

Family Finding Process

The Team

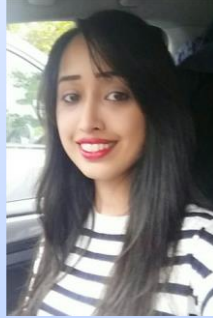
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Stage 1 - Early Tracking Process

- Family finding social worker/manager to attend Early Tracking Meetings as per each local authority's (LA) arrangement and add relevant children's information to the 'early warning' ACE Matching and Tracking (MAT) database.
- Where appropriate, family finding social workers may attend legal planning meetings where a Fostering for Adoption plan is being considered or where previous children have been adopted.
- LA to complete the ACE Early Permanency referral form to identify potential relinquished babies or Fostering for Adoption cases. This to be forwarded to the Family Finding Manager/ Hub Manager as detailed on the referral form.

Stage 2 – Adoption Decision

- Agency Decision Maker (ADM) endorses the adoption plan in the relevant LA.
- Family finding team is notified of ADM decision and receives ADM paperwork to include the Child Permanence Report, adoption medical, foster carers report and ADM reasons.
- Child's social worker notifies birth parents and informs of support services available (Family Connexions).
- Adoption allowance is discussed and decided upon, if appropriate, by LA Manager.
- Family finding team creates a profile of the child in consultation with the child's social worker to identify key matching needs. Family finding team keeps communication with the child's social worker for updates on court timescales.
- Family finding team to provide a family finding statement in relation to a specific child if court ordered.

Stage 3 - Matching and Tracking (MAT) Meetings

- Held in ACE a minimum of once per month. Adoption social workers attend.
- Family finding team present children's profiles to be considered following an ADM decision. Child's social worker can also attend in person or via video call.
- Following the discussion of the child's matching needs, Family Finding team provides profiles of prospective families to the child's social worker. ACE aims to provide a minimum of two potential families for consideration. Child's social worker to advise Family Finding Team within 5 working days of shortlisted families and request the full AARs. Family finding team can offer support and advice
- Visits arranged to prospective adoptive families between the adoption social worker and child's social worker.

Stage 4 – Family Finding

If there are no potential links identified in ACE within 3 months of the placement order being granted, or sooner if the child's needs are more complex, the Family Finding Manager will seek permission from the ACE Lead Manager for an interagency placement search. A family finder will be allocated who will meet with the child's social worker and draw up an agreement of roles and responsibilities:

The role of the family finding social worker may include:

- Updating the child's profile for MAT, featuring their details on the national website Link Maker for ACE adopters or national adopters where agreed and pursuing other family finding activities where appropriate such as Activity Days, targeted advertisements, national exchange days, etc.
- Advice or direct work to prepare the child for adoption
- Meeting with the foster carer to gain a fuller understanding of the child's needs
- Attending child in care reviews
- Providing updates on family finding to the LA through their permanency review panels/meetings

Stage 5 – Matching

- The family finding team offer to chair a Linking and Matching Meeting with the child's social worker and manager (and family finder if allocated) to discuss the preferred match and identify the reasons to proceed or not. The LA have the final decision.
- Adoption social worker and child's social worker plan arrangements for prospective adopter/s to meet with other professionals e.g. school/nursery/medical advisor. A child appreciation meeting to be held for all children over the age of 3 years old. This to be arranged by the child's social worker and chaired by an ACE manager or family finding team.
- Adoption social worker and child's social worker (and family finder if applicable) jointly complete the matching documentation and support plan for adoption panel. The child's LA is responsible for the financial assessment, confirming any adoption allowances and settling in payments, expenses for introductions such as accommodation, subsistence, and transport costs. The adoption support plan to clearly identify any therapeutic support needs.
- For interagency placements, family finding manager notifies the ACE Lead Manager of the proposed interagency match.

Stage 6 – Panel and ADM Ratification

- Child’s social worker and adoption social worker (and family finder where allocated) attend adoption panel.
- Local Authority ADM ratifies the matching recommendation from the panel and ensures this is entered onto the child’s client record system. Child’s social worker notifies birth parents.

Stage 7 - Placement Planning Meeting

- Chaired by an ACE Hub manager / experienced adoption social worker
 - Family finder/adoption social worker prepares the introductions plan to be shared with all participants prior to meeting.
 - Discussion held as per adoption placement planning regulations. ACE to circulate minutes after the meeting.
- NB: for interagency placements the H1 interagency form to be signed separately to this meeting by the Lead Managers in each agency

Stage 8 - Review of Introductions

- Chaired by an ACE Hub manager / experienced adoption social worker
- All issues discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting are reviewed and addressed as necessary and recorded in the minutes.

Stage 9 – Post Placement Day

- Child’s social worker is present on the day of placement. Fostering social worker may also be present to support the carers.
- Child’s social worker completes statutory visits post placement. ACE social worker completes support visits. Records of visits to be shared. Both will attend the Looked After Child Reviews
- Adoption social worker supports adopters to make their application to court for the adoption order.
- Adoption social worker completes section C on the Annex A. Child’s social worker is responsible for completing sections A, B, D and E of the Annex A report. Child’s social worker attends the Birth Parent Court Hearing/s.
- For placements within ACE, the adoption social worker will remain allocated for 12 months post the adoption order as a point of contact for support. The case will then close to ACE or be transferred to the relevant adoption support team (Spoke) if ongoing adoption support is required at that time
- For interagency placements, the local authority social worker will work alongside the relevant adoption agency for the adopters to support and monitor the placement. The Family Finder will remain as a point of contact for advice and guidance for adoption support and ASF applications and will track these placements until an adoption order is made. When an adoption order is granted, the case will close to ACE or be transferred to the relevant adoption support team if ongoing adoption support is required at that time.