**West Sussex – Practice Guidance**

IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years’ experience, and who have acquired the right skills to carry out this role.

**Arrangements for Adoption Reviews**

**Summary**

Once an adoption agency has Authority to Place for Adoption, the requirement to Review the child’s case under the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 supersedes the requirement to hold a Looked After Review.

The child’s social worker should provide written information about the intended arrangements for Adoption Reviews, to the child (depending on age and understanding), to the prospective adopters (usually this will be part of the Adoption Placement Plan), and to any other person considered relevant, such as the child’s parents.

Where the child is of sufficient understanding and wishes to attend the Review, he or she should be encouraged and receive appropriate help and support to attend the Review. The venue, timing etc. should be arranged to facilitate such attendance.

Convening and Chairing Adoption Reviews

All Adoption Reviews will be Chaired by the child’s Independent Reviewing Officer.

The procedure for convening and preparing for the Review is as set out in the Looked After Review Procedure, except in relation to the involvement of the child's birth parents.

NB There is no requirement to invite birth parents to Adoption Reviews or to consult them prior to an Adoption Review, but the child’s social worker, in conjunction with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), may consider that their views should be ascertained and reported to an Adoption Review or that the parents should be invited to attend in appropriate cases.

Where a child has been placed for adoption, the prospective adopters must be consulted and invited to the Review.

Timescales for Adoption Reviews

The timescales for holding Adoption Reviews will depend on whether or not the child has been placed for adoption.

Adoption Reviews of Children not yet Placed for Adoption

Where the child has not been placed for adoption, arrangements must be made so that an Adoption Review is held:

• No later than three months after Authority to Place for Adoption has been obtained;

• At least every six months thereafter until an adoptive placement is made.

Adoption Reviews of Children who have been Placed for Adoption

Where the child has been placed for adoption, arrangements must be made so that an Adoption Review is held:

• Within four weeks of the placement;

• Not more than three months after the first Review unless an application for an adoption order has been made;

• At least every six months thereafter until an adoption order has been made or the adoptive placement ends.

Placements at risk of Disruption

Where there are concerns that the placement is at risk of breaking down and regular meetings to consider appropriate support have taken place but the risk of breakdown is still evident, an Adoption Review must be convened immediately.

Where placements break down, an Adoption Review and a Disruption Meeting must be held.

Where a placement has been made with parental consent and notice is received that such consent has been withdrawn, an Adoption Review must be convened immediately and urgent legal advice should be taken as to whether an application should be made for a Placement Order.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example child protection concerns and/or significant risk, no decision to move a child from a placement shall take place without a formal Adoption Review having taken place. In such circumstances, legal advice should be sought as soon as possible and prior to any action being taken.

All Cases

The child’s social worker must inform the IRO of any failure to make arrangements agreed at a Review or any significant changes in the child’s circumstances since the last Review, so that a decision can be made as to the need to convene a further Review.

Reports for Adoption Reviews

The child’s social worker will complete the report for the Adoption Review and send this to the IRO at least five days prior to the meeting.

The child (depending on their age and understanding) should be given the opportunity to complete or helped to complete their own written contribution.

The prospective adopters' adoption social worker will prepare a report for the Review.

The Conduct and Recording of Adoption Reviews

The Adoption Review will be conducted in the same way as a Looked After Review - except that Adoption Reviews will specifically consider the following areas:

* Whether it remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption and, if not yet placed, whether a Parallel Plan is being pursued;
* The child’s needs, welfare and development, and whether any changes need to be made to meet the child’s needs or assist his/her development;
* The existing arrangements for contact and whether they should continue or be altered;
* Where the child has been placed for adoption the arrangements in relation to the exercise of Parental Responsibility for the child (which will initially be recorded in the Adoption Placement Plan) and whether they should continue or be altered;
* The arrangements for the provision of adoption support services for the adoptive family and whether there should be any re-assessment of the need for those services;
* In consultation with the appropriate agencies, the arrangements for assessing and meeting the child’s health care and educational needs;
* Any concerns;
* Any outstanding Court proceedings;
* Where the child is placed for adoption, the timing of the adoption application;
* The timing of the ‘Later Life Letter’ from the social worker being given to the child (prior to the Adoption Order), whether life story work with the child has been completed and whether the child’s Life Story Book has been passed to the prospective adopters;
* The responsibility for providing Court reports;
* The frequency of future Reviews and the date for the next Review.

Where the child is the subject of a Placement Order and has not been placed for adoption by the time of the first six month Review, that Review must also:

* Establish why the child has not been placed for adoption and consider what further steps it should take to arrange for the child to be placed for adoption; and
* Consider whether it remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption.

The IRO must ensure that the views of the child are properly understood by the Review and taken into account. If the child does not attend their Review meeting, if for example if they are deemed too young to attend i.e. under 4 years old or for another valid reason , the IRO must meet with the child , preferably at their Adoption placement, as an essential requirement of the Adoption Review process .

Where the child wishes to take proceedings on their own account, for example to apply for the revocation of a Placement Order, the IRO must assist the child to obtain legal advice or establish whether an appropriate adult is able and willing to provide legal advice and/or bring the proceedings on the child’s behalf.

The IRO must also ensure that anyone responsible for implementing a decision taken at the Review is identified, and that any failure to Review the case or implement decisions made at a Review is brought to the attention of senior managers within the agency. In this context the same Dispute Resolution Process will apply as for Looked After Reviews.

Any decisions made at the Review should be notified in writing to the child (depending on age and understanding), the prospective adopters (where the child has been placed for adoption) and any other person considered relevant by the child’s social worker and the IRO, such as the birth parents.

The information obtained during an Adoption Review, any decisions made at the Review and the minutes of any meeting arranged to consider any aspect of the Review must be placed on the child’s Adoption Case Record.

Where a child has been placed for adoption but not adopted within 12 months, the child’s social worker must present a further report to the Adoption Panel identifying the length of the delay, the reasons and the steps being taken to address any difficulties.

Where a decision has been made to place a child for adoption but the child has not been placed within six months, the child’s social worker must present a further report to the Adoption Panel identifying the length of the delay, the reasons and the steps being taken to address any difficulties, including consideration of a Review of the adoption plan and/or a possible change to long-term fostering/separation of siblings.

**Reference Points;**

Adoption Review Template

