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| *C:\Users\eduawyls\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\5C8NHH4T\BCT_LOGO_P_COLOUR.tif*  **Early Permanence**    **What is Early Permanence? (EP)**  It is a child centred approach which aims to prevent delay and multiple care arrangements for all children who may require permanence via adoption.  It is for babies and young children in our care whose circumstances are such that they have a high risk of being unable to live safely with their birth families. They are likely to be placed for adoption but still have a chance of being cared for by their birth families.  EP is a win-win for children – either they return to their birth family or they have an adoptive family to grow up in as soon as possible. For that reason, EP should always be considered where there is reason to believe that adoption may be necessary and can be considered at any time during the care proceedings process. It includes children relinquished by their parent/s |

**How does it work?**

EP carers have been approved to adopt and will also need to be approved as foster carers by the LA of the child if they are to be placed on an EP basis.

EP means that children will be cared for in a fostering arrangement as a child in care until such time as the final care plan is ratified by the court.

If the Court orders the child’s return to birth family, EP carers will support the child’s return to their parents or wider family, and they will only ever have been foster carers.

If the Court grants a placement order, these carers will then become prospective adopters who then go on to formally be matched and adopt the child/children

**What are the advantages of an EP over Fostering?**

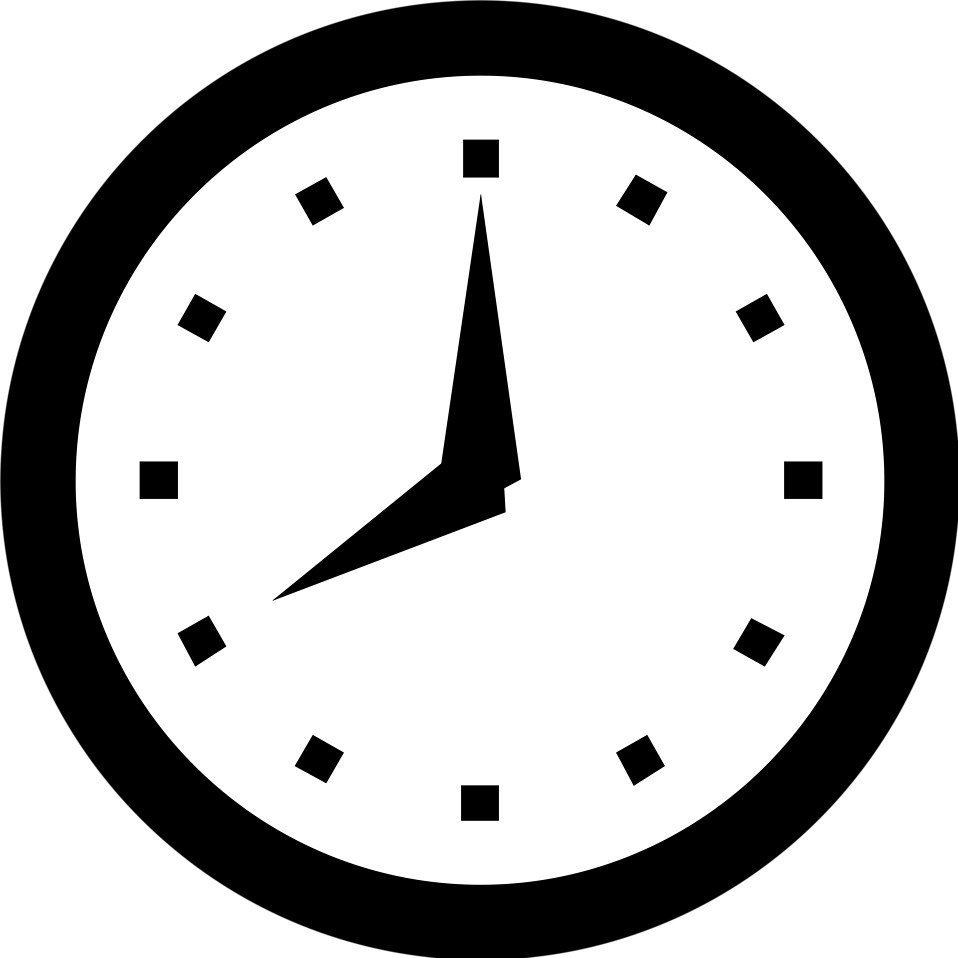
Timescales – enables a child to reside with a potential permanent family at the earliest opportunity

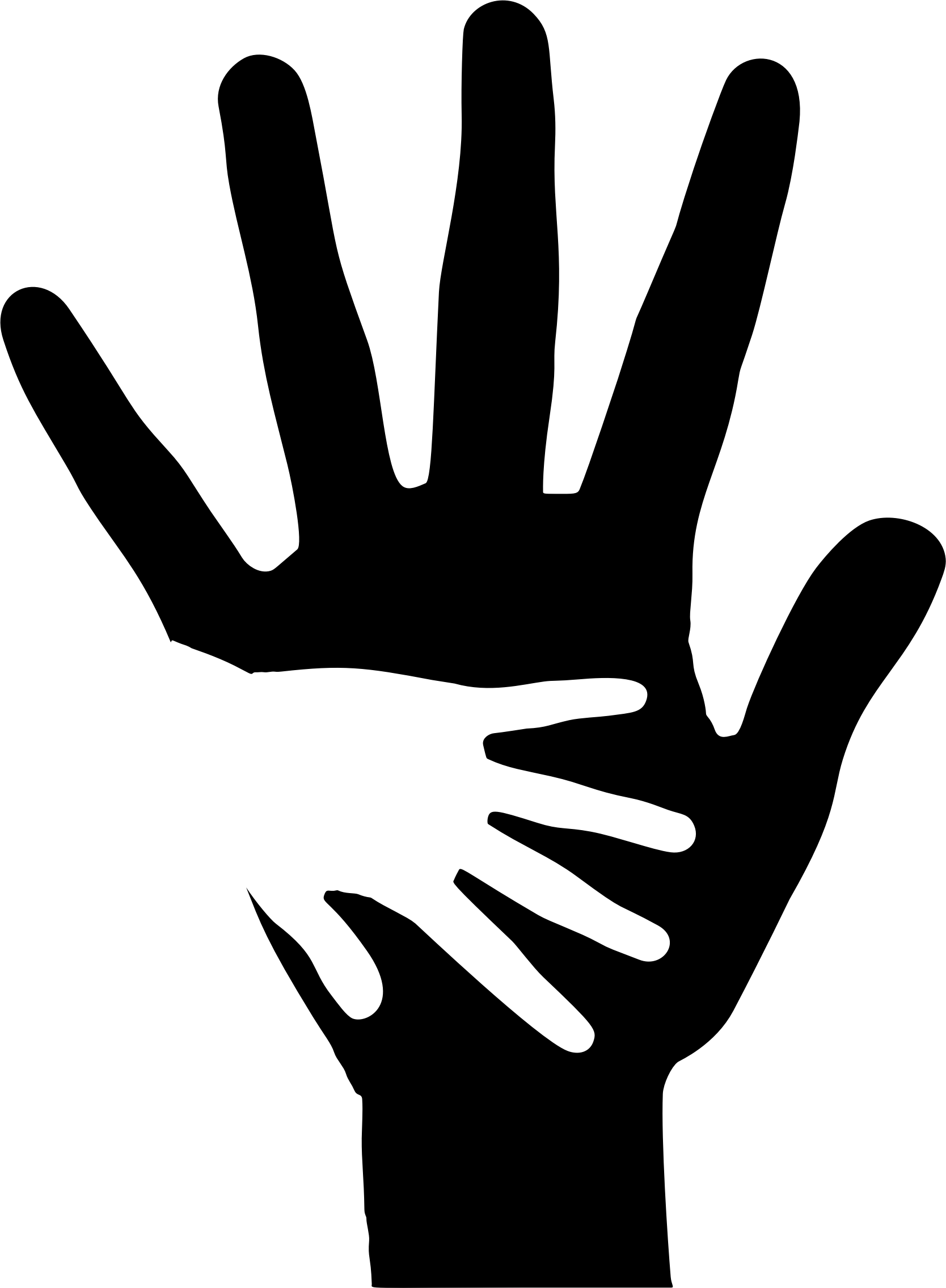
Commitment - an EP carer must be able to commit emotionally to the child whilst accepting the uncertainty regarding the outcome of the final care plan for the child. This means the risk of loss /change and the anxiety associated with this is taken by the carer and not the child

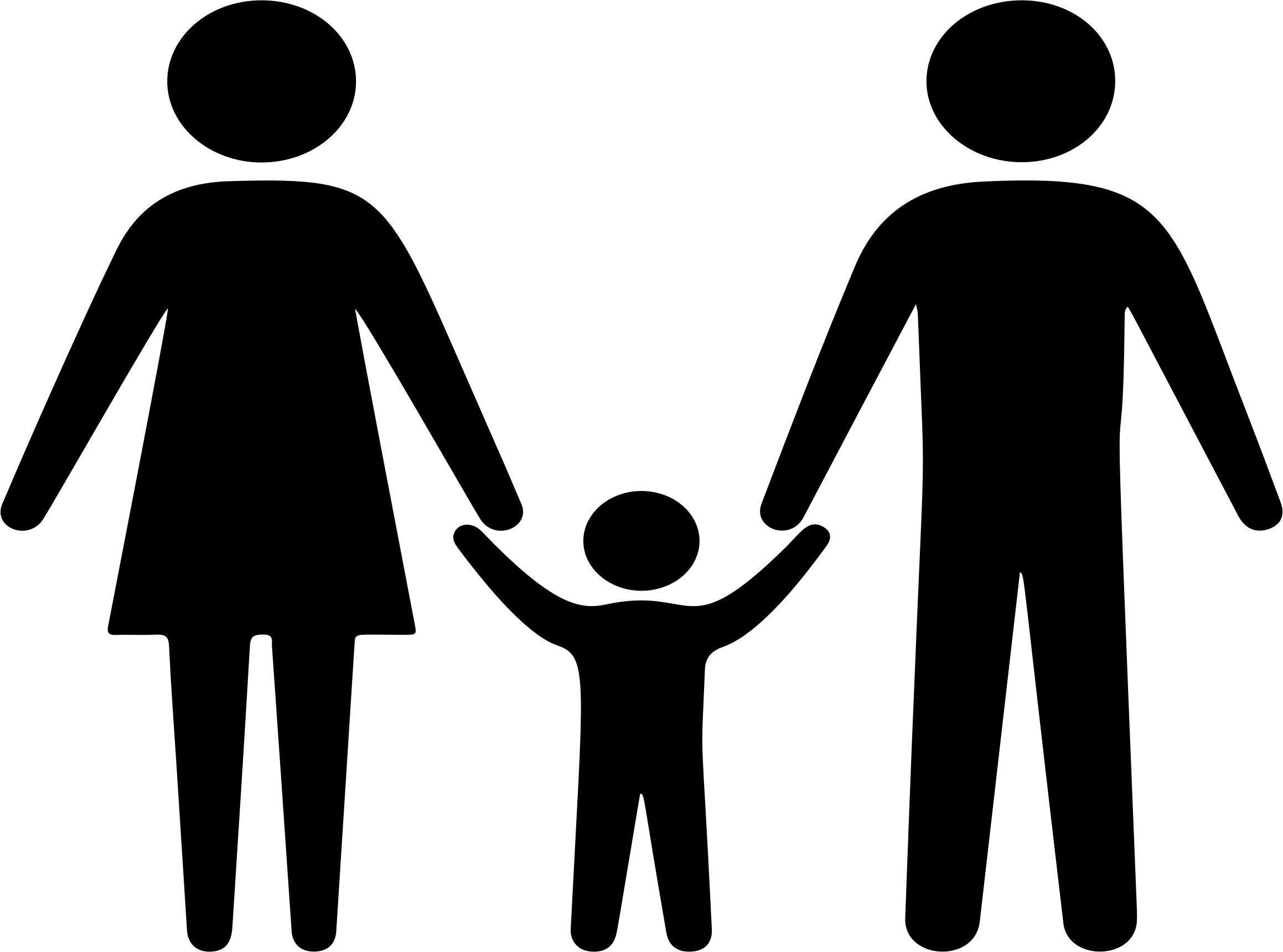
Stability – having one care arrangement for children for the duration of care proceedings and then if adoption is agreed by the courts, for life

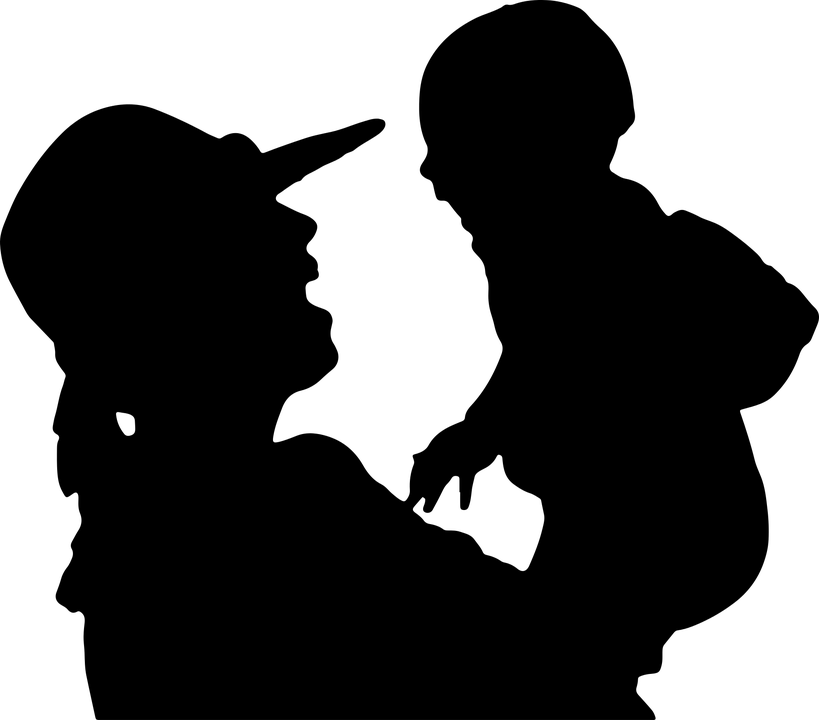
Attachment –EP reduces the number of separations from key attachment figures which could impact on all areas of children’s development

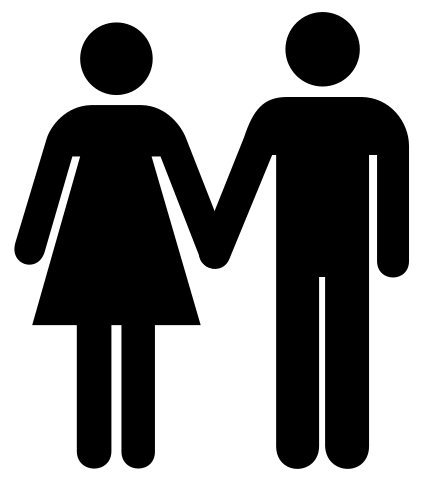
Birth parents will have the benefit of knowing that their children will not need to move if the decision is made that they cannot safely return to their care











**Frequently asked questions**

**I’m not sure how likely the child is to need a plan of adoption?**

Instances where parents have previously had children placed for adoption and there are no signs of significant or sustained change, or where parents have complex mental health, drug and /or alcohol issues, or complex learning difficulties may be appropriate for EP (please refer to the EP screening matrix).

**Am I disadvantaging the family?**

The legal tests for removal of a child from their birth family and whether a care plan for adoption is needed are the same. Under section 22c of the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities are under a duty to place a child in the most appropriate care arrangement available.

Since July 2014 local authorities/Trusts have a duty to consider placing with foster carers who are also approved adopters, if adoption is being considered as the plan. This also pertains when it has been decided the child should be placed for adoption, but the LA is not yet authorised to place the child and there are no suitable family, friends or connected persons. The carers may be dually approved at the outset or may be approved prospective adopters who have been temporarily approved for a named child under regulation 25A Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. EP carers are only acting as foster carers until such time as the Court grants a placement order and the match has been formally agreed by the agency decision maker (ADM).

**How does family time work?**

The EP carers usually bring the children to and from family time if the risk is assessed as safe. This will be supervised by a worker from the Children’s Trust.

**What’s the difference between concurrency and foster to adopt?**

You may hear Early Permanence (EP) also referred to as Concurrency or Fostering for Adoption. EP is an umbrella term which includes both.

Concurrency is where the LA has Plan A – reunification and Plan B - adoption

Fostering for Adoption is usually used where the LA is more confident in a sole plan for adoption.

Whether children’s care arrangements are on a concurrency or foster to adopt basis, carers may find themselves having to support a child returning to birth family or extended family and ultimately only the Courts can decide the final outcome. EP carers are carefully prepared and supported to manage the uncertainty regarding the care planning outcome. In both instances, the foster carer carries the risk of loss rather than the children.

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**Key things to remember**

**Communication** is essential between all parties. The adoption team will have a named support worker to support the carers, liaise with the children’s social worker and provide fostering supervision. Please keep the Adoption Service informed at every step through the care proceedings so that we can keep the EP carers informed. Please remember to invite adoption to any key meetings

**Confidentiality** is crucial. Please remember that the EP arrangement might well become an adoptive placement. This will need to be considered when planning meetings such as Child in Care reviews and information sharing with birth parents

**Sensitivity** – EP carers are putting themselves forward to potentially care for children for life, taking on significant emotional uncertainty so that a child does not have to. This is different from the role of a traditional foster carer who has planned to play an important, but temporary role in a child’s life. EP carers describe the experience as an emotional roller coaster. It is important to avoid over reassurance about possible care planning outcomes. EP carers have to remain focused in the outcomes being uncertain for them whilst win-win for the child.

**Support needs** – there are likely to be times when the carers support needs are heightened e.g. when the final hearing approaches or increase in family time to promote a safe return to parental care. The adoption support worker will provide intensive support during such periods and the EP carers need to be kept up to date with all developments in care proceedings.

**What if I have a child who may fit the criteria?**

1. **Refer to the EP Guidance on TRIX and make use of the EP Screening Tool to assess the viability of an EP placement. Discuss your assessment with your team manager and any other relevant professionals and record your conclusions on the child’s record.**
2. **Contact 0121 303 1010 and request a discussion with the Family Finding Team at the earliest opportunity.**