

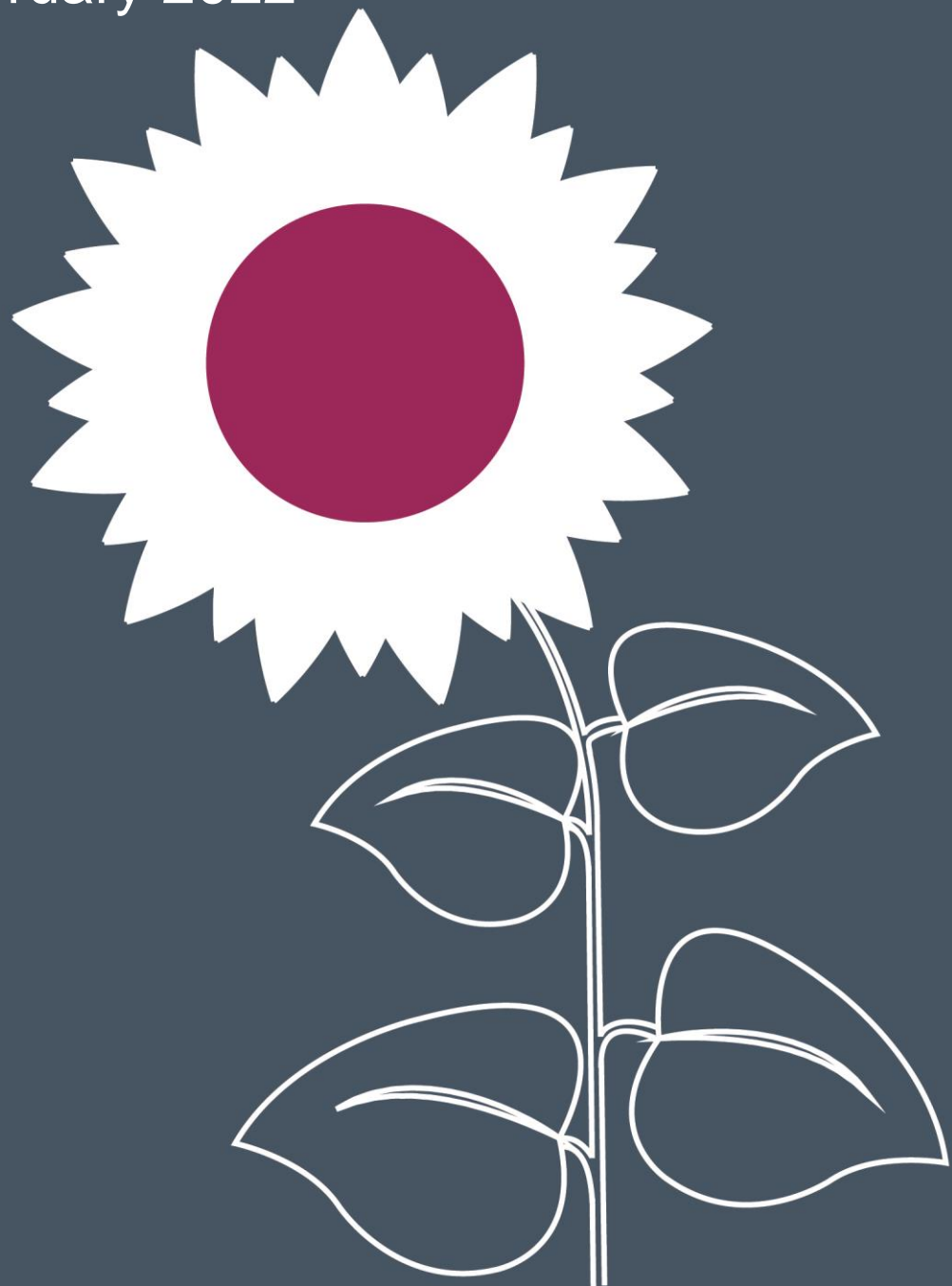


City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Deciding if a child should be placed for adoption

Tri x 5_2_26 February 2021

Review February 2022



See also Permanence policy and care planning procedures 2011

Statutory Guidance Chapter 2 – Deciding if a child should be placed for adoption

NMS 1 – The child’s wishes and feelings

Desired outcome:

- That children know their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; know how to obtain support and make a complaint.

NMS 2 – Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity

Desired outcome:

- That children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

NMS 5 – Promoting good health and wellbeing

Desired outcome:

- That children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services they need to meet their health needs.

1 Planning for permanence

- 1.1 The decision that adoption is the plan for the child is vested in the Agency Decision Maker alone if court is involved in the plan for the child. If the court is not involved, if the child is relinquished for example, the Adoption Panel makes the recommendation which is then considered by the Agency Decision Maker. The child’s need for permanence will be considered when a child is about to be relinquished for adoption or is looked after. When adoption is being considered as the plan for the child, the key duties of the adoption agency are:

- Providing information and counselling to the child and parents (and other family members, as appropriate).
 - Gathering information (including on the wishes and feelings of the child and parents) needed to complete the Child Permanence Report (CPR)
 - Presenting the report to panel or providing the report to the Agency Decision Maker.
 - Making a decision following the panel's recommendation.
- 1.2 When the possibility of adoption has been identified as a possible permanence option, the parents must be made aware of this possibility and provided with information about its significance and information about the support available.
- 1.3 When adoption is being considered as part of a parallel plan before or during care proceedings, the social worker should ensure that the required tasks are completed so that the adoption panel or Agency Decision Maker and court timetable dovetail to prevent any unnecessary delay for the child.
- 1.4 Tasks include:
- Arranging a care planning meeting which should include a representative from the adoption team.
 - Ensuring a statutory review is arranged to confirm the care plan.
 - Making a provisional Agency Decision Maker or panel booking with the panel coordinator.
 - Ensuring the health assessment is undertaken or updated.
 - Gathering the information required for the completion of the CPR including background information on the parents and information on siblings.
 - Considering whether there are any members of the birth family or network who will be able to meet the child's need for permanence.
- 1.5 When assessments have been ordered by the court, there should be agreement obtained by all those involved as to which assessments are to be completed before the case can be referred to the or Agency Decision Maker.

2 Setting up the child's adoption case record

- 2.1 Once a decision has been made at the child's statutory review or, in the case of a child relinquished for adoption, as soon as the local authority is considering the parent's request that an adoption plan be followed, an adoption case record is to be set up. Ref: Adoption Records

3 Counselling and informing the child

- 3.1 As far as is reasonably practicable and taking account of the child's age and understanding, the child must be provided with counselling and information about adoption.
- 3.2 The work undertaken with the child should take account of the child's individual needs including language and any communication or learning impairments. Specialist advice will be taken as necessary.

4 Counselling and informing the child's family and others (paras 22-34)

- 4.1 Independent support will be offered to the birth parents through the adoption support service. This part of the service is independent of the team who are responsible for the child's case. If the service is declined this will be recorded on the adoption case record. Where there are exceptional circumstances which make it inappropriate to use the local adoption support service to provide independent support, for example because of language issues, or where the young person is looked after consideration may be given to the spot purchasing of independent support through a registered adoption support agency.
- 4.2 Access to independent support may be extended to anyone who we as an agency consider relevant, for example birth siblings or grandparents.
- 4.3 If the birth parents wish to conceal child's existence or the plan for adoption from their wider family, the social worker should seek legal advice.

5 Counselling fathers without parental responsibility (paras 35-43)

- 5.1 If mother does not wish to disclose the identity of father without parental responsibility, the social worker should seek legal advice. The paramount consideration will be the best interests of the child.

6 Relinquishment for adoption of children under six weeks (paras 44-48)

- 6.1 If a request is made to the Front Door and Assessment Team (FDA) for a parent to relinquish a child for adoption, a referral will be completed for an assessment by the Children and Safeguarding Team in discussion with the Adoption Service. It is important that the Children and Safeguarding Team confirm that the child is being relinquished and that this is the view of the mother and father of the child if known. Once it has been clearly ascertained that the plan for adoption will progress, the Children and Safeguarding Team will transfer the case to the Adoption service who will complete the work necessary to present the child to adoption panel; provide advice and counselling to the parents and begin to identify a potential adoptive family.
- 6.2 Consent to placement for adoption or to the making of an adoption order cannot be given if a child is under 6 weeks old.
- 6.3 Unless an application for a Care Order has been made for a child under 6 weeks old, the parent(s) should be asked whether they are prepared to agree to the child being placed for adoption and to sign an agreement to that effect which will be kept on the child's case record.
- 6.4 Advance notice should be sent to CAFCASS that the parent has requested their child be placed for adoption, and formal written consent to place the child for adoption should be sought from the parent(s) through CAFCASS after the child has reached the age of 6 weeks.
- 6.5 Additional counselling and written information should be provided which makes it clear:
- The parent retains full parental responsibility until they give their consent to placement after the child reaches the age of 6 weeks or a placement order or adoption order is made.
 - Contact with the child may only take place with the agreement of the agency
 - They may request return of the child unless a care order, placement order or adoption order is in effect.

7 Convening an extraordinary panel to consider the plan for a relinquished infant.

- 7.1 When there has been adequate time to prepare and the mother and, if appropriate, the child's father, still state a wish, following the child's birth, to relinquish the child for adoption, the plan should be referred to adoption panel as soon as possible. If possible, an extraordinary panel will be convened as soon as possible after the child's birth.
- 7.2 Where appropriate concurrent planning or fostering to adopt may be considered to enable the child to be placed at the earliest opportunity with adopters who can also foster the child. Where this occurs the birth parents must be informed that the child is being placed in such arrangements.
- 7.3 If the parent or parents, after careful counselling, agree to the placement of the child with an identified family or any family chosen by the agency and a match has been identified for the child pre-birth a match could be heard at the same panel. In these circumstances it will be essential that the prospective adopters fully understand the risks and uncertainties involved.
- 7.4 The parent should be asked to sign an agreement to place a child under six weeks form. This does not apply to any case where care proceedings are in train.
- 7.5 After the child is six weeks old, the social worker should arrange for the birth parent to give formal consent to the child being placed for adoption.

8 Consent to the placement for adoption

- 8.1 A parent may consent to the placement for adoption of a child under section 19 of the Act. This consent may be to placement with any prospective adopter chosen by the agency or too a specific prospective adopter. A parent may also give advance consent to the making of an adoption order.
- 8.2 There is a joint protocol with CAF/CASS for obtaining consent under section 19 or 20.