

ADOPT SOUTH WEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

Adopt South West's vision and the objectives aimed for are to achieve excellent outcomes for children and adults' affected by adoption. Practice standards are an important part of making sure the people we support receive good quality and consistent care and support. Our Quality Assurance Framework's 5 key principles underpin these standards;

- Person Centred.
- Restorative.
- Outcomes Focused.
- Strength-based.
- Reflective.

You can expect us to represent our values in all the work we do;



These standards are based on the notion that our staff:

- Take your wishes and feelings into account.
- Be proactive in supporting a child's positive sense of self through our focus on their social and emotional development.
- Ensure all children's safety and welfare is central in all our work.
- Give you accurate and up to date advice on what to expect from our services.
- Act in a timely manner that promotes best practice and is compliant with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and National Minimum Standards for Adoption.
- Reflect, adapt and change practice when required.
- Strive to be the best and bring out the best in others.

Our work will be delivered in line with these practice standards to ensure that we have a positive impact on the children, young people, adults, and families who we support.

How we will do this:

1. Adoption journey with Prospective Adoptive Parents

- We will ensure that during this process prospective adopters are given correct and up to date advice on what to expect during the assessment process. This will be via an information pack, Advice and support line, information sessions and enquiry discussions.
- We will make a decision within 5 working days of receiving a Registration Of Interest form.
- We aim to complete all Stage 1 Assessments within 2 months, as per the DfE regulations and expectations. If for any reason there is a delay, we will keep the prospective adopters informed.
- We aim to complete all Stage Two Assessments within four months, as per the DfE regulations and expectations. If for any reason there is a delay, we will keep the Prospective Adopters informed.

- If a Prospective Adopter is unsuccessful after the Stage Two Assessment, we will provide them with details of the Independent Review Mechanism (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-review-mechanism>)
- Our aim is that children are linked with adopters within three months of the adopter approval. We will provide a brief profile of you to our Family Finding social workers at the earliest point, before the end of your assessment. Adopters profiles will be uploaded onto Link Maker.
- It is our role to ensure children are adopted as soon as possible and we will support adopters to make their application when right, after 10 weeks of their child/ren being placed with them.
- We will carry out a review of adopter's family finding activity post approval and at 6 monthly intervals.

2. Family Finding

- As Family Finders, we work with the Local Authority of children who have a plan of adoption or where early permanence is being considered. We provide advice and guidance to the Local Authority on adoption and we start to actively family find for a child as soon as a plan of adoption or early permanence is agreed by the Local Authority Agency Decision Maker.
- For early permanence placements, shortlisting, home visiting and proceeding to placement will be discussed individually with prospective adopters and outside of the below timescale. We will ensure we respond quickly to any requests to early permanence placements and ensure children are supported in being placed as quickly as possible.
- We will, place children with Adopt South West families as our aim is to (if safe) keep a child/ren as local as possible. We will extend our search to local and national adoption agencies where this supports the needs of the child.
- We will keep children's information up to date, ensuring regular communication with the Local Authority social worker and review a child's family finding profile every 4 weeks or when there is a significant change.
- We will respond to all expressions of interest from prospective adoptive families within 5 working days and shortlist all expressions of interest in a timely manner ensuring that we communicate progress with prospective adopters' social worker.
- Following shortlisting we will share the prospective adopter report with the child's social worker and escalate to the Local Authority Team Manager where the child's social worker has not responded within a week.
- We will arrange a home visit with the Local Authority social worker and the assessing social worker for the prospective adopters to further discuss whether this is the right child/ren for your family.
- We will discuss the post adoption support offer with you before a link/match with any child is confirmed.
- Following the home visit, if it is agreed by all that this is a good potential match we will arrange a matching meeting within three weeks.
- We will book an Adoption Panel within 8 weeks of the matching meeting.
- We will work with adoptive families, foster families and Local Authority to draft a transition plan to meet the child's individual needs prior to matching panel.
- We will arrange a Placement Planning Meeting to review the Draft Transitions Plan and Adoption Support Plan within 7 days of the Agency Decision Maker approval of the match.
- We will arrange a review of transitions to ensure that the plan is meeting the needs of the child and all involved.

3. Adoption Panel

- We hold regular adoption panels which are chaired by an independent panel chair and includes people with a range of personal and professional experience in adoption. They will consider all the relevant information, ask questions and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. Panel members do not have decision making powers.
- The panel will make a recommendation of;
 - The suitability of prospective adopters to adopt
 - Where the birth parent(s) have given consent (and the matter is not before the Court) for their baby to be placed for adoption
 - Whether a child[ren] should be placed for adoption with particular adopters.
- A social worker will discuss with prospective adopters any themes that the panel will want to discuss with them, at least 24 hours before the panel date.
- The panel recommendation and the minutes will be reviewed by the Agency Decision Maker. Notification of the Agency Decision Maker decision will be given within 10 working days of the adoption panel.

4. Letterbox/Contact

- We will promote and maintain, as identified within the support plan, a child's significant relationships.
- We will record all discussion regarding contact arrangements with all parties on adoption contact records, and we will keep copies of all letters/photos/cards sent through letterbox arrangements for each individual child with a high regard to presentation for inclusion in their adoption records.
- We will pass on letterbox documents within 2 weeks of receipt. Where we have not had contact with a birth family member for more than 6 months, we will check that we have the correct address for receipt of letterbox before passing them on.
- We will contact adopters to remind them that letterbox contact is due to take place, where we have not had contact with adopters in relation to the letterbox contact, we will endeavour to make contact with them.
- We will ensure all parties are informed of all the details they need for direct contacts to take place in a safe and controlled way, and the child's wellbeing will be at the heart of the planning of this contact.

5. Adoption Support (Pre and Post Adoption Order)

- As adoption support workers we understand that you are entitled to contact us at any time to request support or advice. We will consider your requests and provide you with information on appropriate support or advice that are available to you.
- If an assessment of your family's needs is required, our assessment will be focussed on the needs of your child[ren] and we will complete the assessment within 7 weeks of a worker being assigned to complete this.

- When the assessment has been completed, we will let you know our recommendations and provide you with a copy of the assessment.
- The recommendations from the assessment could be: helping you to contact other services that can provide the support you need, making an application to the adoption support fund for therapeutic work, targeted intervention from a worker within Adopt South West.
- If the outcome of the assessment is the recommendation of services from external agencies, we will provide you with these contact details within 2 weeks upon the completion of the assessment.
- If the outcome of the assessment is to make an application to the adoption support fund, then we will complete the application within 4 weeks of completion of the assessment.
- We will review the support plan regularly as identified in your assessment.
- We will inform you in writing at the point of ending our involvement.

6. Adult Adoption Support

- When we receive a referral from you requesting to access your adoption records, we will begin a search for them. This may be within our four Local Authorities or with external adoption agencies across the UK depending on the information provided. If we hold the records within our region (Plymouth, Devon, Torbay or Somerset), we will confirm this with you within 12 weeks.
- When we receive your Birth Information before adoption from the General Register Office, we will allocate a social worker within 12 weeks, who will arrange to meet with you to share your birth information.
- If you were adopted outside the Adopt South West area, then we will undertake a search with external adoption agencies across the UK, however, this can take time and will be dependent on the timescales of the other agencies involved.
- When we receive a referral from an adoption agency requesting access to your adoption records, we will complete an internal search and inform them of the outcome within 6 weeks. If we hold your adoption records then we will aim to allocate a social worker to complete a summary and prepare your records within 6 months.
- When we receive a request from an Intermediary Service requesting a VETO check and view, we aim to respond within 12 weeks.
- We do not provide tracing or intermediary services, however, should you require these we can signpost you to charities and other organisations who might be able help, but they charge fees for these services.

7. Birth Family Counselling

- Please click here for information in relation to birth family support and counselling [Birth families and the adoption process | Support and rights \(adoptsouthwest.org.uk\)](https://adoptsouthwest.org.uk/families-and-the-adoption-process-support-and-rights)

8. Feedback

- We will encourage any forms of feedback to the agency and reflect and learn from the feedback we receive.

This document has been created to provide an easy reference to our standards that we adhere to in the delivery of our adoption services within Adopt South West. They describe the expectations of all social care staff within the agency and must be applied in conjunction with Social Work England Standards and Adopt South West's policies and procedures.

If for any reason we are not or cannot uphold these standards we will communicate with you the reasons why.

Useful links:

Take a look at our website:

[Adopt South West - Can you transform a child's future?](#)

For information on our policies please visit:

[Adopt South West Adoption Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)