

**FFA Guidance Notes for Workers**

**Definition of Fostering for Adoption (Early Permanence)**

* Placement of children with prospective adopters who are also approved as foster carers.
* Expectation that those children will remain placed in foster care and the placement only becomes an adoptive placement if:
* A Placement Order is subsequently made or
* Parental consent is given for adoption
* And the match is subsequently agreed by ADM.
* The Local Authority is likely still to be considering other outcomes for the child, however adoption is the most likely outcome.
* Such placements are likely to be made while alternative family members have yet to be completely ruled out and others may yet come forward
* Viability assessments will have been completed on known family members.

**Benefits for the child**

* FFA protects children from experiencing numerous moves within care. It provides children with good quality, uninterrupted care while assessments of their birth family are completed and the court decides on the best plan for the child. Consistent care reduces possible future harm and helps the child develop healthy attachments.
* The child could start to develop attachments to their adoptive parents earlier than if placed with, and then moved, from foster carers.
* FFA can only apply for children where the care plan is more than likely to be adoption or is adoption.

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|  | **Guidance Note** |
| **1** | Early permanence should be considered at all stages of permanence planning for a child (including pre-birth). Fostering for Adoption placements may be appropriate when it becomes apparent that the permanence plan is likely to be adoption. Therefore, all children’s workers should be familiar with the Fostering for Adoption process.  Please be aware of relevant legislation:  Children Act 1989 Section 22C (9B) (c) as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014  Reg 25A Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 as amended by The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.  Fostering for Adoption (FFA) is a duty on the Local Authority when considering adoption for a child.  The purpose of Fostering for Adoption (FFA) is to reduce delay and placement moves for a child.  Care planning for children should specifically address consideration of early permanence, and record the reasons, when this is not possible.  FFA placements are aimed at enabling early bonding and attachments to develop by reducing the number of placement moves for a child. The FFA carers ultimately wish to be parents, not long-term foster carers and therefore FFA placements should (in the majority of circumstances) result in such permanence for the child and carers occurring. |
| **2** | When considering FFA the child’s social worker should initially consult with the Home/Family Finder (social worker) / Team Manager based within Adoption East Midlands. This person will have an overview of the FFA carers available and will also be able to offer advice and guidance about whether the child’s circumstances appear to be appropriate for a Fostering For Adoption placement.  The homefinding email address for Adoption East Midlands is, [homefinding@adoptioneastmidlands.nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:homefinding@adoptioneastmidlands.nottscc.gov.uk).  Such consultation is likely to prove helpful when deciding the early permanence planning for the child. |
| **3** | The Child’s Team Manager, in consultation with the permanence team, Guardian, IRO (if applicable) and legal department, makes the decision regarding whether an FFA placement should be sought. In some Local Authorities this is signed ff b the relevant senior manager. This decision is case noted on the child’s file and should be referred to in care planning reports.  This case note should be copied into the child’s Adoption East Midlands record, so will need to be e-mailed to the linked home finder. |
| **4** | If the decision is to proceed with FFA placement, then the child’s social worker needs to:   * Formally notify Family Finder to progress possible match, complete the FFA referral form **(Appendix 1)**. * Notify the birth parents of the FFA plan and the legal implications of this. * Explain to birth parents why information about the birth relatives’ background needs to be shared with the FFA carers in order to meet the needs of the child. * Child’s Social Worker to ensure birth parents have signed medical consent forms, to agree information sharing.   Child’s social worker to make a referral to relevant Local Authority Fostering Manager. This referral is to request that a Fostering SW be identified to undertake the statutory and practical task of the fostering role.  The above points need to be completed by the child’s social worker prior to FFA placement. The above actions (including dates) should be clearly documented by the child’s social worker on the child’s file  Life Story Work should be commenced.  The report for Reg 25 decision should be completed **Appendix 2,** BAAF report for temporary approval as a foster carer reg 25A. |
| **5** | Once the Family Finder Team has received formal notification of the request for a FFA placement referral (appendix 1).  The team will:   * Update referral form where applicable. * Identify FFA links * Discuss with the relevant FFA carer’s adoption Social Worker * PARs to be sent to the Child’s Social Worker and manager to consider. * Agreed timescale for Social Worker and Team Manager to read PAR and make decision. * This should always be within 5 working days, and less time if the FFA is urgent placement. |
| **6** | Having read the PARs and discussed with their team manager, the child’s social worker must notify the Family Finder which FFA carers appear to be the most appropriate match and why. The child’s worker will complete the Family Finding Feedback Form (**Appendix 3**) and return it to the Family Finder. |
| **7** | The child’s local authority ADM or nominated officer will be asked for the Reg 25 approval, and the child’s fostering service, will be responsible for fostering activity.  FFA carers adoption SW and fostering team manager or supervising social worker to read brief CPR / FFA rationale and discussion with Child’s SW and further discussion with FFA carers to discuss their ability to deal with legal and medical uncertainty and specific issues relating to the child’s plan i.e. contact arrangements/ possible attendance at medical appointments, reviews. The FFA carers need to be aware of the legal implications of being involved in care proceedings and therefore the risk that the child could be returned to the birth family.  The fostering workers’ role will include the following:   * Ensure that role of approved Foster-carer is met. * Provision of Foster carers file – to include medical consent, logs etc., placement planning meeting, brief CPR. * Creation of carers on client database if necessary. * Completion of workflow to allow fostering payments to be made. * Completion of workflow to ensure appropriate equipment is provided and re-imbursements provided. * Case notes to be updated on approved FFA carer file – fostering. * Completion of Safe Care episode- that FFA carers’ home complies with fostering regulations. * Visit to placement within first week – either Fostering Support social worker or FFA carer SW – as agreed at placement planning meeting. * Monthly visits to discuss Fostering role and offer support, supervision and advice, and ensure visit is recorded using standard fostering visit form, copy to Adoption East Midlands Social Worker. * Regular communication with child’s SW and FFA carer SW to update, ensure that needs of child/ren are met and role of Foster-carer is fulfilled and that there is limited duplication of visiting pattern with FFA carer SW, Adoption East Midlands. * Obtain foster carer case notes (logs) from carers. * Arrange for attendance at appropriate training as and when required. * Participate in future planning meetings for the child. |
| **8** | When a possible placement match has been identified, a Matching Meeting needs to be arranged. The child’s social worker, fostering social worker and FFA carers’ social worker should attend the Matching Meeting within agreed timescale, the child’s Team Manager or the permanence team manager should chair the meeting.  During the meeting:  The child’s social worker provides updated information regarding the child’s health, family and legal circumstances.  The FFA carer’s Social Worker gives an overview of the carers’ capacity to meet the child’s needs and manage uncertainty.  Further discussions regarding what the FFA placement would need to offer, i.e.;   * Provisional plan for child including likely timescales. When is agency decision, child’s plan, likely legal timescales, etc. * Confirmation of the birth plan and discussion regarding wishes of birth parent and role of FFA carers and appropriate support to both parties. i.e.), if unborn baby is born at the weekend, what happens then? Who will be present when the FFA carer(s) meets the child? * Are the FFA carers and birth parents to meet? Consideration needs to be made about the confidentiality of the FFA carers and identifying information and ensure that safeguards are built in to protect the identity and addresses when considering the level of contact between FFA carers and birth parents. Has a risk assessment been completed regarding birth relatives to ensure the security and confidentiality of the placement? * What are the expectations regarding placement confidentiality? * Who would be in attendance at placement review meetings and where should these be held? Who should attend upcoming medical appointments etc.? * What are the expectations regarding contact? How frequent, who transports, who supervises? * Are there risks to the placement being undermined if the FFA carers are involved, or is there an expectation that they will be involved?   Following the Matching Meeting, the FFA carers’ worker discusses the proposed match with the FFA carer to progress the placement.  The Child’s Social Worker to update the FFA carers’ social worker of any outstanding or new information or plans for child to facilitate the placement.  Joint visit to FFA carers with Child’s Social Worker and FFA carer Social Worker to ensure that this placement is the right one. |
| **9** | If the Matching Meeting outcome is that the FFA match should proceed to the next stage of the process, then the Fostering Social Worker and the child’s Social Worker must activate the relevant fostering workflow.  The FFA carers’ worker must ensure that the FFA carers have had sight of all relevant information to make an informed decision, including liaison with any relevant health or educational professionals, etc. as required. The FFA carers Social Worker must ensure that the FFA carers are aware that whilst the placement remains under fostering regulations, they will not have legal parental responsibility, nor will they be referred to as the child’s parents and the child will retain their full birth name.  The FFA carers’ worker to provide information to the FFA carers about their statutory employment entitlements to be able to attend appointments (e.g. planning meetings, etc.) as well as parental leave entitlements for after the child is placed. The FFA carers social worker to provide a link to the Statutory Guidance for Employers.  **The Fostering supervising social worker** will ensure that any mileage payments, or other appropriate expenses incurred for such meetings are reimbursed to the FFA carers in a timely manner. Also that the safe care policy adheres to fostering procedures., and the relevant health and safety assessment is in place. |
| **10** | For a child to be placed under FFA regulations, the following documents should be supplied to the ADM within agreed timescales.   * Record of agency decision on approval as adopters; * Any specific panel minute regarding FFA. * BAAF form reg 25A   (completed by child’s social worker and FFA carers’ social worker, and fostering supervising social worker where possible);   * Viability report for fostering.   The documentation should be read / quality assured by a child care Team Manager and counter signed before being sent to the ADM, via the Local Authority process.  Agency Decision Maker will consider the matter: The decision of the ADM will be relayed to the social workers on the same day.   1. to approve the adopters as temporary foster carers; 2. to agree the foster placement of this child(ren) with these carers; 3. or to decline approval or this placement.   The FFA carers’ social worker must notify the FFA carers of the decision made and any potential issues raised.  If the decision is that the match shall proceed, then Adoption East Midlands will issue a FFA Matching Certificate for the FFA carers to submit to their employers in order to commence their FFA leave entitlement.  The fostering worker will write to the carers to confirm their foster carer status, suppling the foster carer agreement for signature before placement.    The Child’s Social Worker must notify the birth parents of the decision verbally and in writing ensuring confidentiality of the names and addresses of the FFA carers  Copies of the Matching Certificate and written notifications should be clearly uploaded / recorded on the child’s and FFA carers’ files respectively. |
| **11** | Whenever possible a Placement Planning Meeting to be held **prior** to placement (not on the day of placement). The planning meeting is an opportunity for professionals to discuss the practicalities of the placement and the expectations of the FFA carer’s role. It is important to acknowledge the emotions involved and identify any issues that may prevent the FFA carer from meeting the child’s needs.  Id the Placement Planning Meeting cannot be held before placement, it should b held as soon as possible after placement, no later than 3 working days of the placement.  The child’s social worker is responsible for arranging the date, time and venue of this meeting in conjunction with their manager who will be required to chair the meeting. Invitations are typically sent to the following:   * FFA carers; * FFA carers’ social worker; * Fostering social worker; * Child’s social worker; * Current carers (if appropriate); * Current carers social worker (if appropriate); * Child’s social worker’s manager; * Community Midwife (if appropriate).   A Placement Planning Meeting form must be completed. This includes necessary documentation for a fostering placement – medical consent, foster carer charter and safe care policy. The child’s social worker is responsible for completing the majority of this form beforehand (the factual sections) in order to prepare for this meeting. However, this can be in consultation with other workers involved e.g. the Safe Care policy should be completed by the FFA carers SW / Fostering SW and then any issues that arise discussed at the Planning Meeting. Effective communication should occur to ensure that all parties are clear about ensuring relevant tasks are completed in preparation for the Placement Planning Meeting occurring.  Practical issues, expenses, fostering payments, etc. should have been discussed between the FFA carers and the Fostering Social Worker prior to this meeting and confirmed at the Placement Planning Meeting.  Detailed introductions will be planned at this meeting. Signed copies of the Placement Planning Meeting form to be circulated to all attendees.  In some circumstance’s introductions may be shorter than usual due to the child’s imminent discharge from hospital or move from birth family. Given the impact of this Social workers need to ensure their availability to support the child, birth relatives and FFA carers during such a quick transitional phase.  Fostering Social Worker to provide FFA carers with a signed foster carer agreement, together with a foster carer held file (including case note recording sheets and medical logs).  Child’s social worker has responsibility for providing the FFA carers with a copy of the signed medical consent, birth certificate, delegated authority and placement agreement. |
| **12** | Introductions commence as outlined in the Placement Planning Meeting form. A social worker is required to be in attendance when the FFA carers first meet the child.  The child’s social worker, FFA carers’ social worker and Fostering Social Workers should liaise with FFA carers and previous carers to ascertain how the introductions are progressing.  The Midway Review of Introductions meeting is to occur with all relevant parties who attended the Placement Planning Meeting. The chair of the meeting should complete the form (**Appendix 4**). On occasions where a decision has been made at the placement planning meeting that a face to face meeting is not required, the information will still be shared and the template form (**Appendix 4**) completed and distributed to all parties. The Child’s Social worker / Team Manager are responsible for ensuring all parties are consulted and completion of the form.  During this meeting a decision should be made regarding progressing the introductions further; at the original pace, speeded up or slowed down etc. Any issues raised within the first part of introductions should be addressed and if everyone is happy to proceed, then the next phase of the introductions to be agreed and placement date confirmed. |
| **13** | If the introductions have progressed positively and a decision has been made to place the child with the FFA carers, then a Local Authority social worker must be in attendance at the handover stage.  The child’s social worker will visit within the first week of placement.  The FFA carer’s social worker will visit within the first week of placement  The purpose of such visits will be to provide support to the placement and ensure that the child’s and carers’ needs are being met.  Visits by the child’s social worker will be within the first week of placement and no less than 6 weeks after. The Fostering SW and FFA carers Social Worker will discuss and agree visiting pattern until first month / and or until first statutory review has occurred. |
| **14** | If the previous Looked After Review outlined FFA as part of the child’s plan, then as additional review on placement may not be required, and the care pan has not changed. This should be discussed with the Independent Reviewing Officer.  If the child is newly accommodated a review must be held within 20 working days.  The adoption social worker and supervising social worker cannot undertake the responsibilities of the other, however both can co-ordinate to support the placement. Copies of recordings should be shared between the workers. Good communication is essential to placement support.  The relevant paperwork for the review meeting is to be circulated to all parties by the child’s social worker.  After the first statutory review, the child’s social worker must visit on a minimum of a 6-weekly basis. The fostering social worker / FFA social worker to visit on a minimum of a monthly basis, including unannounced visits. |
| **15** | After ADM decision to approve the adoption match.  This is now formally an adoption placement - ensure all case notes are recorded as adoption case notes.  The front sheet should be amended and addresses anonymised. |
| **16** | FFA Carers SW to cease fostering payments and ensure file is updated and closed. In some Local Authorities the adopter may need to resign as a foster carer.  Fostering social worker’s role ceases.  Ensure prospective adopter is updated regarding the implications of their new status, i.e.) PR, using name and decision making. Timescales for submitting adoption application to be discussed. |