

Planning for Adoption, the Child's Journey through Adoption

Planning for Permanence

Every Child in Care must have a Permanence Plan by the date of his or her **second Child in Care Review**. All permanency options, including adoption, can and should, be considered prior to child/ren entering care and should begin at the point where it becomes apparent that the child requires a placement.

An Adoption Plan may be decided at a Care Planning Meeting before or after the second Child in Care review. The Independent Reviewing Officer must be notified by the child's social worker as soon as it is known that adoption is to be pursued and the Adoption Care Plan developed.

When an Adoption Plan is being considered in relation to Children in Care, the Adoption@Heart Family Finding Team should be notified. Consideration should be given as to whether concurrency or fostering for adoption is appropriate.

The Permanence Coordinator/Case Progression Officer will send an Early/Stage 1 Notification to Adoption at Heart (notificationform@adoptionatheart.org.uk) when a decision is made at Legal Gateway Panel to issue proceedings in respect of a child **or**, as soon as it is known that adoption is to be pursued; for example, during pre-birth assessments, when considering whether concurrency or fostering for adoption is appropriate.

Stage 1 Notification will allow Adoption at Heart to commence 'tracking' of the child's plan and begin tentative family finding for the child.

The Child's Social Worker should start to gather information from the family and those involved for the Child's Permanence Report (CPR) and Later Life Journey from the onset of proceedings. . Where a Child Permanence Report (CPR) needs to be completed, the CPR must be completed within the child's file on Mosaic. CoramBAAF offer a checklist and good practice guidance on how to complete the CPR and the Mosaic form mirrors the good practice guide.

Social Workers need to ensure they are concurrent planning for children in care, if there is more than one plan being considered for the child at the time. Early actions should be considered no later than the first Statutory review and include the following:

1. The Child's Social Worker should refer the child for an Initial Adoption Medical. Adoption medicals are required for every child where an ADM decision for a child who Should be Placed for Adoption (SHOBPA) is required

and these must be dated at least within 6 months of the date of decision or sooner. (Refer to Adoption Medicals process)

- 2 The Child's Social Worker should arrange a date with the Agency Decision Maker for a SHOBPA decision (in line with the Court timetable for completion of Assessments of Family and Friends). SHOBPA decisions are considered on a weekly basis, so keeping this in mind, the Child's Social Worker should complete a booking form and email it to the Specialist Team specialistteam@walsall.gov.uk for a ADM date at the earliest opportunity.

Making a SHOBPA (should be placed for adoption) decision

- 3 Following the completion of all Assessments, if it is determined that the Child cannot return home safely or be cared for safely by family or friends, and Adoption is the plan to be progressed, a Looked After Review will need to ratify a single plan of Adoption for the Child. The Independent Reviewing Officer will notify the Permanence Coordinator when the plan has been ratified.
- 4 Permanence Coordinator will send Stage 2 Notification to Adoption at Heart when the child's plan has been confirmed as single plan of Adoption (**minimum 3 weeks prior** to ADM SHOBPA decision being made).
- 5 It is the responsibility of the Child's Social Worker and their Manager to ensure paperwork is of a required standard to submit to the ADM. Social Workers should pay particular attention to spelling and grammar, dates of birth etc.
- 6 The following paperwork will need to be sent to the Specialist Team by the Child's Social Worker, in preparation for the ADM to consider a SHOBPA decision for the Child:
 - Child's Permanence Report, including signatures
 - Any Assessments and Reports referred to within the CPR
 - Together and Apart Sibling Assessments where applicable.
 - Signed copy of Assessment of Support Needs (WSS922)
 - Signed copy of Timescales form (WSS304)
 - Adoption Medical Report,
 - Record of last Statutory Review ratifying the single plan of Adoption.
 - Genogram
- 7 The Child's Social Worker / Team Manager will send all the relevant reports to the Group Manager **10 working days** before the relevant date booked with the ADM. The reports and CPR will be quality assured using the CPR quality assurance audit tool and this will be submitted with all the paperwork to the Specialist Team.

- 8 The Agency Decision Maker can request further information or amendments to be made. If this occurs, the Child's social worker, their manager and the Group Manager will be notified via an email mail about the changes/further information needed and timescale for completion. If changes are not made in the required timescale, a delay in an ADM decision made can occur.
- 9 The Specialist Team will notify the Child's Social Worker, Team Manager and the Permanence Coordinator of the ADM's SHOBPA decision.
- 10 The Permanence Coordinator will notify Adoption at Heart of this decision. A Family Finder from Adoption at Heart will then be allocated to the Child, if one has not already been allocated. (Refer to Family Finding Flow Chart).
- 11 The Child's Social Worker should also make a Life Story Book referral to Adoption at Heart at this time.

After the Decision

- 12 The parents will be informed orally of the agency's decision within **two working days** and written confirmation should be sent to them within five working days. The written confirmation will be sent on behalf of the Agency Decision Maker by the Child's Social Worker.
- 13 The letter setting out the agency decision will be delivered by hand by the Child's social worker.
- 14 The child's social worker will also ensure that the child is informed of the decision in a timely and age-appropriate way.

Matching of Adopters and Transition Process

(These steps can be taken before a Placement Order is granted)

- 15 The Adoption at Heart Family Finder will produce the child's profile in consultation with the child's social worker, identifying the child's needs.
- 16 The Family Finder will be responsible for identifying prospective adoptive families for a Child. A maximum of 3 Prospective Adopter Reports (PARs) will be shared with the Child's Social worker at any one time.
- 17 The Child's Social Worker, with the approval of their Team Manager, will confirm the decision on whether to proceed with the potential match/s within 3 working days of receiving the PARs.
- 18 The Family Finder will arrange a Linking Meeting that will include the Child's Social Worker, Family Finding Social Worker and Prospective Adopters' Social Worker to consider whether the Prospective Adopters could be a

suitable match for the child and whether to further proceed with meeting the Prospective Adopters. The decision made at this meeting will need to be ratified by the Family Finding Team Manager.

- 19 Potential families should be visited jointly by the Family Finding Social Worker, the Adopters' Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker, within **10 working days** of the Linking Meeting. Family Finding Social Worker will be responsible for arranging the visit to the Prospective Adopter.
- 20 Prospective Adopters will be given a timeframe of no more than 10 working days following the visit, to confirm their decision on whether they wish to proceed with the match with the Child.
- 21 Where prospective adopters have been visited and have been ruled out for a potential match, they must be informed verbally within **3 working days** by the Family Finding Social Worker or Adopters Social Worker.
- 22 If the Family Finding Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker are not able to agree which link should be progressed due to difference of views, a discussion should take place between the Team Managers for the child and Adoption at Heart to agree a way forward within **5 working days**. Heads of Service across both services should be advised where disagreement may impact on timescales for placement of a child.
- 23 Where one suitable approved adoptive family is identified, the family finder will arrange a Matching Meeting, **within 15 working days** of agreement for the link to be progressed. This meeting will involve the child's social worker, the social worker's manager, the family finding social worker, the adopter's social worker, the foster carer/s and their fostering support worker. The meeting will be chaired by the Family Finding Social Worker or Team Manager. The purpose of the matching meeting is to formally confirm if the match is to go to the adoption panel.
- 24 Critical information about the child's health and emotional needs is to be shared at key points in the process. Post selection and prior to the matching meeting the family finder will provide the linked prospective adopters with full information on the child, including an up to date Child's Permanence Report. The Family finding social Worker will complete the Matching Report for the meeting.
- 25 The matching meeting should consider:
 - The preparation of the child, the present carers and the prospective adopters for the proposed placement, including the sharing of information with the prospective adopters;
 - The views of the prospective adopters on the information they have received;
 - The preparation of the birth family and the information to be given;
 - Consultation with the Medical Advisor;

- The allocation of preparatory tasks for the introductory work;
- The proposed Adoption Support Plan and any proposed contact arrangements;
- The designated roles and responsibilities for completing the Adoption Placement Report and the proposed Adoption Support Plan, Panel paperwork deadline and Panel date;
- Tentative introduction, face-to-face midway review and placement timetable if approval of match by Matching Panel and ADM.

The following steps will only take place after Placement Order is granted, unless Fostering for Adoption is being progressed (refer to Fostering for Adoption procedures)

30. Family Finding Team Manager will sign off recommendation for the match and, decision to proceed to panel will be made. The Family Finding Social Worker will book the matching consideration on to Adoption Panel if the Adopters confirm their wish to proceed. (Adoption Panel should usually take place in 6 weeks from when the Adopters confirm their decision to proceed after the initial visit).

31. Between the time that the Prospective Adopters confirm their decision to proceed with the match to Adoption Panel taking place, the following actions should be progressed.

- **Child Appreciation Day:** Child Appreciation Days will not take place for all children but should happen for all children over the age of 18 months, children who have had significant placements moves, any child who has had a placement disruption and, children being placed as part of sibling groups or separately (if being placed separately, they should each have a Child Appreciation Day).

Family Finding Social Worker will arrange a Child Appreciation Day before a match is presented to Adoption Panel. This will be an opportunity for the prospective adopters to get more information and insight about the child they are looking to adopt.

- Preparation direct work with the Child for transition to placement: involve adoption therapist or psychologist where a need has been identified to advice on preparation for this transition.
- Progress final goodbyes with birth family for the child (refer to Final Farewell Family Time Protocol) Family Finding Social Worker to prepare Transition Risk Assessment Birth parent referral to be completed (birth parent/s consent required)

Match is presented to Adoption Panel. Match is endorsed by the ADM within 10 working days from Panel

32. Introduction Planning Meeting is arranged by Family Finding Social Worker, that is attended by the Child's Social Worker, Foster Carers, Adopters Social Worker

and Adopters. Introductions schedule is confirmed with date to review the introductions.

33. Post Adoption Contact agreement is agreed and signed by all parties and forwarded to the Post Adoption Contact team.
34. Prior to the placement, notification must be sent by the child's social worker to the present and new GP, the local authority (where the adoptive family live outside the borough), the relevant Health Trust and Clinical Commissioning Group and, if the child is at nursery or of school age, the relevant local education authority (with information about the child's education history and whether the child has special needs). These notifications are still required where the prospective adopters were previously the child's foster carers.

35. Child placed with the Prospective Adopters.

Child's Social Worker will visit Child every week in their adoptive home until the first LAC Review (which will take place within 20 days of child being placed).

36. The child's social worker must inform the parents of the date of the placement, unless the parents have stated that they do not wish to be kept informed. No identifying information about the placement should be conveyed to birth parents or relatives.
37. The child's social worker should ensure the date of the placement is recorded on Mosaic, so that the records identify that the child is placed for adoption but does not show the placement address. Child's Social Worker will also need to update Placement Code on Mosaic to identify that the child has been placed for adoption.

Post Placement

38. Permanence Coordinator will track the timescales for Adoption Application via Permanence Panel and the Permanence Tracker.
39. If the Adopters are planning to make Adoption Application at the earliest opportunity (10 weeks since placement):
 - Child's Social Worker and Adopters Social Worker will complete Annexe A Report by the time the Child has been in their Adoptive placement for 8 weeks.
 - Child's Social Worker will submit the Adoption Application, Annexe A Report, Covering Letter and all other necessary documents to Court at 10 weeks of Child being in adoptive placement.
40. Permanence Coordinator and Adoption@ Heart will track the progression of the Adoption Application through Court.

41. Child's Social Worker or Team Manager will notify Permanence Coordinator of when Adoption Order has been granted.
42. Child's Social Worker to update Child's file on Mosaic.
43. The Child's Social Worker will complete Later Life Letter within 10 working days of the Adoption Order being granted or the Celebration Hearing taking place and send copy to the Adopters.
44. The Family Finder at Adoption at Heart will ensure that the Adopters will also receive the Child's Life Story Book by this point.

2. Adoption Medicals/Prospective Adopters Medical Consultations process

Referral for all Adoption Medicals and Prospective Adopters Medical Consultations are to be made to the Medical Advisors Secretary and the Permanence Coordinator.

Child's Social Worker is responsible for making a referral for an adoption medical for a child.

The Permanence Coordinator will book the adoption medicals and prospective adopters medical consultations on a priority basis.

The Medical Advisors Secretary will inform the Child's Social Worker and the Child's Carers of the appointment date and time, along with details of the paperwork that needs to be completed ahead of the adoption medical taking place. The paperwork includes:

1. Neonatal and Obstetric history (Forms M & B), with Consent form signed by Mother.
2. Medical history of birth Mother and Father (form PH) to be completed by birth parents.
3. Background Information - WSS921
4. Foster carer to complete report on child's development and behaviour - Form CR-YP or CR-C
5. Form IHA – C (Social Worker's and Child's details to be completed)
6. Copies of previous Looked After Health Assessments and any other medical Assessments undertaken
7. Consent Form

Child's Social Worker needs to ensure that the paperwork for adoption medicals is completed and sent to the Medical Advisors Secretary at least **5 days** before the medical taking place. If the paperwork is not completed in this timescale the medical appointment will be cancelled, causing delay in progressing the adoption plan.

Every child who has a plan of Adoption needs to have a review adoption medical every six months. The Child's Social Worker will need to make a referral for a review medical for a child where applicable.

The Family Finding Social Worker is responsible for making referral for Prospective Adopters Medical Consultation. The Medical Advisors Secretary will inform the Prospective Adopters, Child's Social Worker, Adopters Social Worker and Family Finding Social Worker of the appointment date and time for the prospective adopters medical consultation.

NB. Not every prospective adopter will need a medical consultation. Those prospective adopters who are considering adopting a child with complex health issues/background would be offered the prospective adopters medical consultation prior to matching panel.