

Adoption Support

Procedures

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Adoption Support includes any support likely to be required for an adoptive family both pre and post Order to endure through to adulthood and is applicable to both existing and new situations.

Adoption@Heart must make arrangements as part of their adoption service for the provision of a range of adoption support services.

Adoption@Heart does not have to provide the services themselves but must have made arrangements for services to be provided by voluntary or other agencies such as Health or Education.

1. **Duty to Provide Information Concerning Adoption Support**

Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014), Adoption@Heart has a duty to provide information on adoption support services to:

* Anyone contacting the service to request information about adopting a child;
* Anyone informing the service that (s)he wishes to adopt a child;
* Any parent of an adopted child within the area who requests the information;
* Any parent of an adopted child within the area of whom the service is/becomes aware (e.g. where a parent rings about a SEN assessment and it becomes clear that the child is adopted).

Information must be provided about:

* The full range of adoption support services available through Adoption@Heart.  This includes, but is not limited to, therapeutic services, assistance in relation to contact arrangements,
* The right to request an assessment for adoption services (at any time);
* The address and telephone number of the service’s adoption support Services Adviser;
* Contact details for [first4adoption](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/)and the local web-based information service which provides information about adoption;
* Priority school admissions (where relevant). Details can be found at [**School Admission of Children Adopted from Local Authority Care, GOV.UK website**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admission-of-children-adopted-from-local-authority-care);
* The entitlement to early education from the age of two.
* How to make a complaint, under the Adoption@Heart complaints procedure
* Any other relevant services provided by Adoption@Heart;
* Any other information that Adoption@Heart considers relevant.
* Adoption passport

The following information must also be provided to potential and prospective adopters:

* Details of where to find information about adoption pay and leave. Details can be found at; Adoption [Pay and Leave (GOV.UK website)](https://www.gov.uk/adoption-pay-leave);
* Information about the right to receive a copy of the child's permanence report, including a summary of the medical adviser's report on the health of the child, before the child is placed with them for adoption;
* The entitlement to a life story book and later life letter. This should include who provides the life story book and later life letter, what it includes and what it can be used for.

1. **Examples of Adoption Support**

Adoption support is defined as including:

1. Financial support to adopters, signposting to the relevant local authority for a request for financial support;
2. Priority admission for school places, including academies and free schools;
3. Services to enable groups of adoptive children, adoptive parents and birth parents to discuss matters relating to adoption;
4. Assistance, including mediation, with contact arrangements between adopted children and their birth parents or others with whom they share a significant relationship;
5. Therapeutic services for adopted children;
6. Assistance to adoptive parents and children to support the adoptive family and enable it to continue;
7. Assistance to adoptive parents and children where there is disruption or is at risk of disruption;
8. A range of adoption support services, including access to counselling, information and advice for both adoptive parents and their children, who may have complex needs;
9. Birth parent counselling
10. Advice and information to adopted adults about access to adoption records
11. Assistance with support availability in other local authorities.

**4. When to Assess the Need for Adoption Support**

In relation to adoptions arranged by the service, practitioners must assess the need for adoption support at the following stages of care and permanence planning:

1. When preparing the Prospective Adopter's Report for presentation to the Adoption Panel as to the suitability of prospective adoptive parents to adopt;
2. When considering and preparing the Adoption Placement Report for presentation to the Adoption Panel in relation to the proposed placement of a child with particular prospective adopters.

In relation to placements arranged by the service, adoption must also always be considered at a child's Adoption Reviews following the adoptive placement.

Adoption@Heart must also undertake assessments of need for adoption support at the request of the following:

1. Children who are adopted or their adoptive parents;
2. Children who are placed with prospective adoptive parents

The requirement to assess the need for support is limited to the entitlement to services of the person making the request.

As well as adoptions arranged by Adoption@Heart, children adopted from abroad are entitled to be assessed for therapeutic services and disruption support. It is only where the adoption is by a step parent that there is no requirement to carry out an assessment, although in such cases, counselling, advice and information may be offered as appropriate.

**5. Process of Assessment for Adoption Support**

The assessment should take account of the adoption context and, where the assessment relates to the child, all the developmental needs of the child should be covered including health, education and emotional needs, and contact issues. The relevant education service and health trust should be consulted as necessary.

Assessments of need for adoption support carried out prior to Adoption Panel should be carried out by the family finder and the prospective adopters' social worker as appropriate. Assessments carried out at the time of the child's proposed placement with prospective adopters should be considered at the Matching Meeting and also have the approval of the Adoption support Team Manager prior to being presented to the Adoption Panel with the Adoption Placement Report. At all stages, the Adoption Panel must consider and may give advice on the proposed adoption support and this advice will be considered by the Agency decision maker before making a final decision on the contents of the Adoption Support Plan.

Requests for assessment for adoption support, following placement will be allocated to a social worker in the Adoption Support team to carry out an assessment, with advice from the Adoption Support Family Support Worker as necessary. The assessing social worker will usually need to meet with the person being assessed - where this is a child, the adoptive parents will also need to be involved depending on the age, understanding and wishes of the child.

An assessment will not be required before providing advice and information.

Where an assessment is carried out, a written report of the assessment should be produced and agreed by the Team Manager (Adoption Support).

A copy of the assessment report, once approved, should be sent to the person assessed with notice of the outcome of the assessment, which should state:

1. The person's assessed needs for support;
2. Whether Adoption@Heart proposes to provide adoption support services and if so, what the proposed services are;

Where the person assessed is a child, and it is not appropriate to send the notice to the child, notices should be sent to the adoptive parent or the most appropriate adult.

Where the service proposed is one-off, the notice of the outcome of the assessment will be sufficient to outline what is proposed and a full plan will not be required.

**6. The Adoption Support Plan**

**Contents of Adoption Support Plan**

An Adoption Support Plan should set out clearly:

1. The objectives of the plan and the key services to be provided;
2. The timescales for achieving the plan;
3. Those responsible for implementing the plan and the respective roles of others; what should be provided, when and by whom;
4. The criteria that will be used to evaluate the success of the plan
5. The procedures that will be put in place to review the services to be provided and the plan.

**Consultation with proposed recipients of adoption support**

Once a proposed Adoption Support Plan has the approval of the Team Manager (Adoption Support), a copy should be sent to the proposed recipients of the support, as well as to any party involved in the delivery of the plan.

The recipients of the proposed support should be given 10 working days to consider the proposals and make representations to Adoption@Heart about the proposed plan.  Any representations made should be considered by the Team Manager (Adoption Support), who will amend the draft plan as appropriate and inform the recipients of the outcome of his or her consideration.

**Approval of Adoption Support Plan**

In relation to proposed agency adoptive placements, the proposed Adoption Support Plan will be submitted to the Adoption Panel when the proposed placement of a child with particular prospective adopters is recommended.  The final Adoption Support Plan will be approved, taking into account any advice given by the Adoption Panel.

In relation to other situations in which adoption support is proposed, the Adoption Support Plan will be approved by the Team Manager (Adoption Support).

**Distribution of Adoption Support Plan**

A copy of the final plan should go to all those involved in implementing it, and to the recipients of services (or appropriate adult).  Where the child has an Independent Reviewing Officer a copy should be sent to him or her.

**Reviews of Adoption Support Plan**

Where adoption support is in place prior to an Adoption Order, the Adoption Support Plan should be reviewed at the reviews of the adoptive placement, or at any time if there is a significant change of circumstances, within four weeks of the notification of the change.

After the Adoption Order has been made, the Adoption Support Plan will be reviewed if a change in circumstances is brought to the notice of Adoption@Heart.  The Adoption Support Team Manager will decide on the format and content of any such review, which will depend on the circumstances of the case.  It may refer to only one element of the Plan or be relatively minor in which case an exchange of correspondence may be sufficient.

Where the change of circumstances is substantial, such as a serious change in the behaviour of the child, it may be appropriate to conduct a new assessment of needs involving other parties.

If as a result of a review, whether before or after an Adoption Order has been made, it is proposed to vary or terminate the support, the proposed change must be referred to the Team Manager (Adoption Support) for approval, who may decide to refer the case back to the Adoption Panel for information and advice and then to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision to be made.

Once approved, the person concerned must be notified of the proposed change, together with a copy of the revised Adoption Support Plan in draft.  He or she must then be given 10 working days to make representations on the proposals.

Any such representations should be submitted to the Team Manager (Adoption Support) whose decision as to the final contents of the revised Adoption Support Plan should take into account any representations made.

Notice of the decision must then be sent to the person concerned with reasons and, where appropriate, a copy of the revised plan.

**Urgent Cases**

Where there is an urgent need for support, the support can be provided before a Plan is drawn up, but the above procedure should then be followed as soon as possible.

Notice of the decision must then be sent to the person concerned with reasons and, where appropriate, a copy of the revised plan.

**7. Financial Support**

Financial support is intended to supplement existing means of support available to adoptive parents and the child or children being adopted. Adopters must be given advice of entitlements to employee's rights to leave and pay, benefits, tax credits and allowances, and these should be taken into account by the child’s Local Authority when considering amounts of financial support.