



Adoption Support

Policy and Procedure

‘Communication is important, so information should be accessible to everyone. People with sensory communication disabilities may need documents in easy read, large print, audio or Braille formats for example. Others may need face to face communication support through a British Sign Language Interpreter, deafblind interpreter, lip speaker or note taker (as recommended by the NHS Accessible Information Standard). If someone speaks (or reads) a language that is not English, they will need to have the appropriate language-spoken language interpreter and / or text translator’.

1.0 Purpose:

- 1.1. The focus of this policy is to provide guidance of the adoption support service offer to adopted children and families. It covers the procedural processes from referral, assessment, review and closure of the service.

2.0 Underpinning Legislation and Guidance:

- 2.1
- Data Protection Act 1998
 - Adoption and Children Act 2002
 - Adoption and Children Act 2002 Guidance Chapter 2 & 7, Annexes A & B
 - The Adoption and Children (Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (2005).
 - Adoption Support Services Agencies Regulations 2005
 - Adoption Agencies regulations 2005
 - Children and Adoption Act 2006
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
 - Statutory Guidance on adoption DfE July 2014
 - Children and Families Act 2014
 - The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013

3.0 What is Adoption Support:

- 3.1 Adoption support includes any support likely to be required for the child and their family from the point of placement through to adulthood, that results from their being adopted.
- 3.2 Following the making of an Adoption Order, a range of adoption support services are available to every adoptive family. As a minimum this will consist of the 'Adoption Passport' plus access to local support groups and training events, plus regular communication from the adoption agency. In addition, according to the assessed needs of each child placed for adoption, there will be a range of specialist support services available. This could include specialist training, access to therapeutic interventions and regular short break care.

4.0 Duty to Provide Information Concerning Adoption Support:

- 4.1 Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the local authority has a duty to provide information on adoption support services to:
- Anyone contacting the authority to request information about adopting a child
 - Anyone informing the authority that (s)he wishes to adopt a child
 - Any parent of an adopted child within the authority's area who requests the information
 - Any parent of an adopted child within the authority's area of whom the authority is/becomes aware (e.g. where a parent rings about a SEN assessment and it becomes clear that the child is adopted)

4.2 Information must be provided about:

- The full range of adoption support services available in the local authority area. This includes, but is not limited to, therapeutic services, assistance in relation to contact arrangements, and financial support
- The right to request an assessment for adoption support services (at any time)
- The address and telephone number of the Agency's Adoption Support Services Adviser
- The availability of assessments for adoption support services for persons outside the local authority area, so that parents understand which Local Authority or Agency is responsible for assessing their support needs
- Contact details for [First4Adoption](#) and the local web-based information service which provides information about adoption
- Priority school admissions (where relevant). Details can be found at the [School admission of children adopted from local authority care Guidance](#) (DfE)
- Priority council housing and Discretionary Housing Payments
- The entitlement to early education from the age of two (from September 2014)
- How to make a complaint, both under the local authority complaints procedure and to the Local Government Ombudsman
- Any other relevant services provided by the local authority
- Any other information that the local authority considers relevant

5.0 Together4Children Adoption Support Core Offer:

5.1 Information must be provided about:

- Signposting service (linked to Local Early Help Offer)
- Targeted information, advice and guidance regarding behavioural, attachment and other difficulties
- Advice and guidance via the Virtual School
- Support with contact between an adopted child and his or her birth family (post-box/direct contact)
- Meetings, events and activities to enable groups of adopters and adoptive children to get together and support each other
- Training to help adopters to meet the needs of their adoptive child
- Referral to TESSA (Therapeutic, Education & Support Services in Adoption).

5.2 Together4Children is also working in partnership with TESSA (Therapeutic, Education & Support Services in Adoption). TESSA is a nationwide support service run by Adoption UK and funded by the Community Lottery Fund.

5.3 We can refer families to [TESSA](#) that will offer the following support:

- Consultations with psychologists from their clinical partner organisation; The Family Place.
- Peer support through their parent partners (employed, trained and supervised by Adoption UK).

Reflective six weekly therapeutic parenting groups facilitated by one of their psychologists and a parent partner.

5.4 Social Workers/Permanency Support Practitioners can refer to this service by completing their referral form.

6.0 Together4Children Specialist Adoption Support Offer:

6.1 This will be subject to an adoption support assessment of need:

- Financial support (subject to regular review)
- Therapeutic services for adopted children via access to the Adoption Support Fund
- Assistance to adoptive parents and children to support the adoptive placement and enable it to continue, including short breaks
- Assistance to adoptive parents and children where a placement disrupts or is at risk of disruption

7.0 Together4Children Adoption Support Referral Process:

7.1 Adopter(s) will need to self-refer to the Locality Permanency Hub nearest to their geographical location via telephone or via the Together4Children Website. This information and contact details will be detailed within their Adoption Support Plan when the child(ren) was first placed with adopters as well as on the website.

7.2 When a referral is received a duty worker within the Permanency Support Team will undertake a screening process regarding the request for support. The outcome of this process will either be:

- to provide advice/information or to signpost adopter to local universal and targeted services/groups
- to complete a detailed referral for a request for an assessment of adoption support needs to be undertaken; or
- to refer to appropriate Local Authority's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub if there are safeguarding concerns

7.3 There is a regional threshold guidance to assist duty workers with the above screening process as well as an online catalogue of resources to be able to provide appropriate information, advice or signposting the adopter to the appropriate service/group.

7.4 If after the screening process the recommendation is no further action after advice, support and/or signposting has been provided the referral will be closed.

7.5 If the screening/triage process concludes that there are safeguarding concerns and there is a risk of significant harm to the child(ren) and/or imminent risk of placement breakdown and child(ren) being accommodated by the Local Authority, the duty worker will make a referral to the appropriate Local Authority's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. For this process please refer to 14.0.

- 7.6 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub will then process the referral to determine what appropriate action should be taken.
- 7.7 If the screening process highlights the threshold has been met for an assessment of adoption support need, the next stage would be for a detailed referral form to be completed to identify and assess needs, current situation and recommendation of proposed action
- 7.8 Ideally this referral form to be completed by the duty worker following on from the initial screening/triage process. However, if this cannot be achieved and/or undertaken by the duty worker at that time for this to be undertaken by a Permanency Support Social Worker within 1 working day.
- 7.9 Once completed the referral form to be sent to the Permanency Support Team Manager within **1 working day** to sign off.
- 7.10 Permanency Support Team Manager signs off the referral and agrees proposed action and allocates to a Permanency Support Social Worker within **5 working days**.
- 7.11 The allocated Permanency Support Social Worker will contact the family within **5 working days** to provide them with a date to offer a visit. The Permanency Support Social Worker also sends out an Agreement & Consent Form and any relevant checklists for adopters to read and fill out in advance of the visit.
- 7.12 It is the expectation that adopters will consent to an adoption support assessment of need where they are requesting support as set out in the specialist adoption support offer. Refer to 7.0.

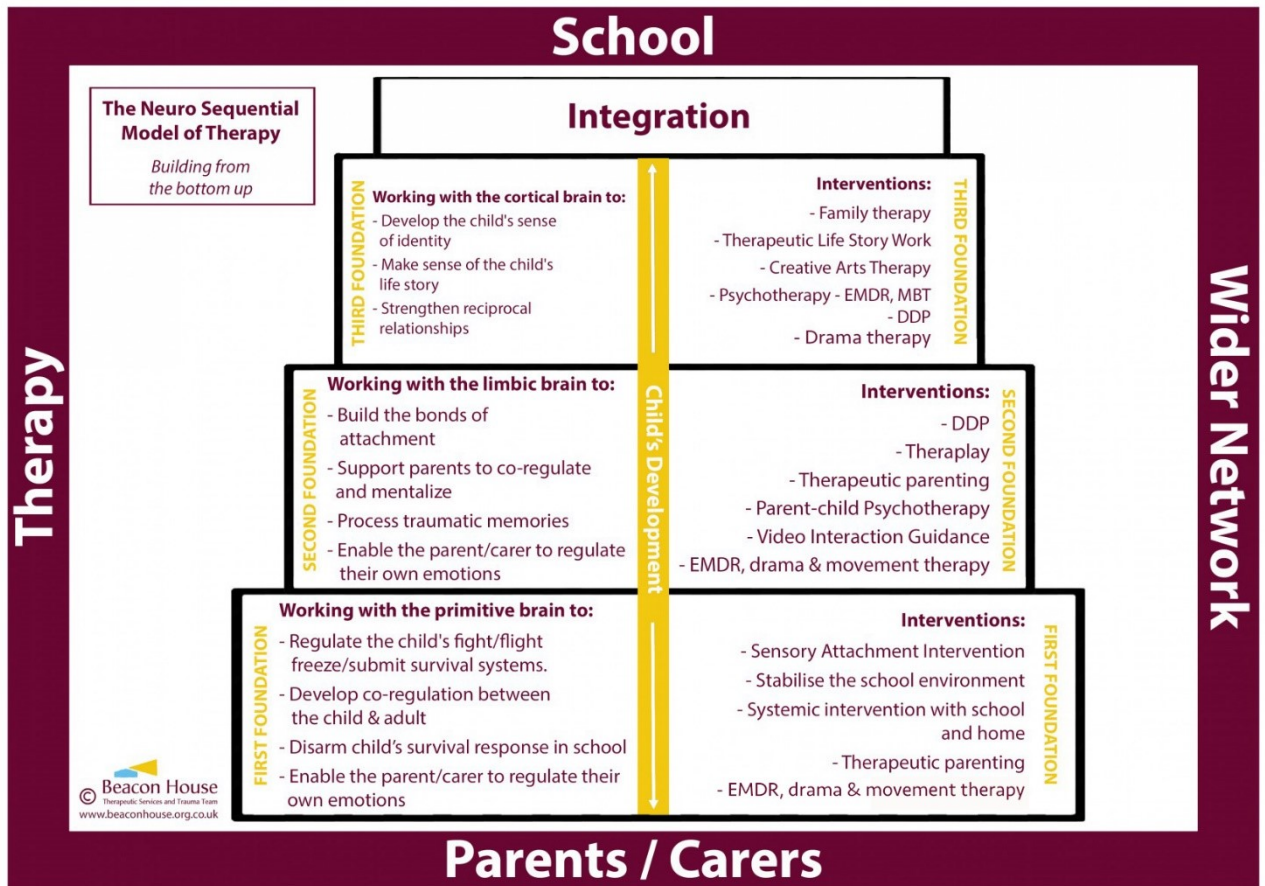
8.0 Adoption Support Assessment, Review and Closure Process:

- 8.1 Permanency Support Social Worker undertakes a visit(s) to complete an adoption support assessment of need. For families who are placed outside of the regional permanency partnership, consideration will be given as to how the assessment is physically completed.
- 8.2 During the first visit to the family, the Permanency Support Social Worker will need to discuss the Agreement & Consent Form in further detail and for the family to agree and sign the document before the assessment commences.
- 8.3 As part of the assessment, the Permanency Support Social Worker will aim to see the child(ren) if this is deemed appropriate and with parental consent to ascertain their wishes and feelings to document this within the assessment.
- 8.4 Adoption support assessment of need and support plan is completed by the Permanency Support Social Worker and signed off by Permanency Support Team Manager and shared with the family within a maximum of **40 working days** from start of initial visit. This may be completed sooner for less complex needs. If timescales are not met Permanency Support Team Manager to comment in the assessment document the reasons for this.

- 8.5 In devising the adoption support plan Together4Children are aware that the most valuable support for adopters comes from other adopters. Hence, the promotion of peer support options will be paramount throughout this support plan so that everyone will have the opportunity to be a part of the adopter community.
- 8.6 Furthermore, Together4Children will apply the sequential model of therapeutic intervention to identify the right support at the right time. Consideration will be given to ensuring non-specialist elements of the core offer are in place before considering specialist therapeutic interventions. Where specialist interventions are recommended, consideration should be given to whether the intervention will be delivered internally or externally.
- 8.7 If an external therapeutic provider is needed, funding for this will need to be applied via the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), please refer to the ASF Policy and Procedure regarding guidance on this process.

9.0 What is a Sequential Model of Therapeutic Support?

- 9.1 Together4Children will work within the parameters of the neuro-sequential model of therapy. The model describes how developmental interventions need to be offered to a child in the right order at the right time through a graduated approach.
- 9.2 Hence, children who have experienced trauma, attachment disruptions and other complex factors require an intervention at the level of the primitive brain. Stability and security need to be achieved first before any of the specialist therapeutic interventions from the second and third foundation (see diagram below) can be considered.
- 9.3 Diagram of Sequential Model of Therapeutic Support:



10.0 Support Plan Review Process:

- 10.1 The first review of the support plan will take place within **three months** from the adoption support assessment of need being completed unless already closed before this date.
- 10.2 The review between the adopters, Permanency Support Social Worker and/or provider of service involved with the family will take place during a face to face meeting and/or via telephone.
- 10.3 The support plan review document will look at the actions identified within the support plan regarding whether any progress has been made, impact upon the family and any changes required/future actions needed to the support plan.
- 10.4 The Permanency Support Social Worker will complete the review document and Permanency Support Team Manager will then sign off, which will have Team Managers decision. Permanency Support Social Worker will share with adopter(s) within **7 working days**.
- 10.5 Subsequent reviews will take place at a minimum of every **6 months** until case requires closure. Permanency Support Team Manager will then sign off, which will have Team

Managers decision clearly recorded. The Permanency Support Social Worker will share with adopters within **7 working days**.

11.0 Process of Closure:

11.1 Support services can be closed at any point during the following processes:

- Following completion of adoption support assessment of need
- Updated assessment and/or review of support plan
- Once identified that the family no longer require ongoing support from the Permanency Support Team

11.2 Closure form is completed by Permanency Support Social Worker and agreed and signed off by Permanency Support Team Manager.

11.3 A closure letter is sent out to adopter(s) along with a service feedback form within **2 working days**.

11.4 Where a family is receiving a therapeutic service from an external agency or provider and no other support is required from the Permanency Support Team, in these situations the family can be 'closed' but must remain subject to review at a minimum of **6 monthly intervals**. Once therapeutic work has been completed and the review concludes that there is no other identified support need, the family will then become closed and actions in 12.2 and 12.3 is undertaken by the Permanency Support Social Worker.

12.0 Request for Transfer:

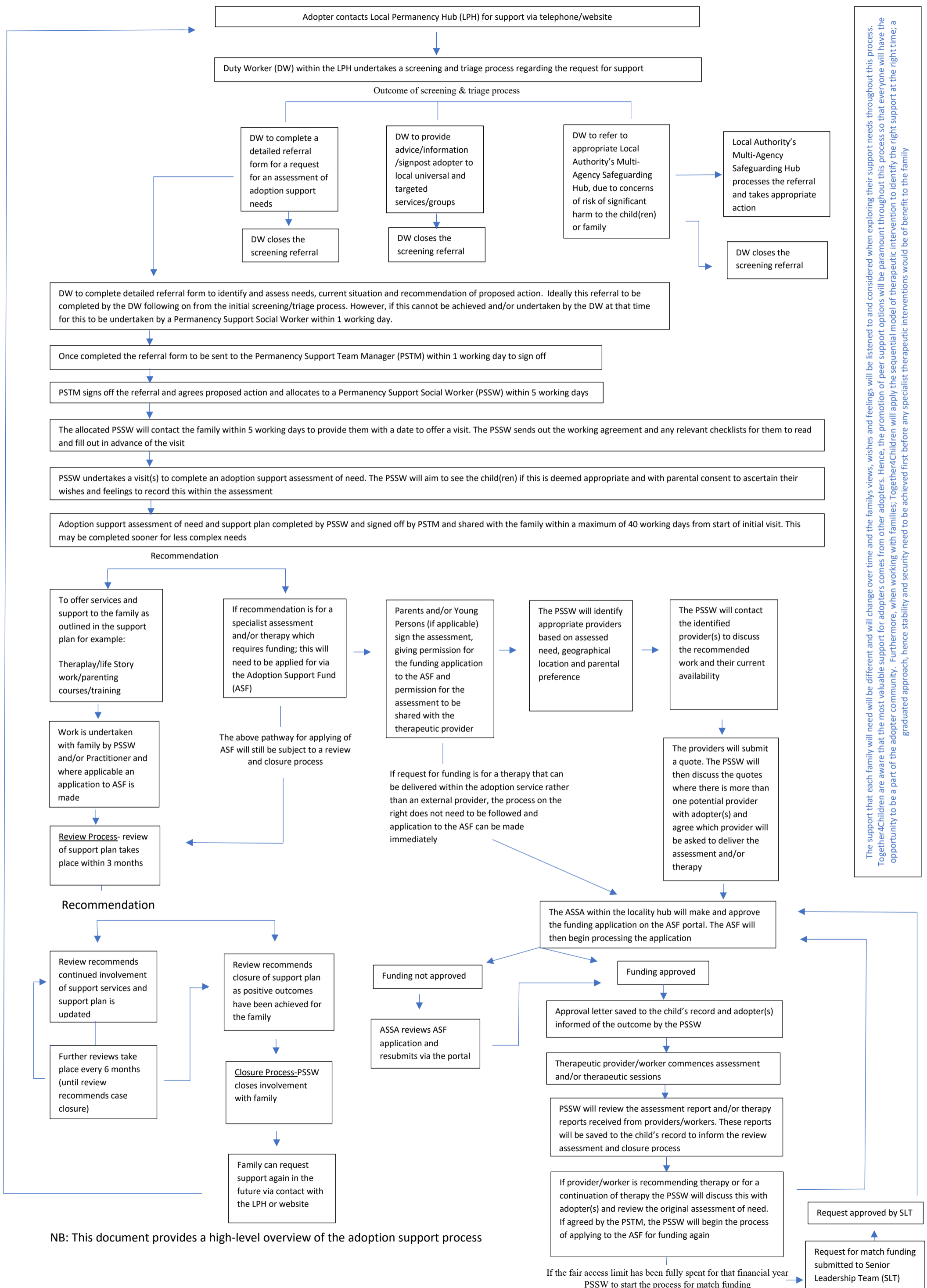
12.1 There will be instances where an assessment has concluded that the family needs to be referred to other services within the appropriate Local Authority to ensure that the right support and interventions are in place for that particular adopted child and family.

12.2 Threshold for referral will be met where there is:

- Likelihood of significant harm (S47 Children Act 1989)
- Potential for imminent family breakdown and risk of child returning to Local Authority Care
- Meets the criteria set out in the appropriate Local Authorities Thresholds Framework (Children & Families)
- Meets the threshold criteria for Children's Disability Service
- Statutory Support Services (Additional to Adoption Support)

12.3 In situations, where the Permanency Support Social Worker is of the view the above threshold is met this should be discussed with Permanency Support Team Manager and agreed. The Team Manager's decision should be clearly recorded on the child's record.

- 12.4 Requests for an alternative service should be made using the current forms and referral processes for each Locality Permanency Hub accompanied by a copy of the adoption support assessment of need if applicable, along with chronology or any other supporting documents.
- 12.5 Stoke-on-Trent's process is to complete a MARF and send to the Safeguarding and Referral Team. Staffordshire's process is to complete a Request for Service form and send it to the First Response Team and the relevant safeguarding team. JAS complete a MARF and send to Compass and/or First Point of Contact.
- 12.6 This request and any advice provided should be clearly recorded on the child's record.
- 12.7 If a referral is not accepted:
- The Permanency Support Social Worker will save a copy of the completed referral form detailing the outcome to the child's record.
 - The Permanency Support Team Manager will discuss the outcome of this decision with the Principle Manager, Central Permanency Hub or the relevant SLT Adoption Lead for T4C for their decision/oversight.
- 12.8 Should a referral be accepted to the identified service it is the expectation that all services and agencies will work together to meet the needs of the child(ren). The Permanency Support Team will not hold the lead responsibility for statutory work under the Children Act 1989.
- 12.9 To be noted in addition that the Permanency Support Teams do not have a statutory duty to respond to or manage children's needs that fall under S17 and S47 Children Act 1989.
- 13.0 Roles and Responsibilities:**
- 13.1 All staff are responsible for following the guidance within this policy. Managers are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- 13.3 Please refer to flowchart below for high-level overview of the adoption support process.



The support that each family will need will be different and will change over time and the families views, wishes and feelings will be listened to and considered when exploring their support needs throughout this process. Together4Children are aware that the most valuable support for adopters comes from other adopters. Hence, the promotion of peer support options will be paramount throughout this process so that everyone will have the opportunity to be a part of the adopter community. Furthermore, when working with families; Together4Children will apply the sequential model of therapeutic intervention to identify the right support at the right time; a graduated approach, hence stability and security need to be achieved first before any specialist therapeutic interventions would be of benefit to the family

NB: This document provides a high-level overview of the adoption support process