

Adoption planning and placement arrangements for children who are looked after

Procedure for social care staff

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure outlines the processes to be followed where the plan for the child looked after (CLA) maybe or is adoption. It describes the decision making processes and how the Children and Families team social worker will work with the Adoption Services in securing the adoption placement and plan for the child.
- 1.2 This procedure is for social workers and managers across all teams and services and is also relevant to the Independent Reviewing Service (IRO).

2. Twin track planning for children looked after (CLA)

- 2.1 Where the assessment identifies that the child's parents may be unlikely to make and sustain changes in their parenting, twin track plans will be made to avoid delay in securing a permanent family for the child.
- 2.2 This will involve a **twin track** approach to planning where efforts are made to rehabilitate the child within timescales **at the same time** as plans are put into place for an alternative permanence placement, if the rehabilitation plan is unsuccessful twin tracking will usually apply to those circumstances where a child is looked after and the subject of legal proceedings.
- 2.3 Under the [Public Law Outline](#) arrangement planning requires sensitive handling and will be applied in such a way as to avoid prejudicing the original aim of rehabilitating the child. Birth families will be informed of the twin-tracking requirement and of the processes and actions that apply. They should be informed that the two plans are being made to meet the child's needs and prevent unnecessary delay.
- 2.4 Proactive efforts will be agreed to explore the potential and feasibility for the child remaining within the extended family networks, subject to the necessary assessments and checks being completed.
- 2.5 The **permanence plan** for a child will be agreed by the second looked after review. It should set out:
 - the objectives of the plan;
 - the timescale for achieving these objectives;
 - the key tasks and those responsible for implementing them; and

- the criteria that will be used to evaluate the success of the plan.
- 2.6 The second review at four months will also identify the preferred twin track plan, and where this is likely to be adoption, the reviewing officer will send a copy of the review minutes to the Operations Manager – Adoption Services' Team for information. Also through the Case Decision Meeting process the adoption manager will be aware of children who are likely to have an adoption plan and will track the decision making process from that point forward.
- 2.7 If by the third looked after review the permanence plan is not in place or is unlikely to be achieved within the timescale, the reviewing officer will refer the matter to the service manager.
- 2.8 Where the second or subsequent review recommends that adoption is the preferred option for permanence, the social worker for the child should present the plan to the Agency Decision Maker at the latest within **two months** of the review decision.
- 2.9 Ongoing tracking of the plan for children subject to Placement Orders will be undertaken by the central **Permanence Panel**, along with the circumstances of all children who have been cared for, for 9 months or more.

3. Presenting the plan to the agency decision maker (ADM)

- 3.1 The agency decision maker will consider the proposed plan having received advice from the operations manager, adoption services and legal services. The social worker is expected to be available to contribute to the process and to add clarification as to the circumstances of the child and the rationale of the proposed adoption plan.
- 3.2 The agency decision maker will require the following documentation:
- BAAF Child's Permanence Report; to include the date that the adoption decision was made by the looked after review;
 - Child's health report prepared by the medical adviser;
 - Statement of facts (where a placement order is sought having been checked by legal services);
 - Carer's report;
 - Statement of the guardians views regarding the proposed adoption plan;
 - Family tree;
 - Relevant expert reports, including connected other assessments relevant to the current proceedings and decision making;

- Other reports which the social worker determines as appropriate to assist the agency decision maker in reaching a decision.
- 3.3 Important in informing the decision will be the views and wishes of the child, the outcome of connected other assessments with reference to the adoption welfare checklist and whether there are any specific support needs of the placement including financial considerations.
- 3.4 Consideration about whether siblings should be placed together or not must be addressed, and further work and/or assessments may be required to assist the decision making. Whilst in most circumstances the preferred option would be to place sibling groups together, each child must be assessed according to their individual needs. The quality of attachments between siblings must be evidenced and consideration given as to whether their differing needs are in conflict and would affect the successful outcome of adoption being achieved for them. (See [Sibling Policy and Practice Guidance](#))
- 3.5 Where the assessment concludes that siblings should be placed separately, this should be clearly recorded and the reasons for this decision explained. Direct work with children should assist them in understanding the reasons for their separate placements.
- 3.6 Where it becomes apparent that nationality issues may be a significant issue arising from the birth parents' legal status within the UK, the social worker should seek legal advice on the possible implications of this for the child's proposed adoption plan.

4. Counselling the child and progressing the adoption plan

- 4.1 The decision to place a child for adoption will be made by the social worker for the child and his/her line manager. The decision will then be confirmed at the child's looked after review and the reason for the decision recorded on the child's case record. An **Adoption Case Record** will be set up.
- 4.2 Within **two months** of the review the adoption plan for the child should be presented to the ADM.
- 4.3 Counselling must be completed with the child and will include the provision of information, advice and support in a manner appropriate to the understanding, background and age of the child. It should explain the process of adoption including legal information and should also ascertain the child's wishes and

feelings about the proposed adoption plan, (where the child is of a sufficient age and understanding) and wishes and feelings about the possibility of placement for adoption with a new family.

- 4.4 Consideration should also be given to the child's views regarding his/her cultural and religious upbringing and views and wishes concerning contact.
- 4.5 Written information should be made available including the **Children's Guide to Adoption**, which is available from the Adoption Service.
- 4.6 Counselling is likely to consist of a number of sessions over a period of time and should be completed by the person who is best placed to complete this work with the child. A record must be kept of the counselling undertaken with the child.
- 4.7 Counselling along similar lines must also be undertaken with the parent/s (guardians and others who have parental responsibility for the child). (See Section 5).
- 4.8 The information as outlined in 3.2 is required by the ADM and copies of each should be sent to the agency advisor **5 days** before the Adoption Decision meeting.
(Note that adoption reports should be sent securely by electronic means or in sealed envelopes, marked confidential and by recorded delivery).
- 4.9 In completing the Child's Permanence Report social workers should be mindful that this is a document for the child. The information contained in the report should be full and detailed as it will be a key document for the adopted child/adult adoptee in understanding their past and the reasons for the adoption decision. It is also a requirement that the Child's Permanence Report has the relevant section completed by birth parents or at least is signed by the birth parents indicating that they have had the opportunity to comment on what has been written in the report. **Their comments must be added to the report.**
- 4.10 Where birth parents have not been willing or able to cooperate in completing the Child's Permanence Report, or have not been available to comment on or sign the report, the social worker will need to explain efforts that have been made to involve the parent/s in the process. The **Independent Adoption Birth Parent Service** might also be able to assist in supporting birth parents to comment on the report either at this point in the process or subsequently.

- 4.11 The ADM will also consider whether a **Placement Order** is appropriate and will also advise on the contact proposals and any support needs, including whether an adoption allowance should be considered.
- 4.12 Once the ADM has agreed the adoption plan the social worker should amend the child's details on Mosaic and notify the birth parents in writing of the decision. The line manager/supervisor is responsible for auditing the child's adoption record and should use the **Adoption File Audit Checklist** for this purpose.

5. Adoption counselling – birth parent/s and other family members

- 5.1 The social worker or the independent adoption birth parent service will offer counselling to the parent/s which should cover their views and wishes about the proposed adoption plan and information about the procedure and processes involved and the legal implication of adoption. In some circumstances counselling should also be undertaken with the other family members such as grandparents and older siblings.
- 5.2 It should ensure that the birth parent/s are aware of their responsibilities, that the alternatives to adoption are realistically explored, and that the nature and implications of adoption are fully discussed. It should also explain the reasons why adoption is considered the most appropriate way of meeting the child's needs both now and in the future.
- 5.3 The counselling will:
- provide an assurance of confidentiality;
 - ensure the parents have an understanding of the meaning of adoption, the legal implications in relation to their rights and responsibilities for the child;
 - ascertain their views and wishes about adoption and contact;
 - give regard to the parent's wishes regarding the child's religion, race and cultural background;
 - offer an explanation of the Placement Order and other legal processes and their applicability to their situation;
 - provide an opportunity for obtaining information for the Child's Permanence Report and purposes, and in identifying suitable adopters;
 - advise of the child's right to access his/her original records at the age of 18 years and the function of the Adoption Contact Register;

- seek to obtain health and medical information/consent which will inform the child's health report and their health report which may be presented to Adoption Panel if the medical advisor considers this appropriate.
- 5.4 They should also be given the following written information on the independent Adoption Support Service for Birth Family Members. Birth parents will also be advised that their details will automatically be given to this service, unless they request otherwise.
- 5.5 They should also be reminded of the county council's [Complaints and Representation procedures](#) and that the [Adoption Statement of Purpose](#) made available to them.
- 5.6 The social worker should explain the requirements for a health report to be completed on the child and its importance in terms of meeting the child's future health and care needs. Their consent to disclosure of relevant health and medical history about themselves and other family members should be explained, as required by the medical advisor, as part of the adoption process.
- 5.7 Parents should be encouraged, as far as possible, to contribute to the Child's Permanence Report, which should include their wishes and feelings about the proposed adoption plan and contact. They may also contribute to their child's life storybook and to give their views as to the type of family with whom they would like their child to be placed.
- 5.8 Where counselling is declined by birth parents this should be recorded on the child's case record, and the parent's solicitor, independent adoption support worker or other advocate should be informed.
- 5.9 A record must be kept of the counselling undertaken with the birth parent/s and the dates this was provided together with the written information about the adoption plan.

6. Adoption medical and health report

- 6.1 Prior to the Agency Decision Maker meeting the adoption medical must be completed in line with the [Integrated Health Care Pathway](#). Sufficient time should be allowed in arranging the medical so that the medical advisor can obtain necessary health reports to be able to complete the **health report**. The

child's social worker should forward to the medical advisor in advance of the meeting the following forms completed by the birth parent/s:

- [BAAF consent form](#);
- [PH report on the health of birth parent](#).

- 6.2 Where the child has recently had a health assessment a further medical may not be required. The designated doctor for CLA can advise on this. The medical advisor will access the obstetric records on the mother, neonatal report on the child, as required, and other health reports considered necessary. The medical advisor will need assurances that parental consent has been received before their health records are accessed. This is particularly important where health and medical concerns feature in extended family.
- 6.3 The child's social worker should attend the adoption medical if possible, usually with the foster carer for the child, or parent if appropriate, and should take with them health reports including the Red Health Record for pre-school children report, and any report provided from the health visitor or school health services.
- 6.4 In some circumstances the medical advisor may request further tests or examinations to be carried out where there are concerns for the child's health and development.

7. Placement orders

- 7.1 Following the adoption agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption, legal services complete the application for a Placement Order. This order is signed by the solicitor and the agency decision maker.
- 7.2 If the placement order is made, the social worker will send to legal services details of current contact and any proposed contact for inclusion in the application. When deciding on future levels of contact the child's identity needs and the effect of the proposed contact on the stability of the future adoption placement must be very carefully considered.
- 7.3 The social worker will provide an updated Statement of Facts to be filed at court with the application.
- 7.4 The Child's Permanence Report prepared by the social worker is also forwarded to legal services for filing at court shortly after the application has been issued.

- 7.5 [Law and Governance Services](#) will issue the Placement Order application.
- 7.6 The court will consider the application and make consequential directions or list the matter for a directions hearing. The directions are likely to include the filing of the Child Permanence Report (as outlined in 6.4), the appointment of a children's guardian, and the filing and serving of any further evidence or reports required.
- 7.7 In many cases it may be possible for the final hearing in respect of the Placement Order application to be heard on the same day as the final care proceedings, with the Placement Order application being heard directly after the care hearing.
- 7.8 If a Placement Order is made the adoption agency has authority to place the child for adoption with an adoptive family. The **Statement of Parental Responsibility** pre-placement, or on placement, should be sent to the parents and other relevant persons. A copy of the Placement Order should be placed on the child's case records.

8. Placing relinquished children.

[Guidance on placing relinquished children for adoption.](#)

9. Fostering to adopt

[Fostering to Adopt procedure](#))

10. Family finding, selecting adopters and the matching process

- 10.1 Unless it is a fostering to adopt arrangement, in order to minimise delay the adoption agency may carry out the following work prior to the placement order being obtained:
- Active family finding through local, regional and national avenues;
 - Linking and matching the child with prospective adopters;
 - Counselling prospective adopters about the proposed match pending the granting of the placement order;
 - Preparing the Placement Report and submitting this to the Adoption Panel with other reports as required; and/or

- Adoption Panel recommending the proposed match and this recommendation being ratified by the agency decision maker.
- 10.2 The **Placement Allocation Group** (PAG) is set up by the adoption services' team and is the forum for identifying prospective adopters for children who have been approved for adoption. The child should be placed within six months of the agency decision that the child should be adopted.
- 10.3 PAG meetings are held on a monthly basis and social workers will be advised on the most appropriate meeting to attend after having discussion with a manager from the adoption services team. However through the adoption operations manager the social worker can be advised of available families outside of the PAG process where possible and will reduce delay in placing the child.
- 10.4 As the availability of approved adopters for sibling groups, older children or children with significant health needs is limited, the social worker will be advised to attend PAG as soon as possible in the adoption planning process. As a means of reducing potential placement delay, legal advice should be sought with a view to incorporating into the care plan for the court process, a recommendation for family finding and featuring a child/ren prior to the adoption plans being considered by the agency decision maker.
- 10.5 Where the court is being asked to authorise the advertisement of a child for adoption prior to the making of a placement order it will apply the following principle:
- a) The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration and therefore it will need to be evidenced that by doing this, it is in the child's best interest.
 - b) That delay (i.e. waiting for placement order hearing and any time for the appeal time to expire, if appropriate) is likely to prejudice the welfare of the child.
 - c) The avoidance of delay must be balanced against the need for fairness towards the natural family in the lead up to the final hearing.
 - d) As advertising identifies a child which is a breach of the child's [Art 8 rights under the ECHR](#) (i.e. right to private life) the advertising must be therefore necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.
- 10.6 Therefore it is envisaged that court agreement will be forthcoming where the parents have been ruled out as carers at an early stage. However, there is no court time to list earlier, where the parents have not played a part in the child's proceedings and have not had contact and where assessments are all negative. Further the Department of Education has advised that advertising children for adoption can take place where:

- the child's care plan is for adoption;
- the agency decision maker has endorsed the plan;
- the agency has informed birth parents in writing of their intention to advertise;
- the agency's legal adviser and child's CAFCASS guardian are aware of the plan to advertise; or the feature makes it clear that the child's parents/guardian have been informed in writing and that the authority to place has yet to be achieved

- 10.7 At PAG the social worker will be invited to share information about the child's needs and the progress of the adoption plan. All children requiring adoption placements, who cannot be matched with an approved Warwickshire family, should be referred to the **Adoption Match** at the earliest possible opportunity. Where there are no suitable families approved, advice will be given at PAG on external family finding options, and an adoption social worker will be allocated from the adoption services' team, who will support and advise the child's social worker on completing child profiles and making referrals to other agencies and organisations.
- 10.8 Using the profile and matching information, prospective adopters can be evaluated against the [Matching Matrix](#) which will need to be completed, highlighting essential and desirable placement requirements. This should be completed by the social worker for the child and include the foster carer's and parents views, as appropriate, on the type of placement which would most suit the child. The family lifestyle, household membership, parenting style, and the support needs of the placement will be important considerations.
- 10.9 Once this process has been completed the aim is to provide the child's social workers with a minimum of two Prospective Adopter Reports who may be able to meet the child's needs based on the matching matrix.
- 10.10 In selecting a suitable placement for a child/ren due regard should be given to the child's ethnic origin, culture, language spoken and their religion. These are important considerations, but not overriding considerations, in identifying a family who can meet the child's long-term needs. In addition consideration should be given to the child's need for continuing contact with birth family members and siblings who may be placed separately. The prospective adopters' capacity to deal with legal complexities should be fully considered and explained. The payment of an adoption allowance and adoption support needs should be addressed, and a financial assessment completed to assess their eligibility for an adoption allowance in the event of the proposed match being approved.

- 10.11 When including the birth parents in the matching process it is essential that non-identifying information about the prospective adoptive families is shared. Whilst birth parents may indicate a preference, it will be important to advise parents that, while every consideration will be given to their wishes, the final decision on placement rests with the adoption agency.
- 10.12 From the potential families, the social worker, in discussion with the line manager, should shortlist two families to be visited. Prior to the visit, the adopter's social worker will have initial discussions about the child with the adopters. The prospective adopters will be provided with:
- The Child's Permanence Report;
 - Health, education, and any other reports available and relevant;
 - A photograph and/or video of the child; and
 - A current Carer's Report.
- 10.13 The prospective adopters must confirm in writing that they will keep this information confidential and return it at the request of the agency.
- 10.14 The child's social worker, and the adoption social worker, should meet with the prospective adopters where they are a potential placement match for the child and discuss the following aspects:
- their views about the proposed placement;
 - their views concerning the proposed contact arrangements;
 - the information available and whether further information is required. Meetings with the medical and legal advisors should be considered, as well as whether a life appreciation meeting would be useful; and
 - whether they would be willing to meet the birth parent/s.
- 10.15 Where health and developmental issues feature, an appointment can be made with the medical advisor to the Adoption Panel, this will assist the prospective adopters in reaching a decision about the placement by gaining a better understanding of the child's needs and potential. In addition the social worker for the adopters may wish to access the child's file to elicit key information which will assist the prospective adopters in understanding and meeting the child's needs. Consideration should also be given to arranging a consultation through the commissioned psychological service for prospective adopters.
- 10.16 Following this meeting the decision to proceed with the placement and to present the proposed placement match to the Adoption Panel rests with the

social worker for the child and the line manager. (See section 12 below - guidance for out of county placements).

- 10.17 It may not be necessary to visit more than one family where the social worker is confident that the preferred family will be able to meet the child's needs. However, it is often a useful exercise to evaluate a second family against the matching matrix to confirm the original preference.
- 10.18 Where a family is not selected after the initial visit, feedback should be given to the adoption social worker and the prospective adopters advised of the reasons. The information on the child should be returned to the agency at this stage.
- 10.19 When potential families have been identified it will be important to share with the child's foster carers the profile information on the prospective adopters. **Under no circumstances should the Prospective Adopter's Report be given to the foster carers, or other parties, as this is confidential to the agency and contains personal information.**
- 10.20 When more than one adoptive family is to be visited, the visits to each of the families should fall within 7- 10 days of each other. This is to ensure that prospective adopters are not kept waiting unnecessarily and will enable the adoption services to maintain effective management and oversight of its adoption placement resources.
- 10.21 Where the social worker is intending to recommend a proposed placement match to the Adoption Panel, the prospective adopters can be visited on a second occasion by the social worker, and the foster carers for the child, to ensure that full information about the child's needs is shared.

11. Presenting the proposed placement match to the adoption panel

- 11.1 The prospective adopters need to be notified that the proposed placement is to be referred to the Adoption Panel, and should be sent the information in 10.12. They are invited to have **10 days** to comment on the **Adoption Placement Report** and for their views on this to be presented to the Adoption Panel.
- 11.2 Both the social worker for the child and the adopters' social worker are required to attend the Adoption Panel. Adopters are invited to attend to represent their views.

- 11.3 The following reports are required by the panel and are only admissible where they have been signed:
- Combined Adoption Placement Report and Adoption Support Plan;
 - Record of the ADM reasons for the adoption plan;
 - Completed Matching Matrix; to include reference to sibling decisions;
 - Child's Permanence Report;
 - Prospective Adopters' Report ;
 - Minutes of previous panel's recommendations in respect of the prospective adopters;
 - Updated Carer's Report completed within the last three months;
 - School/nursery reports;
 - Adoption health report;
 - Any minutes for previous adoption disruptions;
 - For second time adopters, previous matching report;
 - Any other relevant expert reports.
- 11.4 The Adoption Panel makes a recommendation to the agency decision maker and the agency decision can be conveyed verbally to the prospective adopters, the child and birth parents, within **two days** and must be confirmed in writing within **five days**. Birth family members should be reminded of the ongoing support available through the Independent Adoption Support Service for Birth Family Members.
- 11.5 If for any reason the proposed placement match does not occur, the matter should be brought back to the Adoption Panel for further consideration and an account of events.
- 11.6 The birth parents should be supported in the decision to meet the prospective adopters following the agency decision, if such a meeting is compatible with the interests of the child. They should also be encouraged to make known their future requirements regarding contact or the exchange of information.
- 11.7 Any meeting between birth family members and prospective adopters should take place in a comfortable and convenient setting, and should be attended by both the social worker for the child and the social worker for the adopters.

12. Interagency placements

- 12.1 Where there are no approved Warwickshire families, or a limited choice, the child's social worker and adoption family finder will make efforts to identify adoptive families through interagency arrangements. All out of county visits to

potential adoptive families will include a social worker from the Adoption Services.

- 12.2 Where a placement is being pursued through another adoption agency the Operations Manager – Adoption Services should be kept fully informed of developments. The Operations Manager - Adoption Services will ensure that the prospective adopter's agency has received written information about Warwickshire's policies and adoption practices in relation to adoption support and the adoption allowance scheme as well as a letter of expectations on partnership working between the agencies.
- 12.3 Where a placement is made on an interagency basis the **Adoption Placement Plan and Planning Meeting Minutes** are provided to the prospective adopters prior to the placement. [Form H1](#) concerning the financial arrangements in relation to the placement is completed by the Operations Manager - Adoption Services and the manager from the adoption agency. The form is confidential between the agencies involved.
- 12.4 Where required a **Pre-placement Support Meeting** will take place to consider specific needs and consider whether and how an application to the [Adoption Support Fund](#) for therapeutic services will be progressed. It may be necessary to include and contact the adoption agency support services advisor for the local authority where the child is to be placed.
- 12.5 Warwickshire, as the child's placing agency, is required to be kept informed of the emerging needs of children placed on an interagency basis and placed out of county and can respond to a request to update the assessment of need for adoption support within 3 years of the adoption order being granted.
- 12.6 Post placement the Operational Manager - Adoption Services should receive from the Independent Reviewing Officer, review minutes for all inter-agency placements, until the granting of the adoption order.

13. Notifications, introductions and the placement process

- 13.1 Birth parents must be notified of the proposed placement for adoption (but not the address of the placement) if their whereabouts are known. This notification should be in writing and wherever possible should be discussed directly with the birth parents.

- 13.2 Before the introduction of the child to the adoptive family starts it is important that the child has had final contact sessions with birth family members where future direct contact is to end. Sufficient time must elapse to allow the child to grieve this loss, and where appropriate for work to be completed around separation and loss.
- 13.3 Consideration should also be given, at an early stage, in the planning of the birth parents meeting with the prospective adoptive family. This decision rests with the birth parents/s and not the prospective adopters, unless a decision has been taken that such a meeting would not be in the child's interests.
- 13.4 The child's social worker and the prospective adopter's social worker should ensure that the prospective adopters have full information about the child's history; the child's needs and future issues with regard to the child's health and development, contact and support. After the initial meeting, consideration should be given to the child's foster carer, and any other person who has an informed knowledge of the child, meeting with the prospective adopters to share information; and give consideration as to how the child's preparation and move to the adoptive placement can best be managed in view of the child's age, needs and circumstances.
- 13.5 A **Life Appreciation Meeting**, chaired by the adoption service, will be held where the child/ren have complex backgrounds and a range of needs which can be more appropriately shared and discussed in an open forum.
- 13.6 The **Adoption Planning Meeting** is chaired by a manager from the adoption services team and is attended by the child's social workers, prospective adopters, adoption social worker, current foster carers, and fostering social worker.
- 13.7 The Placement Planning Meeting will produce the **Adoption Placement Plan** and supporting minutes, and will cover and confirm the following:
- Summary of the background history;
 - The child's development, health and care needs;
 - The legal position;
 - Contact plans;
 - Finance/equipment;
 - Preparation of the child and life story work;
 - Meeting the birth parent/s;
 - Planning the introductions;
 - Support Plan;
 - Notifications;

- Post-placement visiting and review arrangements;
- Child's name; and
- Decisions relating to the exercise of parental responsibility.

- 13.8 Where specific support services are highlighted in the support plan, it is expected that the social workers would have some initial discussion with the service providers regarding the availability of services to meet the child, and adoptive family's, assessed needs.
- 13.9 The meeting will also clarify with the prospective adopters the statement in relation to the [exercise of parental responsibility](#).
- 13.10 Notifications of the placement should be sent by the social worker for the child to the adopter's GP; the Community Health Services, and education, (if applicable) prior to the proposed placement date. Where the child is to be placed with adopters in another local authority area, the local authority children services (usually through the Adoption Support Services' Advisor) must be informed in writing of the proposed placement, and enclosing a copy of the Adoption Support Plan. These notifications should be clearly marked as confidential.
- 13.11 Where a pre-school child is to be placed, the social worker for the child should ensure that the existing and new health visitor have the opportunity to exchange information.
- 13.12 With the support of their social worker, prospective adopters should be advised how to register the child with their GP and how to enroll the child at their chosen school. The Virtual School can also advise and assist on educational matters.
- 13.13 Prospective adopters should be advised of financial matters and their entitlement to allowances and reimbursement of costs associated with the introductions and settling in of the child.
- 13.14 In terms of support services, the assessment for eligibility for an adoption allowance, where this has been recommended, should be calculated by the finance section by the time the child is placed, and confirmed by the child's first review after placement. Where other specific support needs have been identified, from the point of placement, the child's social worker must have made arrangements with the relevant agency to provide these services.

- 13.15 At the point of placement the prospective adopters should be given the statement relating to the [exercise of parental responsibility](#) and written authority to consent to medical treatment as a routine course.
- 13.16 Where the Adoption Planning Meeting is convened shortly after the Adoption Panel meeting, prospective adopters may meet the child on the day of the meeting, but the formal introductions cannot proceed until the agency ratification has been received.
- 13.17 The date of the child's placement will not be confirmed until the review of introductions meeting, as this will allow the opportunity for further assessment and ensure that all parties are confident to proceed with the proposed placement. During this time the social worker for the adopters will see the adoptive parents separately to ensure that they are both committed to the placement and the decision to proceed.
- 13.18 The Adoption Placement Plan, minutes from the Placement Planning Meeting and the review of introductions meeting are forwarded by the child's social worker to the independent reviewing officer so that any outstanding issues can be raised and progressed at the review meeting four weeks after placement.
- 13.19 During the first month of placement, the adoptive family will be visited on a weekly basis between the two social workers and the **child must be seen alone on occasions**. Records of these visits constitute adoption reports and must be signed by the supervisor/s where the social workers do not have relevant length of post qualification and/or adoption experience. The records of the visits will be entered on the electronic adoption case record accessed by both workers. The frequency of further visits will be decided at the 1st review in accordance with the needs of the placement with a minimum of 6 weekly visits until the making of an adoption order.
- 13.20 The primary concern of the child's social worker is the child's welfare. The social worker should be involved in the ongoing work with the child to assist the child's understanding and adjustment to their new placement. The social worker for the child will have a key role in revisiting, or continuing work i.e. life story work after the child has been matched.
- 13.21 The social worker for the adopters will focus on supporting them in making the adjustments to family life and advising them on how to successfully integrate the child into their family and community.

- 13.22 At intervals the social workers should undertake joint visits to the placement to reaffirm their views on how the placement is progressing and and/or to address any issues that require clarification or resolution.
- 13.23 Following placement, the child's placement details should be amended, in accordance with guidance, on Mosaic.
- 13.24 If the child's is not adopted within six months of placement, the child's social worker will need to discuss with the prospective adopters arrangements for a written medical assessment on the child to take place through a nominated health professional or GP. This has to be at six-monthly intervals for a child under 2 years and at 12 monthly intervals for a child aged over two years.

14. REVIEWS OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION

[Reviews, visits and reporting arrangements for children placed for adoption.](#)

15. Application to adopt and adoption support arrangements

- 15.1 The social worker for the prospective adopters will support them in making their application for adoption to the appropriate court. The child has to have been placed with the prospective adopter for 10 weeks before an application to adopt can be made, and the decision to apply for the adoption order will usually be agreed at the adoption review meeting. The adopters will require the child's full birth certificate and a copy of the placement order to attach to the application alongside their marriage certificate. A brief statement of facts will be required where the birth parents(s) are objecting to the adoption application.
- 15.2 It should be emphasised to prospective adopters that they must indicate on the adoption application form that they require a serial number and should not include any identifying information on any statement of facts required. Where the child is the subject of a placement order, the parent(s) retain parental responsibility and will receive a notice of the adoption application and hearing.
- 15.3 The child's social worker is primarily responsible for completing the [Annex A](#) court report, although the social worker for the adopters will complete the section relating to the prospective adopters. Annex A is a confidential document and cannot be disclosed to any person without the court's agreement. The Annex A report should be signed by both social workers

responsible for its contents, and the line managers/supervisors, if the social workers do not have the required experience. Three signed copies of the Annex A report should be sent to legal services for checking before it is forwarded to the court.

- 15.4 The child's social worker should ensure that, after the adoption order has been made, the adopters have been given the written information about the child which is to be shared with them by the time they reach their eighteenth birthday. This requirement does not preclude existing good practice where, prior to placement, prospective adopters are provided with full information about the child and the circumstances of the adoption. The child's social worker should also provide a '**Later Life Letter**' for the child within 10 days of the granting of the adoption order if not before. Also the completed **Life Story Book** should be ideally completed by the first review following placement (within 28 days) and in all cases by the time of the second review following placement.
- 15.5 The social workers involved should discuss with the adopters how this information should be made available to the child by the time the child reaches 18 years. It should be recorded on the child's and adopters' case records that this discussion has taken place.
- 15.6 The information and agreements regarding ongoing **Letterbox Information Exchange** should be completed and made into a file. A handover meeting is to be arranged with an adoption manager, prior to the Adoption Services taking on the ongoing responsibility for the letterbox arrangements.
- 15.7 The child's change in status should be recorded on Mosaic.
- 15.8 The child's social worker should notify the birth parent/s that the Adoption Order has been granted, and should ensure that the electronic adoption case record is completed. The adoption case record has to be retained for 100 years. (See [Retention and Disposal](#) guidance)
- 15.9 The social worker for the adopters will remain involved with the family for a minimum of 12 months after the adoption order is granted to offer ongoing support and advice. Adopted children, adopters and birth parents may approach the agency for an assessment for adoption support services as required.

16. Non agency (private) applications to adopt by foster carers.

- 16.1 Where a child has lived with a foster carer for more than 12 months the local authority may support the foster carer in making a non-agency (private) application for adoption where this is the permanency plan for the child.
- 16.2 The care plan as agreed at the looked after review must be for adoption and an adoption support plan should be completed outlining the ongoing support that will be provided to placement.
- 16.3 As the adoptive parent has been a foster carer approved by the local authority, and the local authority is in support of the proposed adoption placement, this will be classed as an agency adoption. Accordingly the adopters will be entitled to have an assessment of their need for support services, including financial support and the payment of transitional allowances to former foster carers.

17. The storage of adoption records on Mosaic and Electronic Social Care Records (ESCR)

- 17.1 All records relating to the child and their care plan of adoption must be stored securely. To enable this all adoptions records are to be stored in the designated ESCR category of **Adoption - Child's Record**, on the child's birth record, within Mosaic. Within this category all documents are to be marked with protective marking '**Confidential Restricted**'.
- 17.2 Documents should be uploaded to ESCR in a timely manner and should not be stored within any other electronic folders.
- 17.3 At the point of the agency decision maker's agreement that the care plan of adoption is in the best interests of the child, the birth record for the child within Mosaic will become a restricted record. (See [Mosaic guidance](#) on this process).
- 17.4 At the point of a placement match being made for the child with their prospective adopters, a warning note should be added to the child's birth record stating '**this child is placed for adoption**'. All documents relating to the match should be securely stored in the category, Adoption – Child's Record within ESCR.

- 17.5 At the point of an Adoption Order being made, a new adoption record should be created within Mosaic under the child's adoptive name. The relationships between the child and their adoptive parents should be clear within Mosaic and to enable a genogram to be formulated, be linked as parent – child and not adoptive parent of/or adopted child of.
- 17.6 To link this adoption record to the birth record a copy of the adoption order and the letterbox contact front sheet only will be uploaded to ESCR on the child's adoption record. These documents should be stored under the category of **Adoption - Child's Record** and marked with protective marking **Confidential Restricted**.
- 17.7 To identify the child as an adopted child, a general note should be added to the child's adoption record within Mosaic stating '**[child's name] is an adopted child**'.
- 17.8 The child's birth record will remain open for ongoing letterbox arrangements only, but will remain a restricted record.

18. Further Information

[Adoption Statement of Purpose](#)

[Adoption Guidance and Procedures Intranet Pages](#)

[Placing relinquished children for adoption](#)

[Agreement to place a child for adoption where the child is less than 6 weeks old](#)