**SERVICE SPECIFICATION**

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| **1.0 Background**This service will allow Norfolk County Council to satisfy the requirements of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi>) whereby: * Requirement to provide counselling and information for, and ascertain wishes and feelings of, the parent or guardian of the child and others

14.—(1) The adoption agency must, so far as is reasonably practicable —(a)provide a counselling service for the parent or guardian of the child;* Requirement to provide counselling and information

21.—(1) Where an adoption agency is considering a person’s suitability to adopt a child, the agency must-(a)provide a counselling service for the prospective adopter |
| **2.0 Service Requirements** |
| **Therapeutic Counselling*** To develop, provide and maintain a therapeutic counselling service
* In the first 12-months (and any subsequent 12-month period), provide counselling to a minimum of 36 service users who are adopted, are adoptive parents or are birth parents. A maximum sequence of 6 sessions, each lasting 1 hour, per service user is required.

To support service delivery, the following is required:* Flexible service delivery that includes face to face and virtual delivery to meet the needs of the service user
* To provide information and support around understanding the processes for adoption including signposting to other services
* Safely recruited and BACP registered staff who can recognise and adapt to the needs of the different service users
* Information leaflet about the service, for potential users
* Referral mechanism / route to allow for self-referrals, which are then approved by NCC (as below). This should be considered, although the council is exploring whether to host an online referral form.
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| **3.0 Service User Eligibility & Referral Pathway** |
| Self-referral routes should be available to all adoptive parents, adopted adults and birth parents. As such, referrals going direct to the provider will need to be routed through to an NCC team, for approval prior to the provider making contact and starting work. Some Norfolk children are placed with adoptive families outside of Norfolk. In such circumstances, service provision could be virtual or face to face with the service user travelling to Norfolk. |
| **4.0 Contract Term** |
| Service provision will be for one year, from 1st June 2025 to 31st May 2026, with the option to extend by 12 monthsInvoices should be submitted on a monthly basis to adoption.unit@norfolk.gov.uk, with cs.commissioning@norfolk.gov.uk copied in. |
| **5.0 Reporting, Performance Monitoring and Standards** |
| **Quarterly & Annual Reporting Arrangements**The service will be subject to formal monitoring requirements including quarterly provider returns which will report on performance against agreed actions and targets accompanied with meetings with Children’s Services staff. Monitoring visits and spot audits may be carried out to verify provider returns. Full details of reporting and monitoring requirements are set out in Schedule 3. **Performance Management & Quality Assurance**Norfolk County Council will monitor the performance of the Service through a Performance Management Framework (PMF) based on the [FLOURISH Outcomes](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/children-and-young-people-partnerships/children-and-young-people-strategic-alliance/flourish) set out in the [Flourishing in Norfolk: A Children and Young People Partnership Strategy 2021-2025](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/children-and-young-people-partnerships/children-and-young-people-strategic-alliance/flourishing-in-norfolk-strategy#:~:text=Flourishing%20in%20Norfolk%20is%20our,and%20young%20people%20in%20Norfolk). The provider will be expected to monitor and report on performance including:* Outcomes and Impact: The impact of delivery/difference that the service makes.
* Inputs and Outputs: The quantity of delivery.
* Quality: The effectiveness of professional practice, policies, procedures, and standards.

Quality assurance will be secured through:* The provider’s internal quality assurance processes.
* Assessment of submitted contract monitoring paperwork and reporting.
* Annual Health & Safety Questionnaire.
* Service user feedback.
* This may include quality assurance visits by NCC or independent organisations designated by NCC.
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