

How to Guide: Adoption

Permanence Plan by second LAC Review includes consideration of adoption.

Adoption Service invited to review.

Decision on referring child directly to Decision Maker (Care Order in place or Threshold met) or to Adoption Panel (parents consent and no application for Placement Order).

Refer to Decision Maker or Panel within 2 months of LAC Review ratification of Adoption Plan.

Open Adoption Case Record as soon as decision made at LAC Review.

Where siblings, separate Adoption Case Record.

Discuss Plan with parents; start counselling process with parents and other relevant relatives involved in care of the child. Record all discussions and store receipts on Childs Case Record and Adoption Case Record:

- a) Provide them with written information on adoption, process and timescales, get written confirmation of receipt;
- b) Obtain and record views;
- c) Seek consent to access obstetric and neo natal records, personal GP files by Medical Adviser;
- d) Offer independent counselling and support, taking account of any special needs;
- e) If parents refuse to accept information or advice about adoption record on child's case record, adoption caser record and where address known, arrange delivery by hand and record on Case Records;
- f) Encourage parents to seek legal advice, especially if plan opposed;

- g) If unmarried father try and ascertain if he intends to seek Parental responsibility Order or Residence Order;
- h) Send parents and solicitors any copies of written consents and recordings of parents views.

Where the proposed adoption is at parents request and for an expected child the counselling must start early:

- a) Cover practical tasks such as birth arrangements, contact post birth, length of stay in hospital;
- b) Wishes regarding timing of placement, photos of baby and parents (if they agree) other significant people and places for inclusion in the Life Story Book;
- c) Counselling should continue post birth and the social worker must also confirm that adoption remains the wishes of the parents post birth.

As soon as plan ratified at LAC Review refer to Medical Adviser for adoption medical, including BAAF age relevant forms; note must be completed before consideration of Adoption Plan by Panel or Decision Maker (unless considered unnecessary by Medical Adviser:

- a) Ask if full development medical required, who should conduct and if any tests and opinions required;
- b) Inform Medical Adviser date sent to hospital for Forms B and M (obstetric and neo natal);
- c) Inform Medical Adviser of any issues in non-consent. If parents refuse complete by hand with as much info as available.

Note: If adoption placement is delayed information on child's medical report to be updated twice yearly if child under 2, annually if over 2, and as recommended by the Medical Adviser.

Provide ongoing counselling for child throughout the process as part of Life Story Work, record fully in Adoption Case Record, including reasons for not complying with child's wishes and feelings:

- a) Ensure child understands adoption, expresses wishes and feelings for future, has information about birth family;

- b) Obtain wishes and feelings around adoption, religious and cultural upbringing, birth family contact;
- c) Give Children's Guide to Adoption, as soon as adoption is the plan, confirm in writing, use child's preferred communication.

Refer to Adoption Placement Advisors.

Obtain 2 copies of original Birth Certificate (1 for Court, 1 for Adopters).

If expert reports filed at court relevant to child's health seek court permission to disclose to Medical adviser.

Attend Child's medical if appropriate along with foster carer.

Contact child's health visitor or school health for information on current health.

Contact School or Education provider for information on education needs.

Ask child's carer for report on child to assist in completing Permanence Report.

Consider issues of post placement and post adoption contact, including possibility of meetings between adopters and parents, whether ongoing direct contact or indirect letter box contact. Consider issues around siblings; analysis of relationships, whether to be placed together or separately, issues concerning post placement and post adoption support.

Complete assessment of need for Adoption Support services in relation to the child, including financial support.

Complete Child's Permanence Report, see section 6.2.3, Placement for Adoption, paragraph 2:13, including:

- a) Views of GAL;
- b) Personal Education Plan;
- c) Any specialist reports.

Share relevant parts of the report with the Parents, including those referring to their own wishes and feelings. Allow them to express this in their own words or any alternative means of communication.

For Adoption Panel, ensure the following are included:

- a) Front sheet stating what is being reported, reports included, recommendation sought, who will attend the Panel;
- b) Childs Permanence report including Medical Adviser comments, signed by child's social worker, manager, parent if willing, photograph of child, and parents written comments if any;
- c) Childs health report and health information obtained in relation to the parents (where the medical adviser so advises);
- d) Legal Advice about parental consent and the option of seeking Placement Order;
- e) Expert assessments, contents and recommendations, even if not supportive of adoption (in some cases a summary is sufficient); see procedure manual for details.

Send reports at least 10 days before panel to the Panel Administrator.

Attend Panel with Manager if appropriate, and consider if GAL should be invited.

For cases to Agency Decision Maker, send same reports as to panel, to Panel Adviser for checking, and book time for decision maker to consider reports. As with Panel, this must be within 2 months of decision to ratify adoption Plan at LAC Review.

Normally the decision will be communicated to the parent by recorded delivery from the Agency Adviser:

- a) In some cases the social worker will be asked to hand deliver the decision;
- b) In all cases the social worker must advise the child of the decision in a timely and age appropriate way.

If a decision is made to seek a Placement Order:

- a) Consult Legal Services to prepare the Court Application See separate Guidance in procedure manual: Section 6.2.19; Part 2 Annex B Report;
- b) Advise IRO of court timetable when application is made.

In cases where there is Parental Consent to Adoption or advance Parental Consent: on receipt of signed consent witnessed by CAFCASS the original must be placed in the Adoption Case Record:

- a) Child is over 6 weeks old, social worker to advise CAFCASS to appoint an officer to witness consent;
- b) Child is under 6 weeks old, parents to be requested to sign a prescribed form to facilitate early placement.

Matching child with family: (placement should be agreed by Panel within 6 months of Agency formal approval that child suitable for adoption):

- a) Social worker and family finder addressing the preparation of the child's;
- b) Profile and any other information required, preparation of the child for adoption, possible parental involvement in the process;
- c) Steps to keep Legal Services involved and to seek Court Approval for advertising (if in proceedings);
- d) Consideration of current carers as adopters, plan for family finding;
- e) Issues around area of choice for placement.

Attend matching meeting chaired by Adoption Manager with Adoption staff to consider proposed match of child with adopter.

Visit prospective families with family finder to discuss child and consider potential match.

Once match is identified, collaborate with Adoption staff on preparation of Adoption Placement Report and proposed Adoption Support Plan, sign completed reports along with relevant managers.

Child's social worker will contact Panel Administrator to arrange date for Adoption Panel to consider match.

Proposed adopters to be provided with copy of the Adoption Placement Report 10 days prior to Panel or asked to agree disclaimer, and copy of any disclaimer to be added to the Adoption Case Record.

The Adoption Service will present the reports to Adoption Panel, and the child's social worker will attend. The recommendation will be made to the Agency Decision Maker.

Following the decision the child's social worker should inform the parents:

- a) Orally within 2 days;
- b) Written confirmation will be sent to the child's social worker for transmission by recorded or hand delivery within 5 working days.

Following matching being approved, and legal position permitting, the social worker will attend a Placement Planning Meeting convened by the Adoption Service to draw up an Adoption Placement Plan. (See section 6.2.3, subsection 9 for details). Throughout the child's social worker is responsible for establishing and reporting on the child's views, for coordinating the Placement Planning Meetings, and for being in regular and frequent contact with child, foster carer, prospective adopter during introductions. Any changes to the plan are only by agreement of the chair, and must be informed to the prospective adopters in writing.

Childs Social worker to attend mid way second Placement Planning Meeting to review progress.

Child's Social worker to sign the final Adoption Placement Plan and this to be given to prospective adopters.

Prior to Placement the Childs social worker to ensure the following have been provided to the prospective adopters:

- a) Authority to consent to medical and dental treatment;
- b) The parent-held Child Health Record;
- c) Any letters, photographs or mementos from the birth family, including a 'Later in Life' letter from the birth parent if possible, and the Life Story Book;
- d) The child's birth certificate;
- e) The child's passport (if applicable);
- f) A copy of the Care Order (if applicable), Placement Order (if applicable) and any other Court Orders that exist;
- g) A copy of the Parental Consent to the Placement and Advance Consent to Adoption (if applicable);
- h) A written plan of the contact arrangements pre and post adoption with the birth parents and any previous carers;

- i) The Adoption Support Plan, including a named post-adoption social worker;
- j) The Adoption Placement Plan including arrangements for support and visits by the child's social worker and their own social worker;
- k) Any other relevant information, including specialist reports (subject to the author's consent).

The prospective adopters should be asked to sign confirmation of receipt. Where the information / items are provided at different times, the prospective adopters must sign and date confirmation of receipt on each occasion.

Prior to Placement the child's social worker to notify: (NB these are still required even if the proposed Adopters are the child's former foster carers):

- The present and new GP;
- The local authority (if the family live outside Nottingham);
- The relevant Health Trust;
- If the child is of nursery or school age, the relevant local education authority (with information on education history or special needs).

The Medical Adviser to be requested to send the medical report on the child to the new GP, and where appropriate, to meet the adopters to discuss medical needs.

The child's social worker to confirm the date of placement to the Parents, but no identifying details, unless the parents have indicated they do not wish to be kept informed.

Where a child with an adoption plan is not placed within 6 months the child's social worker must present a further report to the Adoption Panel:

- a) Identifying the reason for delay;
- b) Steps taken to address this;
- c) Whether consideration is required to review the plan including separating siblings if indicated.

Where a placement proceeds the child's social worker will continue visiting the child in the adoptive placement until the order is made:

- a) The social worker will visit within the first week of the placement, and thereafter weekly until the first review;
- b) Visits can be shared with the Adopters supervising social worker;
- c) After the first review visits can be made as determined by the review or if not specified, 6 weekly for the first year, thereafter on a 3 monthly basis.

The child's social worker has primary responsibility for the welfare of the child until the making of an Adoption Order and: statutory visits are required.

The child's social worker and the adopters' worker should discuss progress between visits, and read each other's recordings:

- a) The social worker must see and speak with the child alone on each visit except where the child is too young or refuses to engage, or the child is out;
- b) Where there are concerns additional visits may be needed;
- c) In the event of concerns emerging a Review must be convened by the child's social worker;
- d) In the event of a disruption then procedures to be followed are as set out in the Disruption of Adoption Placement Procedure.

The child's social worker should arrange for the child to continue to have health assessments in line with his Health Care Plan and for this to be reviewed up to the making of the Adoption Order.

Where an application for Adoption is lodged at Court by the Adopters the matters to be dealt with in the Court Report are set out in the Procedures Manual Section 6.2.19.