



Buckinghamshire Council Adoption Service

Workbook for Applicants considering Early Permanence once approved as adopters

1. Additional Learning on Early Permanence since Approval

Please list all forms informal and formal, texts to discussions, days training to reading an article adding what you learnt from this.

2. Motivation

Please state what has changed your outlook on Early Permanence and why you feel able to consider this.

3. Placement uncertainty, grief, and loss

The placement is uncertain until the court grants a Placement Order, so there is always a possibility that the child could be returned to birth family.

How might you feel about and deal with this on a day-to-day basis?

How do you imagine you would feel if the baby were returned to birth family after having lived with you for a while? How would you cope?

If you didn't agree with the decision about a child's return home, how do you think you would feel and respond, in relation to the child throughout transition, birth family members and professionals?

As plans for the child remain uncertain, confidentiality for the child is even more important, and you would not be able to share details of the child's background, or the reasons they are unable to be with their birth family. This would include not being able to share details with those you would generally turn to for support. How would you manage?

You will have been asked to consider in your preparation training, and in your assessment, your own personal previous experiences of grief and loss, and to have an understanding of the child's experience of loss. Even a very young baby will experience loss of his/her birth mother which may impact over time on their sense of self.

Thinking about some of your experiences with grief and loss, how do you feel the child's experience may trigger some of your own feelings and responses from the past?

How might fears about the child returning to birth family impact your attitude towards a child and relationship with them in the child pre-adoption stage?

4. Relationship and support network

Consider your strengths and vulnerabilities as a couple in considering Early Permanence as a route to adoption.

What support will you have from your family and friends?

5. Background Factors and capacity to manage developmental uncertainty

Early Permanence placements are usually undertaken due to a reasonable amount of evidence suggesting fundamental difficulties in the birth family that make it unlikely they can successfully parent. This very tenant means that these are some of the most challenging families, with a wide variety of long-standing problems, including domestic abuse, and substance abuse issues. This means that babies born to these families are particularly vulnerable and often exposed to trauma and damaging substances in utero. Furthermore, as most children placed under Early Permanence are babies, identifying what additional needs will emerge (genetic and/or environmentally driven) is impossible. Similarly, without the benefit of observing early development post-birth, genetic vulnerabilities cannot easily be identified. There is often therefore a huge amount of developmental uncertainty for Early Permanence children.

How do you think you will manage living with that uncertainty in the short and long term?

What emerging needs do you feel able as a family to manage successfully; which not? Why?

6. Fostering Role

If a baby is placed with you under Early Permanence you are a foster carer in the eyes of the placing authority. This means you are expected to work within the regulations, be visited every week, and adhere to court and local authority directives.

How would you feel about being told how to care for your child by professionals (and birth parents)? How would you respond?

Could you manage the practicalities of family time up to 4 times per week, often at inconvenient times and in possibly undesirable places (family time centre, prison etc.)?

How would you feel about birth parents caring for the child without you present, often in ways that you do not like (around feeding, comfort, personal care)? How would you respond?

During family time birth parents may wish to give gifts/clothes to the children, this is usually permitted if in foster care. How would you respond?

How would you feel about any cultural requests? For example we have had a birth family who wanted to retain a lock of hair, we have had requests for circumcision etc.

7. Employment and finance

Consider the impact to your work role, practically and financially and your return to work post adoption leave.

Please state any transferable skills you may have.

8. Household members

Consider the impact for each household member whether adult or child. Think about the preparation they will need and what their understanding is about the difference between adopting and fostering.

9. Ongoing contact with birth family both direct and indirect

Contact with birth family is very important to an adopted child. When it works well it can help adopted children to develop a good understanding about their birth relatives, help with feelings of loss and to know their identity as a whole is respected. When children are helped to understand their history and value their identity, they are more likely to feel acceptance, higher self-esteem and thrive.

Once placement of your child becomes an adoption one, how could you build on the relationship you will have developed with the birth family through family time to create long standing contact for the benefit of your child?

What contact do you envisage with birth family post the adoption order as your child grows up?

How would you manage any challenging times?

Have you had any experience of this within your family or friends? Or have you discussed with adopters how contact works for their child?

Updated March 2022