**Policy, Procedures and Good Practice Guide:**

**Early Permanence (Fostering for Adoption and Concurrency) placements and approval of prospective adopters as foster carers**

**FULL POLICY**

**West Sussex County Council**

**Adoption and Fostering Services**

**August 2018**

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 **1.** **Introduction**

This policy and procedure deals with the early placement of a child with carers who are dually approved, i.e. approved both as prospective adopters and as local authority foster carers or temporarily approved as foster carers for a specific child. This policy should be read in conjunction with [**WSCC Adoption Handbook**](file:///G%3A%5CACD%5CChildrens%20Services%5CAdoption%20%26%20Special%20Guardianship%5CAdoption%20County%5CAdoption%20Handbook%5CAdoption%20Handook%204.3.2015.doc) where further details in relation to Early Permanence placements are addressed in Section 2.1.3 – Fostering for Adoption.

The advantage of this type of placement is that the child will be placed with foster carers who, subject to a **Placement Order** being made, or parental consent being given, are expected to go on to become the child’s adoptive family. The child therefore benefits from an early placement with their eventual permanent carers. Delay in finding a permanent family for young children who have already experienced neglect early on in their lives may have a profoundly damaging effect on their development. This type of placement has potential to reduce this delay and the damage caused significantly and as a result:

* The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 were amended (in 2013) to allow approved prospective adopters to be given temporary approval as foster carers for a named child.

There is a duty upon local authorities to consider a placement with dually approved carers whenever it is considering adoption or where the decision has been made that the child ought to be placed for adoption, but where the agency does not yet have authority to place the child for adoption through either a placement order or parental consent (Section 22C(9B)) Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014). This can be done through a **Permanency Planning Meeting**.

These placements are foster placements. This placement will only become and adoptive placement if:

* The **Agency Decision Maker** (ADM) has decided that the child should be placed for adoption; and
* Either a Placement Order has been made;
* Or parental consent to the child’s adoption is given.

It is possible that such a placement may not lead to adoption, for example because the child’s plan changes where rehabilitation with the birth family is successful; because suitable family or friends come forward or because the court does not agree to make a Placement Order. This may mean that the child returns home or is moved to another permanence arrangement. But, for the vast majority of children in such placements, progression towards adoption will be the anticipated outcome.

Local authorities will need to ensure that people who are willing to care for a child in this way are fully aware that the placement may not lead to adoption, and that they have been given appropriate information and training so that they understand their role and legal responsibilities as foster carers and ongoing support once the placement has been made.

Concurrent planning is an established practice for placing children with dually approved carers. As these placements are foster placements, rather than placements for adoption, they could be made under existing legislation. The law has, however, developed to make the situation more explicit.

 **2.** **Examples of Situations where placements with Dually-Approved Carers may be Appropriate**

* Where parents have had one or more child/ren previously placed for adoption or other forms of permanent placement and the evidence strongly suggests that their circumstances have not changed and they pose the same risks as they did to the previous child/ren;
* The local authority does not have a proactive plan to rehabilitate the child as the circumstances of the parents are such to pose a serious on-going risk;
* Where this is the first child, the circumstances of the parents and the risks to the child are such that there is no proactive plan to return the child to the birth parents or to other family members;
* Where parents have indicated that they may want their child adopted, but have not formally consented.

The following should be used to determine a child/ren’s eligibility for an Early Permanence placement:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Yes** | **No** | **If yes, Name of Parent/s** | **Criteria to be assessed in conjunction with Core Assessment** |
|  |  |  | Parent has killed or seriously harmed another child through abuse or neglect and no significant change has occurred since. |
|  |  |  | Child has experienced extreme physical or sexual abuse by the parent/s (or parents have allowed someone else to abuse the child) and must be removed from the home. |
|  |  |  | Parental rights to another child have been involuntarily terminated (e.g. adoption order or court order) following a period of service delivery to the parents and no significant changes has occurred. |
|  |  |  | Child and/or siblings have been in care on at least one other occasion for a period of three months or more with child protection involvement. |
|  |  |  | Parents have been diagnosed with severe mental illness and have not responded to previously delivered mental health services. Symptoms continue to prevent parent/s from being able to physically and emotional meet the needs of the child |
|  |  |  | There have been two separate incidents of the child protection involvement of there is a chronic historical pattern of abuse or severe neglect |
|  |  |  | Parent/s have a history of substance misuse or are chemically dependent on non-prescription substances and/or have a history of treatment failures. |
|  |  |  | Child has been abandoned with friend, relatives, foster care or hospital or, after being placed in care, parents/s disappear or visit/attend contact rarely, erratically or not at all. |
|  |  |  | Parent/s have shown significant deficits in caring for child, or previous children, and have poor or non-existent support system of relatives, friends to share parenting. |
|  |  |  | There is a pattern of documented domestic abuse between the parents (or partners) and they refuse to separate. |
|  |  |  | Parent is under the age of 16 with no parenting support systems, and placement of the child and parent together has failed (or is likely to fail) due to the parents behaviour. |
|  |  |  | Parent has asked to relinquish the child on more than one occasion following initial intervention. |
|  |  |  | Family members have been considered/assessed and ruled out as potential carers for the child. |
|  |  |  | Other parent has been assessed and ruled out as a potential carer for the child. |
|  |  |  | Adopters of sibling/s have been approached and do not wish to be considered to adopt the child |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name** | **Date** |
| Child’s Social Worker |  |  |
| Children and Families Practice Manager |  |  |
| Adoption Practice Manager |  |  |

*\*Above document taken from CoramBAAF The Role of Fostering for Adoption (Dibben and Howarth, 2017).*

The local authority should not consider such a placement where the child is **Accommodated** under Section 20 Children Act 1989 and there is a reasonable likelihood that the child will be able to return to their birth parents or to family or friends.

 **3.** **Concurrent Planning**

Concurrent planning is usually used in cases where rehabilitation with the birth family is still being attempted, but it is expected that adoption will become the plan for the child should the rehabilitation not be successful.

Concurrent planning requires the identification and delivery of a detailed rehabilitation plan while the child is placed with carers who are approved for both fostering and adoption who support that plan. If the rehabilitation plan proves to be unsuccessful, the foster carers can go on to adopt the child once **Care Proceedings** and the Placement Order application are completed.

It involves placing a Looked After child with approved foster carers who, as well as providing temporary care for the child, bring them to regular supervised contact sessions with their parents and other relatives. In addition, the carer may spend time with the parents at both ends of contact sessions to update them on the child’s progress. This enables a relationship to develop which is supportive to the parents. Focussed support via a contact supervisor will be provided. The role of the contact supervisor is to advise the parents to help them to change their lifestyle and improve their parenting skills with the aim of enabling their child to return home to them. If this is the outcome, the child will have maintained contact with their parents and have sustained their attachment because of the regular contact visits. But the carers are also approved as adopters so that if the parents’ rehabilitation plan is not successful, the child may be placed with the carers for adoption, ensuring a continuity of attachment.

Fostering for Adoption is different from concurrent planning in that Fostering for Adoption allows an early placement of a child where there is no realistic possibility of a rehabilitation plan although there may be some meaningful contact. The concurrency model has always worked with adopters where a rehabilitation plan to birth parents was in place.

 **4.** **Fostering for Adoption**

**4.1** **Duty to Consider Fostering for Adoption Placement**

Under Section 22C (9A and 9B) of the Children Act 1989 [as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014], where the local authority is considering adoption for a child (see **Section 4.2, Considering Adoption for a Child**) or is satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption but is not yet authorised (either by consent or by Placement Order) to place the child for adoption, the authority **MUST** consider placing the child with a relative, friend or other **Connected Person** who is also a local authority foster carer or, where they decide that such a placement is not the most appropriate placement, then they must consider placing the child with a local authority foster carer who has been approved as a prospective adopter.

Where a child is placed in a fostering for adoption placement, the relationship which the child has with the person who is a prospective adopter must be considered by the Court or Adoption Agency alongside other relevant relationships the child has with their relatives or other persons. (See **Section 9 Children and Social Work Act 2017 amending Section 1(f) Adoption and Children Act 2002**).

In such a situation, the requirements under the Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to ensure that placements allow the child to live near the parents’ home, be placed within the local authority area, remain at the same school and to be placed together with sibling(s), do not apply.

(The carers may be dually approved by being fully approved adopters and foster carers for any child, or they might be approved prospective adopters who have been temporarily approved as foster carers for a named child under regulation 25A of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 – see **Section 5, Temporary Approval as Foster Carers of Approved Prospective Adopters**).

Such a placement must be approved by the **Nominated Officer** (Service Lead, Fostering and Adoption) who must:

Be satisfied that:

* + The placement is the most appropriate placement available for the child and will safeguard and promote his/her welfare; and
	+ The child’s wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration, and the **IRO** has been informed; and
* If their whereabouts are known, notify the child’s parent(s)/guardian of the proposed placement.

**4.2** **Considering Adoption for a Child**

Examples of when a local authority may be considering adoption include:

* Where the local authority is trying to rehabilitate the child with the birth parents, there are no suitable family or friends carers and adoption is the best option for the child if rehabilitation does not succeed;
* Where the local authority has decided at the permanence planning stage that adoption should be the plan for the child. The local authority must be able to demonstrate to the ADM and the court why the child cannot return home, why the child has not been placed with family or friends, why no other permanence plan is appropriate for the child and why adoption is the right plan for the child;
* In cases where the birth parents have indicated that they are likely to consent to the child being placed for adoption, but have not yet consented;
* A Fostering for Adoption placement can also be made after the ADM has made the decision that the child should be placed for adoption, but does not yet have authority to place the child for adoption.

Examples of where a local authority will **not** be considering adoption include:

* The child is likely to return home;
* They are aware that there are family or friends who can care for the child;
* A permanence placement other than adoption is more appropriate for the child.

If, at any point during the planning of a Fostering for Adoption placement or if the child is already in such a placement, there is any change to the circumstances of prospective carers, including relatives, a planning meeting with the Fostering for Adoption carers and all professionals involved should take place as soon as possible to consider the new information. This will enable the carers to make an informed choice about their position, and also allows the local authority to consider their position in light of the change in circumstances.

**4.3 Notifications**

Where a decision is made to place a child in a Fostering for Adoption placement, the adoption agency must:

* Notify the prospective adopter in writing **(See Appendix 6);**
* Explain the decision to the child in an appropriate manner, having regard to the child’s age and understanding;
* Explain to the birth parents (which includes fathers without Parental Responsibility) / guardian the legal implications. **(See Appendix 4);**

On those occasions where the child is voluntarily **Accommodated** under Section 20 of the Children Act, the notification should remind the birth parents of their right to remove the child from the local authority’s care and should provide advice on access to legal advice and appropriate advisory bodies. At this point, the local authority may wish to consider commencing care proceedings.

The parents should be informed that the local authority cannot pre-judge the outcome of Care Proceedings and only the court can authorise placement for adoption if the parents do not consent to their child being placed for adoption.

 **5.** **Temporary Approval of Approved Prospective Adopters as Foster Carers**

There are two ways in which prospective adopters can seek approval to be temporary carer for a child through Early Permanence planning, as illustrated below

**Option 2 –** Regulation 25a Temporary Approval for a specific child

**Option 1 –** Dual Approval

by Adoption Panel

Temporary Approval as Foster Carer recommended by Fostering ADM for a specific child

Temporary approval adopters as foster carers for specific child/ren by Agency Decision Maker for Fostering

Early Permanence Match Subsequently identified

Dual Adoption and Foster Approval Recommended

Presentation to Adoption Panel – (Panel to include a Fostering Manager)

Approved prospective adopters can be given temporary approval as foster carers under 25A of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. This temporary foster carer approval process can be carried out at the same time as the adopter approval process.

This temporary approval can be given for a **specific** Child Looked After, where the local authority considers that this is in the child’s best interests. In the event that prospective adopters are willing to proceed with an early permanence placement their Prospective Adopters Report (PAR), Approval Panel Minutes and any subsidiary reports and/or information subsequent to their approval (i.e. **Coram**[**BAAF FfA Temporary Approval Report**](file:///%5C%5Cchinas01%5C~mpin5160%5CAdoption%202013%20PAR%20Forms%5CNew%20BAAF%20FfA%20and%20Concurrency%20PAR%20Forms%202015%5CBAAF%20FFA%20Temporary%20Approval%20Report%20%28England%29%202015.doc)) should be passed to the Fostering ADM to make a decision on their suitability to be temporarily approved as Foster Carers under Regulation 25A of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

Before giving such approval, the responsible authority must:

* Assess the suitability of that person to care for the child as a foster carer **(See Practice Note 2);** and
* Consider whether, in all the circumstances and taking into account the services to be provided by the responsible authority, the proposed arrangements will safeguard and promote the child’s welfare and meet the child’s needs as set out in the Care Plan.

The temporary approval period expires when:

* The placement is terminated by the local authority;
* The approval as a prospective adopter is terminated;
* The prospective Early Permanence Carer gives 28 days’ written notice that they no longer wish to be temporarily approved as a foster parent in relation to the child; or
* The child is placed for adoption with the prospective adopter in Accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

 **6. Preparation, Training, Practical and Financial Support of Early Permanence Carers**

Early Permanence carers must be assessed as adopters and foster carers using the BAAF Prospective Adopter Report (PAR). Their understanding and suitability to take on the dual role as foster carers initially and then adopters must be assessed and the evidence integrated within the report and then summarised at the end of the report.

**6.1 Preparation and Training**

Early Permanence carers are required to attend an additional module of the Adoption Preparation Course. In addition WSCC have put together a pack to enable such carers to develop a robust understanding of the role:

* [West Sussex County Council Early Permanence Factsheet](file:///%5C%5Cchinas01%5C~mpin5160%5CDocuments%5CFostering%20For%20Adoption%20-%20New%20ways%5CEarly%20Permanence%20-%20Pack%5CEarly%20Permanence%20-%20Pack%5CEarlyPermanenceFactsheet_July18.pdf)
* [CoramBAAF Leaflet](file:///%5C%5Cchinas01%5C~mpin5160%5CDocuments%5CFostering%20For%20Adoption%20-%20New%20ways%5CEarly%20Permanence%20-%20Pack%5CCoramBAAF%20-%20Information%20to%20Fostering%20for%20Adoption%20carers.pdf) - which can be found on their website [www.CoramBAAF.org.uk](http://www.Coram.org.uk)
* Paediatric First Aid Course (mandatory and expected for Prospective Adopters to self-fund and attend).
* Attendance at an Early Permanence Workshop/Module – including talks from Foster carer, previous Early Permanence carers **or** a Meeting between prospective adopters, their assessing social worker and a Fostering Supervising Social Worker to share in depth information about the role of a foster carer.
* Additional training is available to all approved/temporary foster carers through the Learning and Development Gateway.

Irrespective of the point in which the decision was made to explore early permanence the process is the same. A workbook for prospective adopters considering becoming Early Permanence carers, with supplementary assessing questions for the social worker to consider are outlined in **Practice Note 2***.*

**6.2 Where an expression of interest for dual approval is made pre-approval:**

In addition to the preparation set out above within all adoption assessment the potential for the applicants to foster prior to adoption should be explored. Where this seems a possibility:

1. All interviews with family members and personal references include the Early Permanence aspect of the application.
2. Prospective Adopters Report completed to summarise the Early Permanence applicants strengths and vulnerabilities in relation to this model.
3. Second Opinion by Adoption Practice Manager/Senior Social Worker
4. Case presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation
5. Membership of Adoption Panel from Central List to include member with fostering knowledge and experience
6. Adoption ADM decision made. Dual approval now granted as both foster carer and adopter.
7. Post approval information Pack to be sent to Early Permanence Carers.

**6.3 Where an approved adoptive carer has expressed an interest in becoming an Early Permanence carer post adoption approval:**

1. Adoption Social Worker ensures preparation as set out in **Section 6.1** is completed.
2. Adoption Social Worker completes [**BAAF FfA Temporary Approval Report**](file:///%5C%5Cchinas01%5C~mpin5160%5CDocuments%5CFostering%20For%20Adoption%20-%20New%20ways%5CBAAF%20FFA%20Temporary%20Approval%20Report.doc)
3. In the event that the prospective adopters stated they did not wish to explore Early Permanence in their adoption assessment – their motivation to be thoroughly explored using questions outlined in **Appendix 9.**
4. Second Opinion visit by Adoption Practice Manager/Advanced Practitioner – where possible or ASW.
5. Case presented to Fostering ADM for decision to seek temporary approval for a specific child.
6. Usual post-fostering approval processes and expectations followed until the approval period expires (see section 5)
7. Post approval information Pack to be sent to Early Permanence Carers.

**6.4 Practical and Financial Support**

All early permanence carers are entitled to receive the fostering allowance for the period of time that they are fostering, as set out in Statutory Guidance (DfE, 2015a). It is agreed that carers will be reimbursed for all agreed costs incurred as a result of providing foster carer. It agrees to:

* Provide the early permanence carers with information about the Foster Care Payments and Accreditation Scheme.
* Pay early permanence carers an **all-inclusive allowance (AIA)** based on the age of the child, which should cover fully the cost of caring for that child and a **household fee**.
* Provide the early permanence carer with full, clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them, before a child is placed.
* Ensure payments to foster carers are made promptly at the agreed time via Bankers Automated Clearing Services (BACS)
* Ensure the foster carer receives clear information with each payment specifying the child for whom the payment is made and the purpose of the payment.
* Refer requests for an exceptional expense payment under the allowances scheme to a countywide panel known as the Exceptional Payment Panel (EPP) to ensure fairness and consistency, in accordance with agreed guidelines.

Carers should be advised to check whether registration as a self-employed person is required for the period of time in which they are receiving a fostering allowance, further information can be found on the HMRC website at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/courses/syob3/fc/HTML/fc\_menu.html](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/courses/syob3/fc/HTML/fc_menu.html).

In addition, since April 2016, those Early Permanence carers who are eligible to claim statutory adoption pay and leave can do so from the point and Early Placement starts. An adoption matching certificate may be required from the Adoption Practice Manager for employers.

Additional support is available to Early Permanence carers via CLA statutory visits, CLA reviewing process and health and education services. Early Permanence carers will also be offered supervision through a supervising social worker on a regular basis for the duration of the fostering period. The Early Permanence carer, acting as foster carer should be supervised by the **Fostering Supervising Social Worker** jointly with an allocated **Adoption Social Worker** from the adoption team in consultation with the relevant **Fostering** **Practice Manager.**

 **7.** **Process for Fostering for Adoption**

It is the duty of the Local Authority to consider placing a Child Looked After for whom the Local Authority is considering adoption with foster carers who are also approved adopters.

**A). A birth mother requesting baby placed for adoption (relinquished)**

In all situations it is the duty of the adoption service to provide counselling and support to birth parents if considering Fostering for Adoption. A joint visit can be undertaken with the CLA social worker:

* Contact Adoption Service (Family Finder) to identify prospective adopters who will offer FFA and are a suitable match;
* Complete brief CPR and send to the Nominated Officer (i.e. Service Leaders or Group Managers);
* The Nominated Officer to agree that child be placed under FFA after:
	+ Considering whether the placement is the most appropriate for the child;
	+ Ensuring child’s wishes and feelings have been considered;
	+ IRO has been informed;
	+ Ensuring Birth Parents are informed about proposed placement in writing **(See Appendix 4).**
* Prospective Adopters to be temporarily approved as Foster Carers for named child by Fostering ADM **or** Service Leaders to agree match if no temporary approval required (i.e. adopters are dually approved);
* Where appropriate prepare a birth plan;
* Inform birth parents of legal implications;
* At birth Section 20 Children Act (1989) to be completed;
* CAFCASS referral (Schedule 2) to formally gain parental consent;
* Complete full CPR;
* Book Adoption Panel for consideration of Match with prospective adopters once CAFCASS and 6 week medical is completed;
* Agency Decision Maker to consider panel recommendation. If recommendation is ratified the placement becomes an adoption placement and fostering payments cease.

**It may be necessary to request legal advice should there be safeguarding concerns as an application for a Placement Order can be made if the threshold criteria is met.**

**Note:** Prior to the adoption placement status the child is a looked after child and the potential adopters who are approved Foster for Adoption are to be treated as foster carers: This includes support, supervision (and training where appropriate) and receipt of the fostering allowance.

**B). Sibling of child/ren already adopted where no significant changes in birth family are evidenced and thresholds met**

**If parents are in agreement with adoption plan**

In all situations it is the duty of the adoption service to provide counselling and support to birth parents if considering Fostering for Adoption. A joint visit can be undertaken with the CLA social worker:

* Contact Adoption Service (Family Finder) to identify prospective adopters who will offer FFA and are a suitable match;
* Complete brief CPR and send to the Nominated Officer (i.e. Service Leaders or Group Managers);
* The Nominated Officer to agree that child be placed under FFA after:
	+ Considering whether the placement is the most appropriate for the child;
	+ Ensuring child’s wishes and feelings have been considered;
	+ IRO has been informed;
	+ Ensuring Birth Parents are informed about proposed placement in writing **(See Appendix 4).**
* Prospective Adopters to be temporarily approved as Foster Carers for named child by Fostering ADM or Service Leaders to agree match if no temporary approval required (i.e. adopters are dually approved);
* Where appropriate a birth plan;
* Inform birth parents of legal implications;
* At birth Section 20 Children Act (1989) to be completed;
* CAFCASS referral (Schedule 2) to formally gain parental consent;
* Complete full CPR;
* Book Adoption Panel for consideration of Match with prospective adopters once CAFCASS and 6 week medical is completed;
* Agency Decision Maker to consider panel recommendation. If recommendation ratified the placement becomes an adoption placement.

**If parents are not in agreement with adoption plan**

In all situations it is the duty of the adoption service to provide counselling and support to birth parents if considering Fostering for Adoption:

* Contact Adoption Service (Family Finder) to identify adopters who will offer FFA and are a suitable match;
* Complete brief CPR and send to the Nominated Officer;
* The Nominated Officer to agree that child be placed under FFA after:
	+ Considering whether the placement is the most appropriate for the child;
	+ Ensuring child’s wishes and feelings have been considered;
	+ IRO has been informed;
	+ Ensuring Birth Parents are informed about proposed placement in writing **(See Appendix 4).**
* Prospective Adopters to be temporarily approved as Foster Carers for named child by Fostering ADM or Service Leaders to agree match if no temporary approval required (i.e. adopters are dually approved);
* Where appropriate a birth plan;
* Inform birth parents of legal implications;
* Instigate PLO and Care Proceedings;
* Complete CPR;
* Agency Decision Maker to consider best interest decision;
* Once Placement Order is granted book adoption panel for match;
* Agency Decision Maker to consider panel recommendation. If recommendation is ratified the placement becomes an adoption placement and fostering payment cease.

**Note:** Prior to the adoption placement status the child is a looked after child and the potential adopters who are approved Foster for Adoption are to be treated as foster carers: This includes support, supervision (and training where appropriate) and receipt of the fostering allowance.

**C). A child where there is a ADM decision and awaiting Placement Order**

In all situations it is the duty of the adopter service to provide counselling and support to birth parents if considering Fostering for Adoption:

* Inform birth parents of legal implications;
* Contact Adoption Service (Family Finder) to identify prospective adopters who will offer FFA and are a suitable match;
* The Nominated Officer to agree that child be placed under FFA after:
	+ Considering whether the placement is the most appropriate for the child;
	+ Ensuring child’s wishes and feelings have been considered;
	+ IRO has been informed;
	+ Ensuring Birth Parents are informed about proposed placement in writing.
* Prospective Adopters to be temporarily approved as Foster Carers for named child by Fostering ADM or Service Leaders to agree match if no temporary approval required (i.e. adopters are dually approved);
* Once the Placement Order has been granted book adoption panel for match;
* Agency Decision Maker to consider panel recommendations. If recommendation ratified the placement becomes an adoption placement and fostering payments cease.

**Note:** Prior to the adoption placement status the child is a looked after child and the potential adopters who are approved Foster for Adoption are to be treated as foster carers: This includes support, supervision (and training where appropriate) and receipt of the fostering allowance.

**8.** **Contact Arrangements**

Early Permanence carers are not usually expected to offer on-going direct contact with birth parents once the fostering stage of the child’s placement has ceased and the child is formally placed for adoption. Occasionally there may be a request from Birth Parents for direct contact post Adoption that will need to be discussed and assessed.

All Early Permanence carers are expected to assist any direct contact between the child and their birth parent/family during the fostering phase of the placement as they are caring for the child under the fostering Regulations and expected to offer the same support to the child as a mainstream foster carer. This will usually be in the form of taking the child to and from contact and attendance at **Children Looked after Reviews.** In most cases a contact supervisor will be allocated to supervise contact with birth family and relatives at specific venues. The role of the foster carer may be to bring the child to the contact centre, if this is a safe and appropriate measures have been considered to safeguard the confidentiality of the possible adoption placement.

In some cases it may be appropriate for the Early Permanence carers to be present during contacts. Whilst Early Permanence carers may have managed direct contact between the child and the birth parent/family positively, they have been prepared to do this for a time-limited period and may not be emotionally able to continue to offer this beyond the temporary fostering period. Early Permanence carers can seek to claim appropriate travel costs from their Fostering SSW in line with payment policies.

Discussions will be held with the Early Permanence carers about the type and level of contact they consider they will be able to offer, in conjunction with the needs of the child, as would be the case for any other prospective adopter who had not temporarily fostered a child first.

**References and Recommended Reading**

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Department for Education (2014) *Children and Families Act*, London: DfE

Department for Education (2015) *Early Permanence Placements and Approval of Prospective Adopters as Foster Carers: statutory guidance for local authorities and adoption agencies*, London: DfE

Department for Education (2015a) *Children Act 1989 Guidance and regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, placement and case review*, London: DfE.

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Selwyn, J, Wijedasa, D, Meakings, S (2014), *Beyond the Adoption Order: challenges, interventions and adoption disruption*, Department for Education, University of Bristol.

**Recommended reading:**

* Adoption Pay and Leave – [**www.direct.gov.uk**](http://www.direct.gov.uk)
* WSCC Adoption Handbook (2018)
* WSCC Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures
* WSCC Allegations Management for Foster Carer Procedures
* WSCC Fostering Services Statement of Purpose

**Adoption Glossary**

* **Adoption** is a legal procedure in which the parental responsibility for a child is transferred from their birth parent or other person with parental responsibility to their adopter. An adopted child loses all the legal ties with their original parents. When an adoption order is made in respect of a child, the child becomes a full member of their new family, usually takes the family name, and assumes the same rights and privileges as if they had been born to the adoptive family including the right of inheritance. Adoption is a significant legal order and is not usually reversible.
* **Adoption Agency** Adoption agencies are organisations that work with prospective parents and children to assess, match, arrange and support adoptive placements. There are two kinds of adoption agency in England – local authority adoption agencies and independent/voluntary adoption agencies. The main difference between the two is that local authorities have children in their care, whereas independent/voluntary agencies do not. The local authority children’s services team has responsibility for finding homes for children in care but both local authority and independent/voluntary adoption agencies assess prospective adopters and match children with them. Adoption agencies do not charge for their services to prospective parents adopting children from care in the UK, and no profit is legally permitted in adoption though some charges are made for those who wish to adopt children from abroad. All adoption agencies are subject to strict regulatory control and regular Ofsted inspections.
* **Adoption Assessment** is the process by which adoption agencies assess potential parents in preparation for adoption. An adoption assessment should take no longer than six months, unless for exceptional reasons, and happens in two stages. Stage 1 includes initial interviews, identity and background checks and references and preparation. This should take no longer than two months. Stage 2, sometimes called a ‘home study’ takes four months, during which a social worker will work in depth with potential adopters to assess their strengths and suitably to become an adoptive parent. In the case of domestic adoption (i.e. of a child in care in the UK), the cost of assessment is covered by adoption agencies, not by prospective parents.
* **Adoption Match** (formerly the Adoption Register for England) is the statutory matching service for England. Funded by the Department for Education, it is an online database containing details of children waiting to be adopted, and information about approved adopters. All children approved for adoption for 90 days or more, and for whom an active match with an approved adopter is not being pursued, must be referred to Adoption Match. They can be referred sooner. Adopters approved for 90 days without an active match being pursued must, with their permission, be referred to Adoption Match. They can also be referred sooner. Once the details of children and adopters are included in the database they will be included in detailed matching searches. Adoption Match staff work with social workers to ensure that children and families are given the best opportunity to be successfully matched. Adoption Match also arranges Adoption Exchange Days and supports Adoption Activity Days.
* **Adoption Order** the adoption order is the final court order which gives approved adopters full and permanent parental responsibility for a child. It is issued by the Family Court, on the application of the prospective adopter/s. The adopter/s will then be provided with an adoption certificate bearing the child’s new surname (if changed) which becomes the child’s formal identifying document. An adoption order can only be made with the consent of the birth parents or if the court has dispensed with the birth parents’ consent.
* **Adoption Panel** Each adoption agency has an adoption panel, made up of social workers alongside independent members including those with personal experience of adoption. At the end of stage 2 of an adoption assessment, panel members are provided with a copy of the Prospective Adopter Report (PAR), and meet to consider the content and to make a recommendation about the prospective adopter’s suitability to become an adopter. Prospective adopters are invited to attend the panel if they wish, and will have seen their PAR in good time before the panel meeting. At the end of the meeting the panel will make a recommendation which will be passed to the adoption Agency Decision Maker for their decision, which should be made within 4 months of the start of stage 2 of the adoption assessment.
* **Adoption Register for England** *see Adoption Match*
* **Assessment** *see Adoption assessment*
* **Attachment** is the emotional bond between two individuals, specifically in the case of adoption between the child and adoptive parent. Children who come into the care of local authorities may suffer from disrupted attachments due to their early life experiences, and may find it difficult to form secure attachments with adoptive parents, families and friends.
* **Birth Parents** are the child’s biological mother and father, who may or may not have been involved in the child’s early care. Birth families include by extension the grandparents, uncles, aunts and siblings who may or may not have played a part in the child’s life. Birth parents will always be the child’s biological parents, and their history will be important for a child to understand as he/she grows up. After an adoption order is made, birth parents are no longer the child’s legal parents.
* **CAMHS** is the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services specialising in behavioural, emotional and mental health difficulties in children and young people and can be accessed through referral by GP, social worker or school.
* **Care Orders** under the Children Act 1989, section 31, if a local authority believes a child is at risk of or suffering from significant harm it can apply to court for a care order. If the court decides that a child may be at risk if returned to his/her parents’ care they may make a care order. This means that the local authority shares parental responsibility with the child’s parents and the child becomes ‘looked after’ by the local authority and ‘in care’. The local authority can then make most of the important decisions for a child, such as where and with whom he/she will live.
* **Care Proceedings** are the legal processes whereby courts decide the permanence plan for children temporarily in care. Some may return to birth parents, or to birth relatives perhaps with a Special Guardianship Order, or remain in care and be fostered long-term, or be placed for adoption.  Care proceedings my result in a care order and a placement order if the court decides that adoption is the best plan for the child.
* **Celebration Days** take place after the court hearing that has granted an adoption order, and are a chance for adoptive families to celebrate the making of an adoption order. Adoptive families visit the court and meet the judge, who will give a certificate and usually invite families and friends to take photos. Celebration days have no legal standing, and are not part of the adoption process.
* **Children Looked After (CLA)** are children in the care of a local authority. A child may be looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis with the agreement of the child’s parent/s, or because the courts have issued a court order placing the child in the local authority’s care. Children adopted from care continue to be considered previously looked after children, particularly with respect to education funding.
* **Child Permanence Report** **(CPR)** is an important document, and an essential tool to enable the adoption agency to plan for the future life of a child. It is completed by a child’s social worker and contains comprehensive information about the child’s family background, life experiences, health and the circumstances that led to the child being in care. CPRs are sent to prospective adopters who have expressed serious interest in a child during family finding and matching. It is a source of information to help prospective adopters decide whether to proceed, as it provides essential information about the child’s background and heritage which is used in the matching process. Adopted adults can also request a copy of their CPR, and it contains important information about their life history.
* **Concurrent Planning** is a well-known practice for placing children with dually approved carers. It involves placing a looked after child with approved foster carers who, as well as providing temporary care for the child, support a plan for rehabilitation and facilitate contact with parents and other relatives. But the carers are also approved as adopters so that if the parents’ rehabilitation plan is not successful, the child may be placed with the carers for adoption, ensuring a continuity of attachment. Concurrent planning is usually used in cases where the local authority is still attempting rehabilitation with the birth family, but expects that adoption will become the plan should the rehabilitation with the birth family not be successful. However, it is a scheme which ensures that the babies have the best possible start in life, given that they have been born into a very vulnerable and high risk situation. If they return home, they will have had a secure and loving early period in foster care, whilst maintaining a relationship with their birth relatives through regular supervised contact centre visits. If they are adopted they will have been with their permanent family from the earliest possible time, and will have developed a secure and trusting relationship with their adopters, perhaps from the time they were born or soon after. Children placed with concurrent planning carers are considered unlikely to be able to return to the care of their birth families, but until all the court assessments are complete, this is not a certainty, and a small proportion of these children do return to their parents or other relatives. *See also Fostering for Adoption.*
* **Contact** between a child and their birth family (and others who have been important in their lives) must always be considered when a child is placed for adoption. The child’s needs are central to any plan which must also take account of the adopters’ views. Direct (face to face) contact between a child and their birth parent/s is rare. If contact is agreed, this is most likely to be indirect, confidential ‘letterbox’ contact, where an exchange of written information between the adoptive parent and birth family, perhaps once a year,  is handled through a central point (usually the adoption service acting as the letterbox exchange) to keep addresses and sensitive information confidential. Direct contact may take place between an adopted child and their siblings, who may be living in other adoptive or foster families. Contact arrangements, along with life story work and other ways of providing information, are part of a process to help children develop their sense of identity, make sense of their past and integrate it with their present.
* **CPR –** *see Child Permanence Report*
* **Early Permanence Plan** or **Early Permanence Placement (EPP)** refers to the situation where children may be placed in their home at the earliest opportunity by being placed with adopters who are also approved as foster carers, who initially foster the child and may become their adopters once the court proceedings have been concluded. There are currently two early permanence plans – *see Concurrent planning* and *see Fostering for adoption*.
* **Family Finding** is the process by which local authorities find the most suitable permanent family for a child. Adoption agencies will work with approved adopters to help make links with a child or children for whom they may be a good match. Profiles of children are made available to approved adopters either by their own adoption agency or via Adoption Match and other family finding and matching agencies.
* **Fast Track Assessment** is an accelerated adoption assessment for those who have previously adopted a child, or who are currently approved and experienced foster carers.
* **Foster Carer** *see Fostering*
* **Fostering** places a child with an approved foster carer who can provide a stable and safe family environment and care for children who are unable to live at home. Fostering may be a permanent arrangement, or temporary until a permanence plan such as a return to birth family or adoption is made. Foster carers are paid allowances by the local authority and do not have legal or parental responsibility for the children in their care. Parental responsibility remains with the local authority and the child’s parent/s. When adoption is the approved plan for a child in care, foster carers have a vital role to play in preparing the child to meet his or her new family, and facilitating introductions and final placement.
* **Fostering for Adoption** Section 22C of the Children Act 1989 requires the local authority to consider a placement (initially as a fostering placement) with carers who are both approved foster carers and approved prospective adopters. This must be considered whenever the agency is considering adoption for a child, or where the decision has been made that the child ought to be placed for adoption, but where the agency does not yet have authority to place the child for adoption through either a placement order or parental consent. Whilst a low level of contact may take place in these placement, this is only for the benefit of life story work, and not as a result of further assessments of possible rehabilitation. *See also Concurrent Planning*
* **Home Study** *see Adoption assessment*
* **Introductions** take place after the match between child and prospective adopters has been decided after matching panel. Introductions are a carefully managed way of supporting the child’s move from his or her foster carers to adopters, agreed during a placement planning meeting. Typically, they take place at the foster carer’s home, and are supervised by the child’s social worker. During a period of one or two weeks, adopters will spend more and more time with the child until they are doing all the care from getting up in the morning until going to bed at night. After the agreed introductions period, the child will move to the adopters’ home, sometimes with support of the foster carer who may stay nearby for a few days until the child is settled.
* **Later-Life Letters** are written by a child’s social worker, explaining why the child was taken into care and adopted. It is given to adopters on placement, and is designed to be read with the child at a time when he or she can better understand the actions and circumstances leading up to the adoption decision.
* **Life Story Books** are often put together by a child’s social worker, but may also be prepared and developed by adopters, to record the child’s history up to and beyond the point of being placed for adoption. Usually they contain baby photos, pictures of birth parents, foster carers and any significant other people, with simple text helping children to understand their early history and the reasons why the child could not remain with their birth family.
* **Life Story Work** is an ongoing process whereby parents help adopted children to feel more secure in their adoptive family. Adopted children are helped to understand their personal history and develop their sense of identity, including who they are, their biological parents and family, their early life experiences and why they were taken into care, and how they came to be adopted into their families. An understanding of the past can enable a child to feel more settled with their adoptive family and deepen bonds within the family.
* **Linking Panel** is the formal meeting that recommends a match between approved adopters and a specific child or children. The adoption panel of the child’s local authority will read through all the information in the adoption placement report, prepared by the prospective adopter’s agency to consider the match. Within this report is the Adoption Support Plan, which outlines support to be provided for the adopter and child. If the panel approves the match, the child’s local authority Agency Decision Maker then makes the final decision about whether the match should go ahead.
* **Local Authority Adoption Agency** *see Adoption Agency*
* **Mailbox/Letterbox** *see Contact*
* **Matching** is the process of identifying a suitable adoptive family for a specific child (see also *family finding)*. It may involve the child’s local authority considering a number of potentially suitable adoptive families, in order to identify one that is the best match for the child or children. This one prospective adoptive family will then proceed to *matching panel*
* **PAR –** *see Prospective Adopter Report*
* **Placement Order** This court order may be made by a court at the end of care proceedings and gives permission for the local authority to place a child with prospective adopters. If a child, subject to a placement order, is placed with a prospective adopter the local authority and the prospective adopter share parental responsibility for the child. A placement order ends when an adoption order is made.
* **Permanency Planning Meeting** refers to a meeting thatconsiders the most effective route to securing permanency for a child or young person.
* **Placement planning meeting (PPM)** *see Introductions*
* **Post-Adoption Support** refers to a range of services that can be accessed by adoptive parents. These include counselling, therapies, legal and medical advice and assessments. Some specified therapies can be paid for by the Adoption Support Fund, after an assessment is carried out by the local authority post adoption team.
* **Preparation Groups** take place during the prospective adopter assessment, often starting in stage 1, and are designed to give prospective adopters the opportunity to understand and prepare for the realities of adoptive parenting. Prospective adopters meet as a group with others going through the same process. They learn together, and explore the benefits and challenges of adoption and key parenting skills needed to care for children who may have experienced neglect and abuse. The format of the groups varies between adoption agencies and usually includes the valuable opportunity to meet with adoptive parents and hear their stories.
* **Prospective Adopter Report (PAR)** is a report written by the prospective adopters’ social worker which summarises the information collected during the adoption assessment process. The PAR contains a lot of information and provides evidence about why the social worker considers the prospective adopter suitable to be approved as an adopter. Prospective adopters have the opportunity to read the report, to clarify any inaccuracies and add their own comments. The PAR will be presented to the Adoption Panel, and once adopters are approved, the PAR is also used to provide information to social workers who are seeking adoptive parents for children in care.

**Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Adoption Matching Matrix Meeting (MMM) Template.**

Just to remind everyone there is West Sussex guidance and templates for Life Story Work These can be found here:

[http://teamspace.westsussex.gov.uk/teams/CSC/ATT/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fteams%2FCSC%2FATT%2FShared%20Documents%2FLifeStory%20guidence%20and%20templates&FolderCTID=0x0120002C0EA7D9BDAA6B49B71E7D0D9BEE1EFC&View={8FA50A35-74CC-4636-A44A-A6833266EAB0}](http://teamspace.westsussex.gov.uk/teams/CSC/ATT/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fteams%2FCSC%2FATT%2FShared%20Documents%2FLifeStory%20guidence%20and%20templates&FolderCTID=0x0120002C0EA7D9BDAA6B49B71E7D0D9BEE1EFC&View=%7b8FA50A35-74CC-4636-A44A-A6833266EAB0%7d)

**Appendix 2: Early Permanence Carer Agreement**

**Early Permanence carer Agreement**

***(Fostering Services Regulations 201, Reg. 27(5) (a) and (b)***

This agreement dated [insert date], is between West Sussex County Council and approved Early Permanence carer/s:

[Insert carer’s name]

1. **Terms of approval**

You are approved as temporary foster carers by West Sussex County Council’s Nominated Officer to provide a placement for: [insert child’s name] **under Regulation 25a of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013**

1. You will have a named adoption social worker who will visit you at least every two weeks and who will contact you by phone in the intervening weeks.

In accordance with Standard 21 (Fostering Services National Minimum Standards), you will receive at least one unannounced visit annually.

**Your adoption social worker is:** [insert name]

1. Your approval as temporary foster carers will be for a specific child to be placed with you as part of the Early Permanence scheme and will be managed and reviewed by the adoption service.
2. You will be advised of any changes to the council’s policies and procedures and legislative governance relating to your role as family placement carers.
3. You are only approved to care for the specific child/ren named in section 1 of this agreement and must not allow yourself to be approached by anyone else to accept a placement.
4. When placing a child or young person in your home on an Early Permanence basis, the Children’s Services department will provide you with the appropriate Child in Care (CiC) paperwork and:
* Financial arrangements for the support of the child during the placement;
* Arrangements for the delegation of responsibility for consent to the medical or dental examination or treatment of the child;
* Arrangements for obtaining approval from Children’s Services for the child to live, even temporarily, away from your home. This includes holidays, school trips and visits to your own extended family;
* Arrangements for meeting the medical educational, safety and social needs of the child.

The above matters will normally be addressed during the Pre-Placement Planning Meeting that must occur prior to all placements or on the next working day in respect of emergency or immediate placements.

1. The Adoption Service undertakes to support this placement by ensuring that:
* Agreed financial allowances are paid promptly;
* you are provided with adequate supervision;
* you have appropriate agreed access to advice and consultation with allied professional services;
* you have appropriate access to peer support;
* “enhanced” support is provided promptly if/when a placement or aspects or a placement result or are likely to result in unusual or unacceptable strain on your normal family circumstances

**As temporary foster carer/s, you are required:**

1. To give immediate/written notice to the Adoption Service, with full particulars of:
* Any intended change of your address;
* Any change in the composition of the household;
* Any criminal offence for which you or a member of your immediate family has been found guilty or any other change in the/your circumstances which may affect your ability to care for a child placed or the suitability of your household;
* Any request or application to adopt children, apply for special guardianship, a child arrangements order or for registration for childminding or day care.
1. To ensure that any information relating to a child placed with you, to the child’s family or to any other person, which has been given to you in confidence in connection with the placement, is kept confidential and is not disclosed to any person without the consent of the Adoption Service.
2. Not to administer corporal punishment to any child placed with you**.**
3. To return any written information appertaining to the placement to the Adoption Service at the conclusion of the placement or at any time the Adoption Service considers appropriate.
4. To comply with the terms of any Adoption Service Agreement in respect of children/young people placed in your home.

This will include promotion of the child’s education and a requirement not to remove the child from their education setting during term times to facilitate family holidays unless this is in very exceptional circumstances and not without the express permission of the Senior Manager responsible for the child’s case management.

1. To care for any child placed with you as if the child were a member of your own family and to promote their welfare, having regard to the long-and short-term plans for the child and having due regard for appropriate safe care practices at all times.
2. To keep West Sussex County Council’s Children’s Services department informed about the child’s progress and to notify them immediately of any significant events affecting the child.
3. To safeguard any child placed with you from abuse or neglect, and in circumstances where an allegation of abuse or neglect is made, to co-operate with the local authority’s policies and procedures for the investigation and conduct of such matters.
4. To allow any child placed with you to be removed from your home if the Directorate of Services for Children, Schools and Families considers that the continuation of a placement would be detrimental to the welfare of the child or if the placement is no longer considered the most suitable way of meeting the child’s assessed needs.
5. In such circumstances where you require an unplanned and premature termination of the placement of any child in your care, that you will give a minimum of 28 days’ notice to the Adoption Service of your requirement for the end of any such placement.

In such circumstances, the Family Placement Service will consider the welfare and security of any child in placement to be paramount but will have due regard and sensitivity for any reasonable request from you as a family placement carer.

1. *You should be clear that it is possible this placement may not lead to adoption, for example, because the local authority’s plan changes and [insert name] can be safely returned to her birth parents’ care; or because a friend or family member comes forward to care for her; or because the court does not grant a placement order; or because the local authority does not agree to you being matched with the child for adoption.*

**Signed (Early Permanence Carer)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Print name:** ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Early Permanence Carer)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Print name:** ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Adoption Practice Manager)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Print name:** ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 3: Early Permanence Family – Summary of responsibilities.**

**EARLY PERMANENCE FAMILY – Summary of Responsibilities**

The concept of Concurrent Planning is a child-focused practice designed to:

* Minimize the number of placements a child experiences in foster care.
* Maximize the possibility that the child’s foster parents are qualified, fully prepared and willing to be the child’s adoptive family.

We have coined the term “Early Permanence Family” for this special category of family.

An Early Permanence Family:

* Supports a child’s reunification efforts.
* Is willing to adopt if the child becomes available for adoption.
* Recognises that reunification efforts may include multiple contacts with either or both birth parents, as well as contact with other relatives (e.g., grandparents, siblings, etc.) and recognise that the frequency of contact may change over time according to the courts directions.
* May encounter emotional challenges as the child “moves through the system.”
* May need additional support from their Social Worker.
* Knows that the placement is considered a “foster placement.”
* Understands that the placement does not imply that adoption will occur, or even that the child will remain in the home of the Early Permanence Family during the course of reunification.

Your Social Worker will inform you, the Early Permanence Family, of the child’s situation prior to placement insofar as we have information. However, the very essence of an “Early Permanence placement” means that there are many as yet undetermined variables and circumstances, and that we most likely will only have limited information at the time of placement. Many circumstances impact these placements, including but not limited to the following:

* The court disposition is unknown and unpredictable.
* Social Workers cannot predict the outcome of a case.
* The birth parent enters a residential program and the child is “reunified” with the parent in the residential/parent and child unit.
* A relative (or connected persons is found and the child is moved.
* A birth sibling or half-sibling is located and the child is moved; this may occur months after the initial placement with the Early Permanence Family.
* The social worker for the child changes and the new worker has different observations, philosophy and different plans agreed by senior managers.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information with regard to what it means to be an “Early Permanence Family,” and that I have received a copy of this information. I hereby adhere to and carry out my duties and responsibility for West Sussex County Council accordingly.

**Early Permanence Carer #1**

Date:

**Early Permanence Carer #2**

Date:

**Appendix 4: Letter to Birth Parents - Decision to proceed with Early Permanence Placement – Template**

Dear

I am writing to inform you that a decision has been made on [insert date] that [insert name] should be placed with early permanence carers who are approved to foster and adopt. I am aware that the Local Authority has discussed this plan with you and has identified early permanence carers for [insert name] and plan to place her/him on [insert date].

I have enclosed a leaflet explaining Early Permanence and its benefits to children who are party to care proceedings with this letter.

If you would like more information about this, please contact [insert child’s name] Social Worker [insert social workers name] and s/he will be able to clarify how this works.

A copy of this letter has also been sent to your solicitor.

Yours sincerely

**Resilience and Permanence Service Leader**

*If you require this letter or future correspondence from us in a different format (e.g. tape, Braille, or disc) please do not hesitate to let us know*

**Appendix 5: ADM Ratification Letter to Early Permanence Carers.**

Dear[Name – Early Permanence Carer]

**Re: Ratification of an Early Permanence Plan – [Insert Childs Name]**

Further to the recent adoption panel recommendation, which I have considered, I am pleased to confirm my agreement to your dual approval as foster carers and prospective adoptive parents for West Sussex County Council.

Your social worker will keep in touch with you whilst you are waiting for a placement via our Early Permanence scheme or via the mainstream adoption route.

I would like to thank you for your co-operation in the very full assessment process and congratulate you on your approval and wish you the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

**Agency Decision Maker**

*If you require this letter or future correspondence from us in a different format (e.g. tape, Braille, or disc) please do not hesitate to let us know*

**Appendix 6: Letter to Early Permanence Carers - Decision to proceed with Early Permanence Placement – Template**

Dear

I am writing to inform you that a decision has been made on [insert date] that [insert name] should be placed in your care as approved Early Permanence carers. It is considered that this placement will provide [insert child’s name] with stability for the duration of care proceedings and in the event a Placement Order is granted by the courts the option for us to proceed to Adoption Linking Panel.

***(Delete if not appropriate)*** *To enable this I have agreed to temporarily approve you as Foster Carers under Regulation 25A of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013*

*Your temporary approval period expires when:*

* *The placement is terminated by the local authority;*
* *The approval as a prospective adopter is terminated;*
* *The prospective adopter is approved as a foster carer;*
* *The prospective adopter gives 28 days’ written notice that they no longer wish to be temporarily approved as a foster parent in relation to the child; or*
* *The child is placed for adoption with the prospective adopter in Accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002.*

I am aware that the Local Authority has discussed this plan with you and will identify an early permanence plan to support you to care for [insert name]. We plan to place her/him on [insert date].

If you would like more information about this, please contact [insert child’s name] Social Worker [insert social workers name] and s/he will be able to clarify how this works.

Yours sincerely

**Fostering ADM (if Temporary approval)/Service Leader (if no temporary approval required)**

Family Operations/ Resilience and Permanence Service

*If you require this letter or future correspondence from us in a different format (e.g. tape, Braille, or disc) please do not hesitate to let us know*

**WSCC Practice Notes**

**WSCC Practice Note 1: Areas for fostering supervising social worker to address when recruiting early permanence carers.**

**Present:** Prospective Carers, Fostering Practice Manager/Supervising Senior Social Worker from nearest Locality Fostering team and Adoption Social Worker.

* Legal planning and processes/ child’s legal status
* Introductions from hospital and other care providers
* Delegated authority
* Health and Safety
* Social worker roles post placement, including the IRO
* Contact Centres and their role in contact with the child’s birth parents and other birth family members. The arrangements for contact between the child and the birth parents and any other significant people in the child’s life and our expectations of them in transporting to and from contact.
* Support, development and training (Learning Gateway Access), supervision post placement, post approval Early Permanence post approval pack and post placement Early Permanence annual reviews by the ASW.
* CoramBAAF Foster Carers Report.
* Sharing information about the child and Life Story Work.
* Fostering finances including exceptional payments
* Self-employed status / tax liability and how to check and declare these.
* Record keeping and reporting accidents / injuries etc.
* Training requirements (First Aid Training)
* Fostering regulations - including home, personal liability and car insurance, home fire safety check and unannounced visits post placement (fostering phase).
* Allegations, Safe Caring Plans and safeguarding plans.
* Extended family DBS checks if appropriate
* Giving Evidence and the requirement to keeping appropriate records (diary sheets).
* Corporal Punishment Policy – as outline in the Foster Carer Agreement
* The availability of information on the child and the child’s family including the child’s siblings.
* The position and role of the birth parents and their rights and responsibilities, the nature and meaning of parental responsibility, what it means in relation to a looked after child and what it means on a day-to-day basis.
* The role of the child's and the fostering supervising social worker.
* The significance of the care plan, the placement plan and reviews.
* The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer.
* The importance and nature of ‘safe caring’.
* Health checks and the health plan.
* Personal education plan.
* Foster care competences and associated support and developmental opportunities.

Evidence of the carers understanding of the above should be demonstrated in the Prospective Adopters Report or if seeking temporary approval the CoramBAAF FFA Temporary Approval Report.

**WSCC Practice Note 2:** **Additional assessing questions for Early Permanence carers wishing to seek temporary approval.**

When assessing prospective Early Permanence carers suitability the Adoption Social Worker must address the following issues in their assessment:

* Do the carers fully understand the uncertainty of an Early Permanence placement during the temporary foster care stage?
* How will the carers manage the anxiety this uncertainty will generate?
* Do carers understand that they will be expected to retain care of the child and support a rehabilitation or transition plan if it is decided that the child should return home or move to another placement?
* How will the carers respond to direct contact with the birth parents and the requirement to facilitate contact between the child and birth parent during the temporary fostering stage?
* Do the carers understand the different roles and responsibilities of a foster carer and an adopter?
* Do the carers have sufficient practical day-to-day child care experience to be able to care for the child to the standard expected of a local authority foster carer?
* How will the carers deal with little or no information about a child’s health history?
* Whether there has been any change since being approved. What’s changed in terms of the thought processes from adoption to Early Permanence, do you understand that although there would be a high chance that a baby/child placed would go on to have a Placement Order, and this would be classed as a foster placement until such time? Do you have an understanding of the difference between a foster placement and an adoption placement? How would it be different for you?
* What is your motivation for Early Permanence?
* Although confidentiality will be looked into on a case by case basis, there is no guarantee about your being identified as a foster carer to the birth family – i.e. contact, reviews, how do you feel about this?
* The impact of Early Permanence could possibly be emotionally draining – for example you will be building a bond and attachment and could potentially experience loss and separation if the child is returned home, how would you deal with this? What support might you need? (The same could be said about adoption, birth parents are contesting adoption orders more and more).
* There might be a high level of contact with birth parents, during the early days, as a foster carer you might be expected to support contact, how do you feel about this?
* There would be looked after reviews for the child, you would be expected to attend and give feedback. (This is same as if an adoption placement).
* On a practical level, what experience have you had of handling, changing nappies, changing clothes, bathing, feeding a new born baby or young child?

**WSCC Practice Note 3: Adoption Matching Meeting – pre-linking meeting to consider whether Fostering for Adoption placement should become an adoption placement\***

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| **Meeting Attendees:****Date:** |
|  | Child’s needs: | Carer’s ability to meet needs: |
| Are there any specific financial needs in relation to the child/children or prospective adopters? |  |  |
| What are their support networks? |  |  |
| Has carer demonstrated an ability to work with the local authority? |  |  |
| What are the carer’s attitudes to the particular circumstances or ability of the child/children in the FfA placement? |  |  |
| What are the carer’s views on sharing the child/children’s life story? |  |  |
| Are there any post-adoption support needs identified? |  |  |
| Please note any other relevant information |  |  |
| **Summary of Information** |
| Are all parties agreed that this is a suitable match? Briefly describe the main factors contributing to this decision |
| Proposed plan and timescales |

\*Taken from CoramBAAF – The role of fostering for Adoption.