

Child Appreciation Meeting

Purpose

The purpose is for the prospective adoptive parent/s to meet as many professionals involved in the child's journey so far. It is an opportunity for the prospective adopters to ask questions about the child, their birth family, and to gain a better idea of how to meet the child's needs and the challenges they may face as the child grows up. It provides a detailed window into the child's lived experiences including significant losses, moves and change.

It allows the prospective adopters to gradually build up and absorb the layers of information available and have as full a picture as possible about the child before attending the adoption matching panel. The meeting will provide a timeline of the child's journey which will help the adopters to provide a narrative for the child throughout their lives.

The **Child Appreciation Meeting** helps to develop understanding of the child's attachment patterns with their birth family and foster carer/s and the type of parenting they are likely to need. It can also help prospective adopters identify any potential behavioural/ emotional triggers for a child from their history, and to consider strategies to support with these.

This is an opportunity to capture memories and anecdotal information from personal recollection which may otherwise be lost or not recorded on the child's written records.

When will it be held?

A **Child Appreciation Meeting** will be held for **all** children over the age of 3 or for younger children where they have experienced a high number of moves, and for sibling group placements of three or more children. It will take place once a match has been identified and prior to adoption matching panel.

Arrangements for the meeting?

The child's social worker (alongside family finder where allocated) is responsible for arranging the **Child Appreciation Meeting** and they will need to identify a suitable venue, refreshments, appropriate participants, send out invites and prepare a family tree and timeline in advance of the day. It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to ensure that a minute taker is arranged. The adoption social worker will prepare the prospective adopters for the **Child Appreciation Meeting**. The prospective adopters and current foster carers should have had the opportunity to meet or have a telephone discussion prior to the meeting.

Who should be invited?

The child's social worker, adoption social worker, foster carers and prospective adopters must attend.

Other possible attendees include:

- current and previous school/nursery teacher
- previous foster carers or respite carers
- previous social workers/family support workers/contact supervisors
- current and previous health visitors or health professionals
- independent reviewing officer
- therapists
- any other adult who may have had a significant role in the child's life.

Structure of the day?

The child's social worker (and family finder where allocated) will prepare for the meeting and provide a visual timeline of significant events and moves in a child's life with photographs where possible. The day will follow a timeline of the child's history, where possible, so that information is presented in chronological order. The child should be encouraged to contribute to this timeline age appropriately. The Child Appreciation Meeting will be chaired by an ACE Manager, or family finder in their absence.



What will be expected of me on the day?

You will have been given a time to attend during the meeting. The chair will try their best to ensure the agenda is kept to time.

Before the meeting, you will need to consider your involvement with the child and/or their birth family. Read and bring your case file (or notes) if you have one.

Most importantly are your memories and observations of the child, especially personal recollections. These are vitally important and can easily be lost. Any tangible recollection, event, memory or achievement that you can bring to the meeting is a bonus. Also share items which belonged to the child such as photos and things they have done, which can be passed on or copied. These will be treasured as they move into adoption.

If you are unable to attend, you should send written information about your memories of working with the child so that these can be shared in the meeting.

You have played a significant part in this child's past you can now help them in their future through your contribution in the **Child Appreciation Meeting**.

What happens next?

At the conclusion of a Child Appreciation meeting, the prospective adopters should take time to reflect and to feel confident that they have been provided with all relevant information to progress the match, to assist them in their parenting and in providing a stable base for permanence. Minutes of the **Child Appreciation Meeting** will be sent to the prospective adopters and put on the child's file within six weeks.

