local authority from their own CMS.</p>	
	<p>The local authorities will identify the data they require Aspire to produce in order to fulfil their own responsibilities in relation to children in care, including those with adoption plans.</p>	<p>Aspire will be responsible for producing the Annual Adoption Report for each local authority in relation to adoption services within their area. This will be presented to the Aspire Management Board and to the relevant Council Boards.</p>	
Freedom of Information requests	<p>The local authority will be responsible for responding to any Freedom of Information requests relating to care planning for children and data about ADM decisions, Placement Orders and</p>	<p>Aspire will be responsible for responding to any Freedom of Information requests relating to adoption assessments and adoption support.</p>	<p>Where a request relates to both the local authority and Aspire, an agreement will have to be reached</p>

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	Adoption or Special Guardianship Orders made in respect of children who are or were in their care.		on a case by case basis as to who is best placed to collate and respond to the request.
Complaints	The local authority will be responsible for all complaints received in relation to the child, to the point of transfer of case responsibility to Aspire.	Aspire will be responsible for all complaints relating to prospective adopters and adopters, children post transfer of case responsibility to Aspire, adopted adults, letterbox.	
	Where a complaint relates to services pre and post transfer of case responsibility to Aspire, a decision will be made following consultation with the complaints officer in the child's authority as to how to manage the complaint and as to who will take responsibility for investigating the complaint and for funding any stage 2 and stage 3 investigations.	Where a complaint relates to services pre and post transfer of case responsibility to Aspire, a decision will be made following consultation with the complaints officer in the child's authority as to how to manage the complaint and as to who will take responsibility for investigating the complaint and for funding any stage 2 and stage 3 investigations.	

## **SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP**

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Special guardianship in care proceedings</b>	The primary responsibility for the child remains with the local authority in respect of permanency planning, court proceedings, parenting assessments, and viability assessments of family or friends.	Following a positive viability assessment of a family member or friend and referral into Aspire, a social worker will be allocated within 48 hours to complete a full assessment.	
	The local authority will refer into Aspire for a full assessment of a family member or friend as soon as	If the family to be assessed lives outside of England, Wales, Northern Ireland or	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	<p>possible following the conclusion of a positive viability assessment.</p> <p>To enable court timescales to be met, this could be before a full assessment is ordered by the court but where the viability assessment is positive and where the local authority is recommending a full assessment to the court.</p> <p>If the family to be assessed lives outside of England, Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland, the assessment will need to be undertaken by an international organisation such as Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) or via ICACU, with access to local systems for undertaking statutory enquiries and medicals, and knowledge of the local cultural and legal context. It is the responsibility of the local authority to fund this.</p> <p>Any assessments of family members from overseas if they travel to this area for a time limited period will be undertaken by the local authority social worker. In these circumstances, any assessment can only be undertaken at the level of a viability assessment, given the need to undertake statutory and medical checks of the applicants in their country of residence, to explore their home conditions and financial circumstances, and also to visit referees.</p>	<p>Scotland, Aspire will offer advice and assistance upon request, but will not undertake the assessment.</p>	
	<p>The local authority will respond to all requests for local authority statutory checks for anyone living in their area within 15 working days.</p>	<p>The Aspire social worker will undertake all relevant enquiries and investigations relevant to completing a full assessment.</p>	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	If English is not the first language for any applicants, the local authority will fund the cost of interpreters to enable the Aspire worker to undertake the assessment.	Once completed and signed off by the team manager, the report will be submitted to the local authority legal team and to the social worker with primary responsibility for the child for submission to court.	
	The local authority social worker will retain primary case work responsibility for the child and for the court case throughout.	The Aspire social worker will attend court to give evidence on their assessment if requested.	
<b>Direct applications for Special Guardianship Orders</b>	Enquiries and notifications about Special Guardianship Order applications, which are received by the local authority where the child is not the subject of care proceedings, will be referred to Aspire within 24 hours.	Enquiries and notifications about Special Guardianship Order applications, where the child is not the subject of care proceedings, will be responded to by the Aspire duty worker within 24 hours.	
	The local authority will respond to all requests for local authority statutory checks for anyone living in their area within 15 working days.	Aspire will allocate a social worker to undertake all enquiries and complete all reports in respect of Special Guardianship Order applications, where the child is not the subject of care proceedings.	
	If legal advice or support at the court hearing is required, the local authority legal team where the child and family live will be responsible for providing advice to or support to the Aspire social worker at the court hearing if this is required.	The Aspire social worker will attend all relevant court hearings in respect of such applications.	

## FOSTER CARERS WISHING TO ADOPT OR APPLY FOR A SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER FOR A CHILD IN THEIR CARE

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	Where a foster carer expresses an interest in adopting or applying for a Special Guardianship Order in relation to a child in their care, the local authority will contact Aspire for a social worker to be allocated to undertake a joint visit to explore further.	Upon request, Aspire will allocate a social worker to undertake a joint visit with the child's allocated social worker in the local authority to explore further.	
		Should the foster carer wish to proceed following the joint visit, Aspire will undertake either an adoption assessment within statutory timescales of 4 months, or a special guardianship assessment in line with legislation.	
	The local authority social worker will continue to take primary responsibility for the child. If the foster carer is a local authority foster carer, they will continue to support the carer in line with fostering regulations whilst the assessment is being undertaken by Aspire. If the foster carer is an Independent Fostering Provider (IFP) carer, that agency will continue to support the carer whilst the assessment is being undertaken.		
	Responsibility for funding any support including financial support post order will be held by the local authority.	Post order, Aspire will provide core support services as provided to other adopters or special guardians.	

## SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP SUPPORT

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	The local authority will signpost enquiries and referrals for special guardianship support to Aspire within 24 hours.	Aspire have information about special guardianship core support services on their website.	
	If the primary reason for the referral is that the child is at risk of significant harm and/or the child is on the edge of care, the local authority will retain primary responsibility for the case, to undertake S47 enquiries and allocate a social worker where LSCB thresholds are met.	Aspire will maintain a daily duty service to ensure that all of those making an enquiry about special guardianship support or requesting a special guardianship support assessment are responded to within 24 hours.	
	The local authority social worker will be responsible for formulating a support plan where a Special Guardianship Order is the outcome for the child in care proceedings.	The Aspire Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Team will offer advice and give information about core special guardianship support services offered by Aspire to inform the support plan for the court.	
	If a Supervision Order is made alongside a Special Guardianship Order, the local authority will retain responsibility for the Supervision Order.	If a Supervision Order is made alongside a Special Guardianship Order, Aspire will offer the family access to the core special guardianship core support services of counselling, advice and information and access to support groups, but will not take responsibility for the Supervision Order.	The funding formula agreed in the Business Case did not include Aspire taking responsibility for Supervision Orders made alongside Special Guardianship Orders.
	The agreement to, means testing, administration, payment and review of special guardianship	Aspire will take responsibility for managing direct contact arrangements if	Harmonisation of adoption and special

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	allowances or other financial support to special guardians, including the costs of managing direct contact arrangements and any costs incurred in the provision of therapeutic support, will remain the responsibility of the relevant local authority.	agreed as part of the support plan submitted to court, and if funded by the local authority.	guardianship allowances across all the local authorities will be undertaken at some future point.
	Where the child was not looked after immediately prior to a Special Guardianship Order, the local authority has discretion but is under no duty to offer an assessment of the need for special guardianship support services, including any assessment of need for financial support.	Where a Special Guardianship Order is made as a result of a direct application to court and not as part of care proceedings, the Aspire worker completing the report for the court will consider the need for support after the order is made. In such cases, special guardians and their families will be offered access to the core support services of counselling, advice and information and access to training and support groups offered by Aspire.	

## **LEGAL**

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Children</b>	The local authority social worker will have primary responsibility for permanency planning and all court proceedings in relation to Looked After Children, including applications for Care and Placement Orders and Special Guardianship Orders.	Aspire will have responsibility for the completion of special guardianship assessments referred to them by the local authority but will not have primary responsibility for the child or court proceedings.	

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	The local authority social worker will be responsible for any appeals against the making of Care and Placement Orders within the timescales allowed by the court at the time of making those orders, even if primary responsibility for the child has been transferred to Aspire.		
	If casework responsibility is not transferred to Aspire at the point of Placement Order, the local authority social worker will be responsible for all legal challenges by the birth family to the Care and Placement Orders until an Adoption Order has been made.	If casework responsibility has transferred to Aspire, the Aspire social worker will be responsible for responding to legal challenges until an Adoption Order has been made, other than an appeal against the Care and Placement Orders within the timescales allowed by the court at the time of making those orders.	
	The local authority legal team will be responsible for supporting the primary case holder, whether this is the local authority social worker or Aspire social worker, in responding to legal appeals against or challenges to the making of Care and Placement Orders or Special Guardianship Orders, where the child was previously a Looked After Child in that authority.		
<b>Adults affected by adoption</b>	As host authority, any legal advice in relation to an assessment or other matter relating to prospective or approved adopters, or other service users will be provided by the BCP Council legal team.		
<b>Adoption Panel</b>	If the Aspire Adoption Panel require legal advice in relation to any matter under their consideration,		



	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	<p>this will be provided by the BCP Council legal team, as BCP is the host authority.</p> <p>The exception to this is where a relinquished child is presented to the Aspire Adoption Panel prior to a local authority decision as to whether he or she should be placed for adoption. In such cases, the child's originating local authority remain responsible for providing all relevant legal advice to enable the panel to reach a recommendation.</p>		

### **ARCHIVING AND ACCESS TO RECORDS**

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	<p>The local authority will retain responsibility for storing and maintaining electronic and paper adoption records archived prior to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017, in accordance with Regulations and Statutory Guidance.</p> <p>This includes records in relation to prospective adopters and adopters, adopted adults, adoption support to families, birth parents, indirect exchanges of information (letterbox), children subject to adoption plans and adopted.</p> <p>This also includes records in relation to special guardianship assessments and support.</p>	<p>Aspire will take responsibility for storing and maintaining electronic and paper records in line with Regulations and Statutory Guidance for any case open to them and archived after 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 in relation to prospective adopters and adopters, adoption or special guardianship support to families, adopted adults, birth parents where a separate case management record to their child's record has been opened, and indirect (letterbox) exchanges of information.</p>	
	<p>The local authority will retain responsibility for storing and maintaining electronic and paper records archived after 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 in accordance</p>		

	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
	with Regulations and Statutory Guidance, in relation to children with adoption plans and adopted.		
	The local authority will provide access to Aspire to any records in their archive in relation to prospective adopters and adopters, adopted adults, adoption support to families, birth parents, indirect exchanges of information (letterbox), children subject to adoption plans and adopted, which are required for new referrals to Aspire after 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2017 where those records are required to inform or assist Aspire in the work they are undertaking.	Aspire will take responsibility for the data storage and security of any information accessed by an Aspire worker from archived records held in the local authority in line with Regulations and Statutory Guidance. Once the case is closed, Aspire will either return that information if requested to the originating local authority or will dispose of it confidentially.	

Appendix C

**Protocol for the Handling of Inter Organisational Complaints in Relation to Aspire Adoption**

**Between**

Aspire Adoption (Hosted by Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council)

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council

Dorset Council



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### **Reason and Purpose for the Protocol**

Aspire Adoption is a Regional Adoption Agency which has been formed through an inter authority agreement with Bournemouth Borough Council as the hosting authority. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 adoption staff from Dorset County Council and the Borough of Poole will be transferred to Bournemouth Borough Council under TUPE arrangements. Bournemouth Borough Council hold management responsibility for staff working within Aspire.

Aspire is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training and support of prospective adopters, matching and placement, adoption panel and support work. In addition, Aspire staff will be undertaking Special Guardianship Order assessments and hold some case holding responsibilities post Placement Order. Please see the attached case holder timeline in Appendix 1 for further information.

Aspire is overseen by a Management Board comprising of senior management representatives from Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and Borough of Poole.

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a guide for the management of complaints, to demonstrate a commitment to work together to provide a positive outcome, ensure ownership of complaints, to reduce confusion and ensure clarity for the complainant. All complaint investigations will take place under relevant complaints legislation and guidance.

All organisations party to this protocol will ensure that any complaints arising from the joint working are handled in line with this protocol.

### **The Protocol**

#### **Complaint Manager Role**

For each signatory organisation, the designated Complaints Manager is responsible for co-ordinating whatever actions are required or implied by this protocol.

As host authority, Bournemouth Borough Council's Complaints Manager will act as the Complaints Manager for Aspire.

They will co-operate with other Complaint Managers and agree who will take the lead role in inter-organisational complaints.

In the unlikely event that Complaints Managers are unable to reach agreement about any matter covered in this protocol, they should each refer the matter promptly to the relevant senior Manager in their respective authorities.

### **The Process**

#### **Single Authority Complaints – See flowchart in Appendix 2**

The receiving authority will establish case and therefore complaint responsibility. Where the complaint responsibility lies solely with one authority, the responsible authority will investigate and respond to the complainant through their usual statutory processes.

If the complaint needs to be passed from one authority to another to achieve this, the receiving authority should always obtain **consent** from the complainant to pass their complaint to the responsible authority to respond. Consent should be in writing and kept by the receiving authority for their records.

The responsible authority will progress the complaint in accordance with their procedure from the point of acknowledgement onwards.

#### **Joint Authority Complaints – See flowchart in Appendix 3**

Where this document refers to joint authority complaints, it is understood that this could also refer to authority / Aspire complaints. In this case, Bournemouth's Complaints Manager will act on behalf of Aspire.

Where it is established that the complaint is jointly held between two authorities, the receiving authority's Complaints Manager will obtain consent to share with the responsible authorities.

The Complaints Managers from the responsible authorities will discuss and agree which authority is to take the lead in managing the complaint process. In determining this, consideration will be given to the number of complaint elements for each authority and the 'weight' of the complaints being made, or this role will default to the receiving authority if the number and weight of complaints is equal.

The lead authority Complaints Manager will be responsible for acknowledging the complaint and managing the complaint process at Stage 1 and in coordinating a joint response.

Should a request for a Stage 2 consideration be received, the Complaints Managers will review the aspects of complaint being brought to Stage 2 to ensure that the lead authority is still relevant. The split of investigation costs between authorities will be agreed and the lead authority Complaint Manager will be responsible for appointing an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person at their agreed rates.

The investigation will produce a joint report and the authorities Adjudicating Officers will consider the aspects of the investigation report relevant to their authority and respond to these. The lead authority Complaint Manager will combine the responses to provide a joint response to the complainant.

Following a Stage 3 review request, the Complaints Managers will review the aspects of complaint being brought to Stage 3 to ensure that the lead authority is still relevant. The lead authority Complaint Manager will make arrangements following their own procedures. Both Adjudicating Officers will attend if complaints remain unresolved for both authorities. As in Stage 2, the cost will be split between the authorities as agreed and a joint response to the Panel's report and any recommendations issued to the complainant.

The authorities will work together where complaints are considered by the Local Government Ombudsman to ensure that joint working is maintained.

### **MP Enquiries**

In the event of an MP enquiry, joint discussion and agreement will take place between Complaints Managers and Aspire where appropriate regarding who to take the lead with management of the enquiry. This will then follow the usual process of the lead authority.

### **Compliments**

Each authority to process their own compliments in their usual way. Compliments for Aspire staff should be passed to the Bournemouth Complaint's Manager to record.

### **Recording and Learning**

Each authority will remain responsible for recording and reporting complaints and learning made about its staff and service in line with the statutory guidance.

Joint complaints may be reviewed to ensure that any inter authority learning is embedded in service improvements.

**Aspire Adoption**

**Case Holder Timeline**

**Aspire Adoption – pre Placement Order**

Recruitment, assessment, training and support of prospective adopters - for all authorities.

Special Guardianship Order Assessments – for all authorities

**Aspire Adoption – post Placement Order involvement**

Majority of children Social Worker case holding responsibility taken over from originating authority post Placement Order

Matching and placement – for all authorities.

Adoption support work – for all authorities (not financial).

Post adoption indirect contact (letterbox)

Adoption Panel - for all authorities.

Special Guardianship Order support – for all authorities (not financial).

Agency Decision Maker - for decisions about the suitability of adopters.

Placement Order Made / Special Guardianship Order Made

**Originating Authority – pre Placement Order or Special Guardianship Order**

Permanency planning, court process and early identification of child requiring adoption:

- all adoption case holding responsibility up to Placement Order, including Agency Decision that the child should be placed for adoption.
- case responsibility for care planning and court process for Children in Care where a Special Guardianship Order is the permanency plan.

**Originating Authority – post Placement Order or Special Guardianship Order**

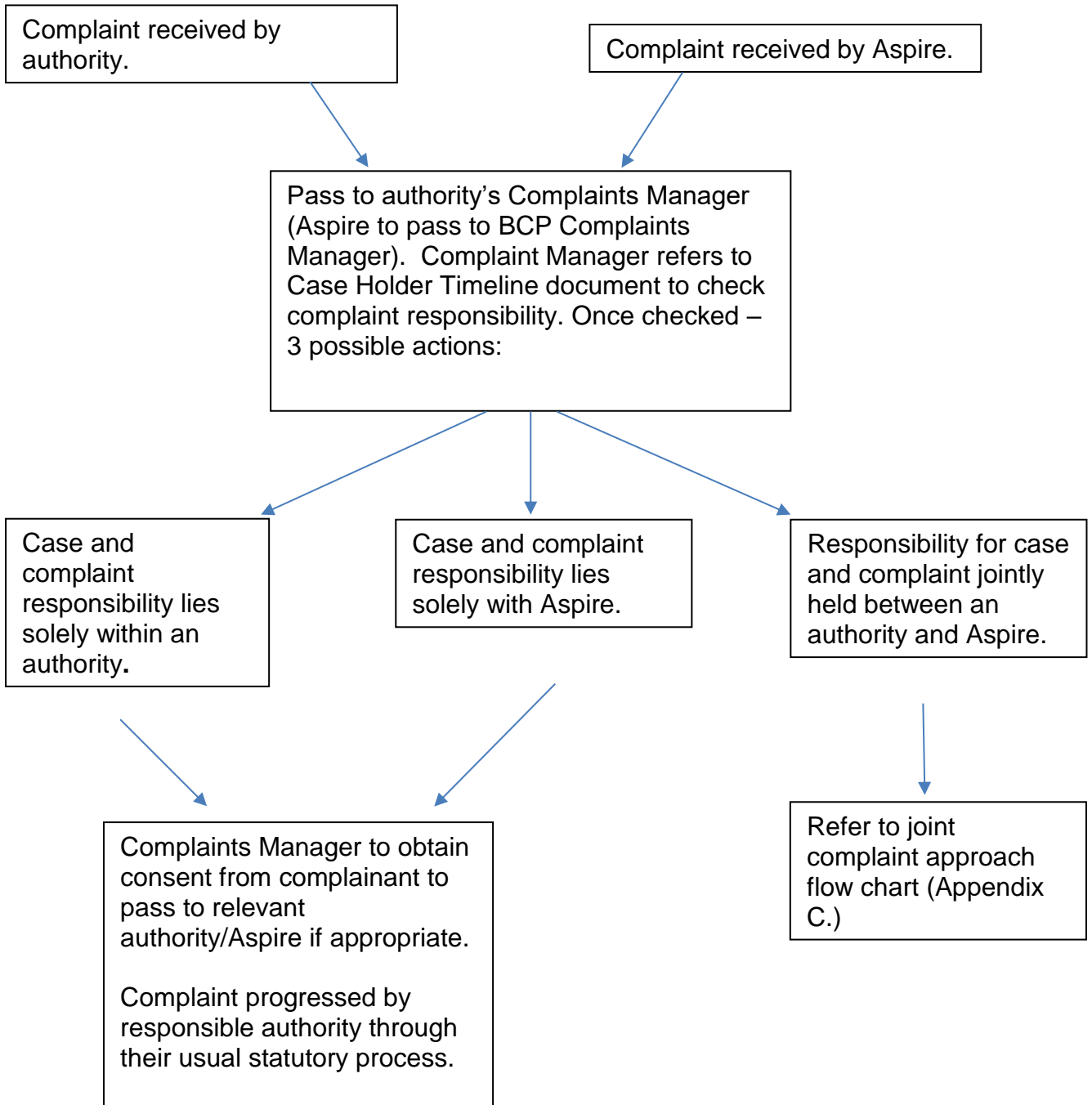
**Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole** – All adoption case holding responsibility transferred to Aspire following Placement Order – local authority retain responsibility for Independent Reviewing Officer/Children in Care reviews.

**Dorset** – Approximately 20% of adoption case holding responsibility transferred to Aspire following Placement Order – local authority retain responsibility for Independent Reviewing Officer/Children in Care reviews.

**Dorset/ Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole-** responsibility for any Supervision Orders made alongside a Special Guardianship Order.



**Protocol for Dealing with Complaints in relation to the Regional Adoption Agency – Aspire and its partners  
Flowchart following initial contact from complainant**





**Protocol for Dealing with Complaints in relation to the Regional Adoption Agency – Aspire and its partners**  
**Flowchart following identification of joint complaint**

Responsibility for case and complaint identified as being jointly held between originating authority and Aspire.



**Stage 1 process** - Receiving complaints manager to obtain consent from complainant to share complaint with other authority / Aspire as appropriate.



Complaint referred to service for response within each authority by relevant Complaints Manager.

Joint discussion and agreement between Complaints Manager and Aspire where appropriate regarding who to take lead with management of

The Lead authority will take responsibility for Stage 1 management with input from the other authority or Aspire as per their own processes.



Lead authority to monitor statutory timescales and follow up where necessary. Responses collated by lead authority.

Lead authority to send response on joint headed paper to complainant once agreed by all parties within statutory timescales. Include information on next stages and Local Government Ombudsman. Both authorities responsible for own learning and recording.



**Stage 2 process** – review complaint to ensure lead authority still relevant. Agree between relevant complaint managers how investigation cost will be split. Lead authority appoints investigators with agreement of other authority and provides information to complainant. Complaint to be investigated in accordance with procedure of lead authority following the Statutory Guidance. Joint report and adjudication to be issued to complainant on completion.



**Stage 3 process** – Same costs split as the Stage 2 process as this is a review of Stages 1 & 2. Lead authority appoints panel with agreement of other authority and provides information to complainant. Review to be completed in accordance with procedure of lead authority following the Statutory Guidance. Both authorities Adjudicating Officers to attend review. Joint adjudication to be issued to complainant on completion.



**LGO Referral** – Authorities to work together on receipt of Local Government Ombudsman enquiry to provide Local Government Ombudsman with information.

## Contacts



### **Children and Young People's Services Complaints Manager**

Karen Mayo 01202 714740 [k.mayo@poole.gov.uk](mailto:k.mayo@poole.gov.uk)



### **Senior Assurance Manager – Complaints Team**

Julie Taylor 01305 225076 [julie.taylor@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:julie.taylor@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

### **Adult and Children's Complaints Manager**

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### **Aspire Adoption Manager**

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