

ATV: Family Finding Practice Guidance

Referral:

Step 1; which authority is the referral from	Oxfordshire County Council	Swindon Borough Council	Reading (BFfC) West Berks Bracknell Forest RBWM (AfC) Wokingham
Step 2	Locate the child on LCS	Add the child to LCS and request restriction	Add the child to LCS and request restriction
Step 3	Upload the referral on to the child's LCS file and make a case note stating that the referral has been received.	Upload the referral on to the child's LCS file and make a case note stating that the referral has been received.	Upload the referral on to the child's LCS file and make a case note stating that the referral has been received.
Step 4	Assign the case to "Awaiting Allocation O S Family Finding"*	Assign the case to "Awaiting Allocation O S Family Finding"*	Assign the case to "Awaiting Allocation W Family Finding"*
Step 5	Email Caroline Nicholls (and Hannah Ferry) notifying them of referral.	Email Hannah Ferry (and Caroline Nicholls) notifying them of referral.	Email Claire Corcoran and Jo Neale notifying them of the referral.
Step 6	Move the email into "Dealt with" folder of the duty inbox, and record on handover sheet.	Move the email into "Dealt with" folder of the duty inbox, and record on handover sheet.	Move the email into "Dealt with" folder of the duty inbox, and record on handover sheet.

LCS:

- **Ensure that family finding steps are regularly recorded (including PPM mins or case notes of actions) on the case file to provide evidence of the family finding work undertaken.**
- **Significant decisions such:**
- **First contact with child's social worker**
- **Dates of ADM and P/O**
- **Family Finding Court Report being filed**
- **Matching criteria (consider support plan needs)**

- **Permanency Planning Meetings**
- **If applicable – matching hub referral/ formulation and review meetings**
- **Linking/shortlisting meeting**
- **Matching meeting (choosing a preferred family)**
- **Support plan- including finances; additional support; CATCH; ASF**
- **ATV adopters, check that the child is listed under “Considered children” in the adopter’s hub. Non ATV adopters – create the adopters on LCS – please see guidance.**
- **For non-OCC children, please ensure that the file is restricted.**
- **If applicable referral to Anchor/Attach**

[National Practice Standards for Matching | Adoption England](#)

Allocation:

- Begin your Family Finding Plan – this is a working document to be completed throughout your involvement
- Read all relevant paperwork on the child; CPRs, medical, Carer’s Report etc. You may need to go into the ATV Panels folder to copy these documents, and then upload them to LCS.
- Make contact with the allocated social worker to discuss matching criteria. Start the Adoption Placement Report (APR) – enter the matching needs/factors at this stage.
- Make contact with the foster carer and arrange a visit to them and the child to begin getting to know them. Gather videos and photos of child
- Regular Placement Planning Meetings should be being held by the Local authority until a placement is found. In some authorities, ATV take over this responsibility after ADM is made, these are then called Family Finding meetings.
nb: Check that CPRs and adoption Medicals are kept up to date (*CPR’s updated 6 monthly; and Medicals 1st adoption medical MUST be in person; reviews can be paper exercise; Ox/Swin children 6 months for under 2s, 12 months for 2 years+ **from the date of the examination.** Berkshire children 6 months for under 5s, 12 months for 5 years+ **from the date of the examination.***)
- Discussion regarding ongoing family time should be had sooner rather than later and reviewed throughout.

 <https://oxfordshirecountycouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/OG-ALLATVSTAFF/Shared%20Documents/Post%20Adoption%20Contact/Process%20for%20contact.docx?d=w89b80614efd341a890da12286d7add42&csf=1&web=1&e=ZpaBOc>

- If direct contact is being suggested, ideally funding should be secured from LA resource panel or similar, by matching panel. This is the responsibility of the children's social worker.

Profiling:

- Draft a profile of the child, include good quality photos (consider and discuss with your manager if professional photographs are needed after 3 months of family finding) and video clips. Include as much information as possible.
- Review the spreadsheet of approved and waiting adopters- using the child's matching criteria identify 2-3 families who meet the child's needs and who have been waiting the longest; then contact the families linkworker to discuss;

<https://oxfordshirecountycouncil.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/OG-ALLATVSTAFF/Shared%20Documents/Adopters/Adopter%20Tracking/Approved%20and%20Stage%20%20Adopters%202023-24.xlsx?d=w045c8809035747db9ac184a094ddecda&csf=1&web=1&e=vHn11g>

- For children over age 2 or with additional needs, or part of a sibling group create a Linkmaker profile. Pre-Placement Order this needs to be available to **professionals only** in ATV. Lauren Bathe, Hannah Adams or Victoria Tocock can assist with this. Once the Placement Order has been granted, if appropriate, the profile can "go live" to ATV adopters. For very young children where there are likely to be many ATV adopters interested, the profile will only be added once a manager agrees.
- For children over age 2 or with additional needs, or part of a sibling group present the child at the Marvellous Matching Meeting and circulate the profile to workers in ATV.

Ongoing family finding:

- Review of post adoption contact
- Family finding meetings/Permanency Planning Meetings should be held approx. 6 weekly – updates on child and family finding; updating matching criteria- between family finder and child's social worker; case note on LCS of this meeting. Regular contact with the child's social worker is really important.
- Consider referral to Matching Hub – consistently considering support plan including financial; therapeutic; practical and emotional

- Regularly update the child's profile including photos and videos linkmaker showing the child's personality and likes (you can discuss with manager using professional photos)
- Consider profiling events, discuss with social worker whether a referral to this would be appropriate.
- If there is an upcoming ATV Play Day, discuss with social worker whether a referral to this would be appropriate.
- Consider other national events; other forms of advertising on social media discuss with your manager whether this would be appropriate.

Choosing a family:

- For a child who is under 2 years old, without complex needs, you need to consider the 2-3 families (that meet the child's matching criteria) that have been waiting the longest. To do this, look at the Excel spreadsheet "Approved and Stage 2 Adopters" on Teams. Please enter in details/dates into the columns of the families that you are considering. For our priority children (children over 2 years of age, sibling groups, children with complex needs,) you do not need to do this step.
- For an older, more complex child, or siblings (where Link Maker has been used) Collate expressions of interest and PARs. Respond to messages on LM in a timely manner, if you are on leave you can ask someone else to do this (FSWs for example). Relevant recording on LCS – use first names of adopters
- As family finder, you shortlist to 2 preferred PARs and share these with the allocated social worker. Remember to keep your matching criteria in the forefront.
- Family finder to have a conversation with the chosen adopter link workers to gain a brief bit of an overview as to whether the adopters would be a suitable match (to inform shortlisting meeting).
- If, after exploring every potential match within ATV, you cannot find a suitable match, and discussion with your supervisor, you can seek permission to profile the nationally. To do this, you email Teresa Rogers with a brief summary of family finding and current needs of the child and copy your manager in.

- Hold a Shortlisting meeting. This meeting does not need to have a manager present, but it is expected that discussion with both CSW and FF managers has occurred in supervisions/discussions outside. To include reasons why the identified families are being considered. The strengths and vulnerabilities of each family and whether they meet all of the matching criteria. Reasons for chosen family to be visited.
If there is contentious decision making, consider inviting a manager or senior practitioner to chair.
- The family finder notifies the adopter's link worker and then shares the relevant documents with them (CPR, medical and carer's report) if this hasn't already happened. CPR's should only be shared with adopters before the shortlisting meeting if have they are complex children. The adopters then have some time to read all of this information and discuss with their worker.
- Family finder to also notify the link worker of the other family who was **not** chosen (with any constructive feedback). Please remember to update the spreadsheet also, as this helps other family finders be aware of who is and who is not available.
- Suggestion: book matching meeting with professionals within 1 week of the family finding visit
- A family finding visit takes place. This is in the adopter's home (if the adopters live a considerable distance away, a virtual information sharing meeting could happen first), the family finder, the allocated social worker and the adopter's social worker are in attendance.
- **Matching meeting:** This meeting needs to include the CSW manager as the LA need to lead the decision to progress to panel or not. This meeting can be chaired by an ATV manager or senior practitioner (not the family finder). If the placement is Interagency – ATV manager to chair this meeting.
- Support Plan be considered; including matching hub. Anchor/Attach; financial; review of post adoption contact
- Book panel (aim for this to take no longer than 8 weeks following the decision to progress the match). To do this, email Carol Saunders or Antonia Webb.
**Berkshire children must attend Berkshire panel.*
- Book 5 hour slot in managers diary, 4-5 weeks before panel date, to QA APR and family finding plan. This is your responsibility to meet this deadline and if this is not possible, it is your responsibility to discuss with your manager and make a plan.

Panel:

- Book a Progress to Panel meeting 6 weeks before panel date – this is to ensure that all paperwork is on track (including important checks such as medicals etc). This includes family finder and child’s social worker. Consider including the foster carers supervising social worker. If particularly complex, consider a manager to chair to oversee.
- Prepare paperwork – make sure that the Adoption Medical for the child is in date and signed by the medical advisor. *Ox/Swin children 6 months for under 2s, 12 months for 2 years+ **from the date of the examination.** Berkshire children 6 months for under 5s, 12 months for 5 years+ **from the date of the examination.***
- CPR will need to be update (allocated social worker has responsibility to update the medical and the CPR).
- Carer’s report needs updating (SSW responsibility).
- Adoption Placement Report and Family Finding Report to be completed (family finder to complete, with additions and review from managers and social worker). Updated photos needed; To send to manager to QA and changes made; then send to adopters, sw and manager for comments and signatures required; Adopters should have 10 days to read and make comments before submitting to panel
- Adopters link worker is responsible for preparing and providing the family finder with all relevant adopter approval paperwork and any pertinent updates that can be submitted to panel admin as a bundle. Please refer to readiness checker
- Arrange a Life Appreciation Day/activities – adopters to meet the foster carer, medical advisor, nursery/school worker, family time workers and any other professionals important to the child.
- This may include a “Meet Before Match” meeting between adopters and child – awaiting updated AE guidance.
- Preparing the child for Meet before Match/ move to adoption– social worker needs to prepare child with foster carer- Discuss the script the child will be told- so everyone is clear and adopters can use same language in their welcome books etc. Family finder can assist by suggesting books and resources – Order Pip and Zaz. You can order books via: AdoptionbooksfromATV@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- Check that the wish you well contact has been arranged - this needs to be arranged by the social worker and occur before panel (ideally 4 weeks before panel).

- Family finder to submit panel paperwork 2 weeks prior to panel, this needs to include the signatures of social workers and managers. (If an ATV match, only one ATV manager needs to sign this off).
- Family finder to draft the introductions plan.
- Arrange the Adoption Placement Planning Meeting – manager or senior practitioner to chair and family finder to send out invitations. Prepare the agenda template.
- Attend Matching Panel. It is best practice for the FF to attend Matching Panel. It is a requirement for the Child's SW or their line manager, if they are not available, to attend panel. The adopters link worker or their manager must also be in attendance for panel to form a recommendation. Following this, if panel recommends the match, distribute the draft introductions plan to all parties.

Placement:

- Adoption Placement Planning Meeting and introductions reviews to be held. These should be chaired by an ATV manager or senior practitioner (can be family finder). Family finder to make any changes to the Introductions Plan and ensure that the final meeting minutes are sent to all attendees, the adopters need to sign and return the minutes, which then need to be emailed to Permanence Support.
- Ensure that the letterbox referral has been completed. Good practice is that this is complete by the time of the first Adoption Review.
- For children placed **outside ATV**, family finders need to continue to attend the Adoption Reviews to ensure that the IRO is aware of the APR (and support plan), and that all actions from the Placement Planning Meeting are being dealt with – for example, Later Life Letter and life story book. *Family finder to notify the social worker and link worker that if the child is a Berkshire child, an updated Adoption Medical will be needed for the making of an Order.*
- Complete the LCS form "Family finding for a child outside LA" as far as you can. This will then sit in your worktray until the Adoption Order is granted.
- The adopter's social worker should notify once the Adoption Order has been granted.
- Please complete the LCS form and then close the case (there is separate guidance for this).



- Family finder (for non-OCC children) is responsible for creating the child's new LCS record in their adopted name – this is not to be linked to their birth name record, it is for the purpose of Permanence Support).