[**www.surreycc.gov.uk**](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/)



**Children Referred for Adoption (other than voluntarily placed baby adoptions)**

About this document

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title | **Children referred for adoption (other than voluntarily placed baby adoptions)** |
| Purpose | **To set out the procedure for children referred for adoption** |
| Updated by | **Jill Nancolas** |
| Approved by | **Sheila Jones** |
| Date | **November 2022** |
| Version number | **2018/1** |
| Status | **Approved** |
| Review frequency | **3 yearly** |
| Next review date | **November 2025** |

Version Control

**Document Location:** e.g**.** Surrey County Council Intranet

This document is only valid on the day it is printed

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date Issued:** | **Version** | Summary of Changes | **Created by** |
| 05/02/2018 | 1 of 2018 | Minor updates throughout – job titles, etc. | Jill Nancolas |
| 10/04/2021 | 2 | Minor updates throughout – job titles, etc  Reference to changes in the adoption agency from April 2020 | Jill Nancolas |
| Nov 2022 | 3 | Full review | Jill Nancolas |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Intended Audience**

This document has been issued to the following people for Review (R) Information (I) and Review and Sign off (S).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Position** | **S/R/I** |
| Surrey Children’s Service frontline workers |  | I |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**The Childs Adoption Pathway**

**(other than voluntarily placed baby adoptions)**

It is crucial that permanency is achieved for all children that become looked after and that drift and delay are minimised. It is essential that planning for permanency commences as soon as possible , before the child becomes looked after if possible but once a child becomes looked after, this will take place alongside planning for a child to return home. This is referred to as parallel planning.

When a child has been looked after for four months a ‘triple track’ permanency plan needs to be in place to ensure that there is no delay to achieving permanence for a child once final decisions are taken.

The three possible tracks are:

* Rehabilitation to birth parents
* Placement within the birth family in a situation that has been assessed as able to meet the needs of the child throughout their childhood (kinship care).
* Placement outside the birth family in a situation that will be permanent for a child throughout their childhood and beyond. This can be achieved through adoption, special guardianship or permanent foster care

If plan is for child to be become looked after, consideration should be given as to whether a foster to adopt placement should be sought at this stage

Family group conference

Kinship referrals

PLO

Community based Assessment

Child becomes looked after

Commencement of care proceedings

Attendance at Permanency Planning Meeting to agree triple track planning

Triple track plan is in place by 4 months from child becoming looked after

Assessments of childs needs including sibling assessment to inform care planning

Assessments agreed within proceedings

Assessments of all potential Family and Friends carers assessments

Gathering all relevant medical information

Social worker progresses CPR

Care proceedings

Care plan decision for Adoption:

This should be agreed at a LAC review

National Minimum Standards for adoption require ‘Child Adoption Decision’ to be made within 2 months of the LAC review where adoption was agreed to be the plan

Adoption planning meeting with the Permanancy Planning Manager

Paperwork sent to adoption agency medical advisor for completion of medical summary

Independent Legal Advice sought

Papers passed to the agency decision maker for Child Adoption Decision

Agency Decision within 7 working days of receipt of the papers

Application for a placement order

Final Hearing : Care order and placement order made

**Family Group Conferences**

Family group conferences have an important part to play in making permanence plans for children (see procedures re family group conferences). In all cases where a child is deemed to be a child in need and may be likely to become looked after or has become looked after, a referral should be made to the family group conference co-ordinator to discuss how this process may be able to assist in permanency planning.

A FGC may be required for both sides of the birth family if they cannot work together. The family should be encouraged to nominate the relative who is, in their opinion, most able to provide permanent care of the child cannot be returned to the care of the birth parents.

*It is important to note that when considering permanency options in the family and friends network once care proceedings are underway case law is clear that the local authority should investigate all connected persons – not only the people who are suggested by the parents, so there may be other people to contact who were not invited to a family group conference.*

**Permanency Planning**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 states that all children should have a plan for permanency in place by the 4 month statutory review.

Social workers should be considering permanency for all children who might become looked after, the triple track approach should be followed from the commencement of planning for children

* A discussion of the potential for rehabilitation, any expert assessments that are required or further work to be done to achieve this safely.
* Any possible kinship placements should be referred for a kinship care assessment via the family and friends team by this time or immediately afterwards.
* A third option of permanency outside the birth family.

If adoption is to be the likely third track then rigorous timescales must be adhered to so as to be ready to progress this plan without delay at the conclusion of the care proceedings. Consideration should also be given as to whether the child’s needs could be met through an early permanence placement (ie by placement with a carer who is approved both for adoption and fostering and who could initially care for the child under fostering regulations but offer adoption at such time as a court endorsed this as the care plan.)

Please note: if any of the options that are being considered involve the possible placement of the child for permanency outside of the UK it is vital at this stage that specialist legal advice is obtained. Each receiving country has different requirements and some of these can take a considerable time to organise.

**Medicals**

All children who may require permanent placement should have a full IHA (C) medical, which must be undertaken by a community Paediatrician. This will fully inform the local authority of any medical needs which need to be taken into account. If the child is not looked after during the care proceedings process ( ie Interim Supervision order) then a full paediatric medical should be arranged at an early stage and if the persons with parental responsibility refuse this court directions should be requested.

As soon as possible the social worker should approach the birth parents or anyone else with parental responsibility for the child in order to gain their signed consent to medical information being obtained and for the medical appointment to take place.

BAAF form M & B (neonatal and obstetric reports) from the hospital of the childs birth, Parental health PH forms from the birth parents and carer’s reports from the current carer should be obtained. All medical information must be passed to the permanency planning manager in order that a medical summary can be requested from the adoption agency medical adviser as soon as possible if a care plan for adoption is likely to be pursued.

Note: Court permission is not required for local authorities to disclose to their medical advisers information relating to the child, birth parents and siblings that is available only in court papers in care and adoption proceedings. Disclosure allows medical advisers to fulfil their duties under the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, in particular to provide medical information on the child, birth parents and siblings to the local authority decision maker when considering whether a child should be placed for adoption. Changes to make this clear come into force on 20 December 2012, these changes apply to England and Wales and affect Practice Directions 12G and 14E (Communication of Information) to the Family Procedure Rules 2010.

**Birth Certificates**

2 full copies of the child’s birth certificate should be sourced.

**Permanency Planning Meetings**

To ensure that triple track planning is taking place and all appropriate assessments have been considered , that FGC has occurred- family mapping has taken place and relevant referrals have been made for family and friends assessments. Referral should take place as soon as possible after the child becomes Looked After. A comprehensive triple track plan should be put in place.

Initial meeting should take place within 4 weeks of the child becoming looked after or entering care proceedings and reviews should take place every 4 weeks for children under 5 and at least every 3 months for children over 5.

**The Independent Reviewing Officer**

The IRO should ensure that the birth family are aware of the triple track plan, and understand the function and importance of work on each of the three tracks.

A further review should be held when the care plan is confirmed, and there is also a requirement for a review to be held within 3 months of a placement order being made when the plan for adoption has been confirmed by court.

**Proceeding to a plan for permanent fostering**

Once the care plan is clearly likely to be for a child to need placement with a permanent family on a fostering basis a comprehensive referral should be made to the Gateway Service.

Once a child has been in the care of foster carers for one year and their long term care plan is confirmed as fostering this should be progressed to a permanent match via the Surrey Fostering Service.

At any time if foster carers wish to apply for a legal order in respect of a child who they are caring this should be encouraged if appropriate and discussed with the permanency planning managers.

**Proceeding to an adoption care plan**

**The social worker should open the adoption pathway on LCS at this point**

Once it is clear that Adoption is to be the chosen track in planning for a child the social worker should liaise with the Permanency Planning Managers and make a booking for an adoption planning meeting (APM). (*From 1st September 2012 the Adoption panel will only consider children for a ‘should be placed for adoption recommendation’ when the child has been voluntarily relinquished by the birth parents for adoption, in all other instances the Child Adoption Decision ( CAD) process is progressed via the Permanency Planning Managers and agency decision maker.*

A full Child Permanence Report is required for the APM and the work on this should have been progressing following the last review.

* The child's permanence report should clearly analyse why the child must be placed for adoption, including the reasons that the birth parents are not considered to be able to look after the child and the outcome of any assessments of family members. (now commonly known as Re: BS analysis)
* Photograph of child
* School report if relevant, and PEP
* Foster carer/s report
* All reports being relied upon by the court during the care proceedings
* Medical Advisors summary to be inserted into the childs permanence report prior to it being sent to the agency decision maker.

The relevant paperwork will then be sent for the provision of independent legal advice and then to the agency decision maker and a decision made as to whether the child should be placed for adoption, and a recommendation is also made to apply for a placement order from court, without which parental consent would be needed to place the child with prospective adopters.

*Legal note: The decision should be made within 7 working days of receipt the required papers*

*The birth parents should be informed orally of the decision by the child’s social worker within 2 days of the above date and of the decision in writing within 5 working days.*

*Copies of the agency decision maker’s decision must be placed on the child’s adoption file*

*The CAD decision should be made within 8 weeks of the review decision to pursue an adoption care plan, and once made should be recorded on ICS*

Once the Child adoption decision has been made, the social worker should instruct the legal department to make an application to the court for a placement order. This should ideally be heard at the final hearing of the care proceedings.

*Legal Note: case law requires that a placement order application must be submitted for consideration at the final hearing if adoption is to be the plan for the child. It is not acceptable to request that the court concludes the proceedings with the making of a care order, for a placement order application to be submitted subsequently.*

Placement order applications need to be accompanied by the child’s full birth certificate and a statement of facts if the parent does not consent to the placement for adoption which will be prepared by legal services. A report (ANNEX B to the family procedures adoption rules part 5, rule 29) (see Appendix d) will need to be prepared for the court by the child’s social worker if directed by the Court and also the welfare checklist in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 section 1(4)- see appendix d should be addressed in the social worker’s final evidence.

Leave of the court to disclose all expert reports from the proceedings to prospective adopters should always be sought at the final hearing.

In exceptional circumstances consideration should be given to asking for leave of the court to have the child known by another name upon placement for adoption.

**Preparation of the child for adoption**

The child’s social worker should ensure that work with the child continues with the aim, so far as is possible;

* The child has an understanding of the reasons for the adoption plan and what adoption will mean for them.
* The child has an opportunity to express his or her wishes and feelings about his or her future.
* The child has information about his or her birth family, which is kept safe and provided to the adopters and the child at an appropriate time.

The child should be given a ‘children’s guide to adoption’ as soon as adoption is decided as the plan for the child. Where any aspects of the child wishes and feelings are not acted upon these should be explained to the child and should be fully recorded in the child’s’ permanence report.

Gathering information for the later life letter and the life story book is imperative at an early stage and ongoing during the adoption pathway.

**Supporting the birth family**

Adoption South East ( Surrey spoke) have a scheme for offering support to birth parents. At the earliest stage of the parallel planning process the birth family should be aware of the triple track nature of planning and the possible outcomes for themselves and the child.

The birth parents should be offered support irrespective of whether they have parental responsibility for the child.

It may be appropriate for other members of the extended family to receive support, especially where they have played a significant part in the child’s life.

The child’s social worker should explain to the birth parents the reasons for the adoption plan, the stages of the adoption process, including the likely timescales and possible contact arrangements and seek to ascertain their views at all stages in the process.

Account should be taken of any special needs relating to the birth parents mental health or learning disabilities. Advocates or specialist support workers should be accessed if necessary. Specific needs relating to language or ethnicity should also be taken into account and an interpreter should be used if English is not their preferred language.

The birth parents should be encouraged to seek legal advice particularly if they are opposed to the adoption plan. Fathers without parental responsibility should be asked if they wish to apply for parental responsibility and have the implications of this explained to them.

Birth parents should be offered the opportunity of independent counselling around the issues of adoption after the final hearing of the court agrees a care plan for adoption. To access this service the child’s social worker should make a referral via the Adoption Service. Birth parents should be offered help with transport costs etc. to enable them to take advantage of this service.

**Choosing an adoptive family**

Adoption South East provide adoption services to Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove. There is a Surrey spoke located within Surrey.

The Permanency Planning managers liaise regularly with ASE about all the children whose care plan may become adoption.

When the child’s care plan is definitely one of adoption ( at the adoption planning meeting stage ) a linking grid is completed by the permanency planning manager and social worker to identify the childs needs. ASE will then seek to source a suitable adoptive family prior to or immediately after the making of a placement order.

The childs social worker will be sent details of the chosen family and will be asked to consider and accept ( or give cogent reasons for not accepting ) the choice. If a suitable family is not available in the ASE resource pool inter agency funding will be requested to widen the search to a national one which will be conducted by the family finding worker from Adoption South East.

The childs social worker will meet with the prospective family to answer any questions and then to decide if the match should progress. A full discussion should take place about the child, their history their needs, contact plans etc. In order that the adoptive family are fully informed before they take the decision about whether to proceed towards a match with the child and a matching panel.

The linked family must be given all the relevant paperwork about the child, including medical information, school reports etc. prior to the visit of the social worker.

The families’ right to see all the relevant information is now required under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 – this information cannot be shared until the court has agreed the adoption plan via the making of a placement order.

**Foster carers wishing to adopt**

Where foster carers express an interest in adopting a child they are looking after and there is an adoption plan for the child the family’s supervising social worker and child’s social worker will initially discuss the implications of this with the family. A visit by a worker from the Adoption service will be arranged to explore the feasibility of this and whether the child’s needs would be best met by remaining in the care of the current carer. If the foster care wishes to be assessed, and the social workers involved feel that they will be able to meet the child’s needs this will be allocated a social worker from the adoption service to undertake a full adoption assessment . A registration of interest form is completed by the foster carers at this stage.

The foster carers should be given access to the Adoption Services full training programme.

A full assessment will be undertaken and the foster carers presented to the adoption panel for consideration as adoptive parent/s for the specific child. The match can be heard at the same adoption panel if the prospective adopters are approved as suitable to adopt.

The expectation from regulations is that this assessment will be completed and presented to the adoption panel within 4 months as there is no stage 1 in the foster carer conversion process.

If the foster carer has been caring for the child for more than a year, and the local authority are not in agreement that they should be assessed as adopters for that child they are entitled to apply to the court to adopt the child. This application will be dealt with as a non-agency adoption.

**Progressing towards a match – the fact finding period.**

The prospective adoptive carer/s should be given the opportunity to meet the foster carer/s who have been looking after the child to discuss the day to day care of the child.

Once a placement order or formal consent to adoption is obtained the prospective adopter/s should be given the opportunity to have a brief sighting of the child. (see appendix e)

The prospective adopters will be given the opportunity to meet with the agency medical advisor to discuss the medical history of the child and any implications of that history. If they choose not to take advantage of this, this will be recorded on the placement report.

The prospective adopters should be able to discuss the child with others who are involved such as school or nursery staff and any person providing specific medical or therapeutic services.

A Post Adoption support planning meeting is held to discuss the support needs of the child and the family after placement and post adoption. A post adoption support plan is drawn up which should include a discussion of issues surrounding the prospective adopter/s exercise of their shared parental responsibly once the child is placed. If the adoption agency feels it necessary to restrict the prospective adoptive families exercise of their parental responsibility this should be outlined here and explained to the prospective adopter/s.

The post placement support plan will consider financial support to adopters in certain circumstances. If financial support of any kind is to be considered in the support plan, a proposal for financial support should be submitted to a senior manager for approval prior to the post adoption support planning meeting.

The post adoption support plan must be presented to the meeting of the adoption panel which is to consider the match between the family and the child. The prospective adopters will be given a copy of all reports.

The birth parents should be informed and given brief non identifying information about the prospective adoptive family prior to the matching panel.

**Placement report**

The child’s social worker and the social worker for the family should prepare a placement report which outlines why the family were chosen for this child and in what ways they will be able to meet the child’s needs

The placement report must cover the discussion that has been had about the prospective adopters exercise of parental responsibility and must be clear about the contact plans that are in place for the child post placement and post adoption.

The prospective adopter/s must see the placement report and have an opportunity to comment on it in writing

*Legal note: the prospective adopter/s should be given 10 days to make written comment on the proposed placement report before it is submitted to the adoption panel.*

**Matching panel**

*Legal note: the match should be approved by the agency decision maker within 6 months of the agency’s formal approval that the child should be placed for adoption. In cases of babies under 6 months of age whose parents request they be placed for adoption the match should be agreed within 3 months of the child adoption decision. If these timescales are not met the adoption panel minutes must record the reason for this.*

The adoption panel meets to consider the match between the prospective adopter/s and the child. The matching panel will be booked via the adoption panel administrator and the necessary paperwork must be submitted at least 10 days prior to the panel appointment.

The paperwork that is necessary for a matching appointment:

* Prospective adopters report, (PAR) this will be already held by the adoption panel administrator if the family have been approved by the Surrey adoption panel.
* Updated medicals and DBS checks etc. if these are out of date. (these last 2 years)

If the chosen adoptive family have been approved by another adoption agency care should be taken that the checks undertaken accord with the Surrey Adoption Service policy around non statutory checks.

* The child’s permanence report (having been updated in line with any recommendations by the original adoption planning meeting checklist completed at the ‘should be placed for adoption’ stage)
* The placement report including any comments by the prospective adopters
* The post adoption support plan
* Updated medical information is the original IHA (c) is out of date.( every 6 months for children under 5 years, annually for children over 5 years)
* Foster carers report with updating information about the child.

People who should attend the adoption panel for a matching appointment are:

* The child’s social worker (and their supervisor if necessary due to legal experience requirement)
* The prospective adopter/s
* The supervising social worker for the prospective adopter/s
* The foster carer/s if possible

The match will be considered and the adoption panel will make a recommendation. This will be scrutinised by the adoption agency decision maker and a decision made. The adoption panel should also consider whether any restrictions should be placed on the prospective adopters exercise of their parental responsibility whilst the child remains looked after.

*Legal note: the decision must be made within 7 working days of the adoption panel recommendation and conveyed to the adopters and the birth parents orally within two working days and in writing within 5 working days*

*Copies of the panel minutes and decision makers decision should be placed on the adopters and children’s files.*

**The Placement Planning Meeting**

This should be convened once the adoption panel recommendation has been ratified, and once authority to place has been secured, either via a placement order or via consent under section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act.

The people who will be invited are:

* The child’s social worker
* The prospective adopter/s
* The social worker for the prospective adopter/s
* The foster carer/s
* The supervising social worker for the foster carer/s

The meeting will be chaired by the prospective adopters social worker or in the case of an inter agency placement by the supervising manager for the family finding worker for the child.

The purpose of the meeting is to plan the period of introductions and make formal arrangements for the placement to take place.

For inter agency placements a separate part of the meeting will complete the BAAF form H1 which details the contract between the two agencies in relation to the placement.

A placement plan will be drawn up

A copy of the placement plan should be given to the prospective adopter/s who must confirm in writing that they wish to proceed with the placement. A copy of this agreement should be placed on the child’s file.

A copy of the placement plan should be given to all involved in the placement planning meeting and sent to the independent reviewing officer for the child.

The period of introductions must be child focused and age appropriate. It should be based on the premise that the child and the adopter/s must become comfortable with each other before the introductory visits shift to be based in the adopter/s home. Adopter/s should be given every opportunity to see the child in the foster home at all parts of the day, and to be given all the information regarding the child’s needs (bearing in mind the importance of attunement and building attachments )

A midway meeting should be planned to monitor how the introductions period are progressing and to make any necessary changes to the schedule. This will usually be chaired by the social worker for the prospective adopter/s who will present a report of the progress of introductions to their supervising manager for agreement for the placement to go ahead.

*Legal note: Any changes to the agreed plan should be notified to all parties in writing.*

Visits to the prospective adopters home may vary in length and duration depending on the age of the child. Research indicates that most children over the age of three need 2- 3 weeks to adjust to the idea of a move and for a pre-verbal child even a young baby a move in less than 7-10 days is premature. Introductions plan must be child focussed and take account of new research and thinking.

The child’s social worker must liaise with education staff regarding a transfer of school.

Unless permission has been given by the court, or by every person with parental responsibility it is not legal for the child to be known by any other name until the making of an adoption order

*Legal note: there is the provision under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 for application to the court by the local authority or the prospective adopter/s for permission for the child to be known by their new surname.*

**Notifications:**

These should be prepared by the adopters social worker ( or the family finding worker in the case that a child is to be placed with non Surrey adopters) prior to the child’s placement and forwarded to the permanency planning manager. At this stage a letter is sent to the adopters with a copy of the child’s medical advisor summary and a letter to the new GP.

The permanency planning manager will send the statutory notifications to the health authority, (via the medical advisor) the education authority and the local authority where the child is moving to:

* Notification to the local authority where the child will live SCS235 – a copy of the post adoption support plan should be supplied to the adoption service of the area to which the child moves as they will become responsible for the post adoption support for the family three years after the placement.
* Notification to the appropriate Clinical Commissioning Group or local health board (Wales) SCS470
* Local education authority (where the child is of school age) with educational history and whether the child has been or is likely to need to be assessed for special educational needs Notification to the prospective adopters (if the child is already living with e.g if they are fostering the child) of the date that the placement becomes a placement for adoption.

The child’s social worker will inform the birth parents of the progress of the plan whilst maintaining full confidentiality of the placement, unless the birth parent has stated that he or she does not wish to be kept informed.

If the placement plan is terminated the child should be helped to understand this in an age appropriate manner.

If the placement plan is terminated the birth parents should be informed (unless they have stated that they do not wish to be kept informed).

The team manager should consider the best way to conduct a disruption meeting.

**Further preparation of the child for placement**

The child’s social worker and the foster carer should work together to continue to prepare the child for placement with the chosen family.

The child’s social worker will ensure the child is properly prepared for the first meeting, including using the welcome album that the family prepared for their approval adoption panel.

The child’s social worker should be working on the life story book for the child and preparing the ‘later life letter’ for passing to the child’s adoptive parents for sharing with the child at an appropriate age.

In accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011, the life story book must be passed in draft to the prospective adopters for the child by the time of the 2nd statutory review of the placement and the final copy and later life letter must be passed to the adopters within 10 days of the celebration hearing.

**Placement**

The placement is made under Adoption Agency Regulations 2005

The social worker for the child and the supervising worker for the foster carers (if appropriate) should be present when the child leaves the foster home with the adopter/s on the day of placement.

The child’s social worker should ensure that the placement change is noted on LCS in order that the payments to the foster carers cease.

The placement address on LCS for adoptive placements should read Surrey Adoption Service, Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road Woking Surrey.

The child’s social worker must notify the birth parents of the child’s move to an adoptive home.

The adopter/s social worker should ensure that they have the necessary copies of the care order/placement order/ court order giving permission for the child to be known by their new surname, or copies of the relevant consent to placement if the birth parents have given consent under section 19 and or section 20 of the Adoption and Children act 2002.

They should also be handed:

* the red health record for the child, NHS card.
* any passport
* two copies of the childs birth certificate.
* SCS526 placement letter,
* SCS470 - forms for child’s registration with their new GP

The adopter/s and child must be seen by a social worker within one week of the date of placement and each week thereafter until the first child care review at 4 weeks. This is a legal requirement under the Adoption and Children Act 2002

The visiting social worker should see the child separately from the prospective adopter/s unless the child is of sufficient age and understanding and refuses to see the social worker alone. This is a legal requirement under the Adoption and Children Act 2002

**Post placement**

The child remains a looked after child until the making of an adoption order. Parental Responsibility is shared by the local authority, birth parents and prospective adopter/s.

The child is subject to looked after statutory reviews at 1 month, 4 months and every 6 months thereafter, the birth parents are not invited to attend the looked after reviews.

The statutory review should include discussion as to whether it is appropriate for the prospective adopters to lodge an adoption application

*Legal note: an adoption application cannot be lodged until a child has been in placement for 10 weeks.*

The child’s social worker will keep in contact with the birth parents and inform them of the progress of the child.

The birth parents have access to an independent support worker, referral for this can be made through Adoption South East.

There is a local requirement for an unannounced visit to the prospective adopter/s home by their family placement social worker between the 1st and 2nd child care review and at least annually thereafter if an adoption order is not made.

**Post adoption contact arrangements**

It is the responsibility of the adopters social worker in conjunction with the child’s social worker to draw up post adoption contact arrangements.

A post box arrangement can be set up and this should be signed by prospective adopters and birth family. This is not a legally binding arrangement but allows for an exchange of prescribed information, e.g letters between the adults, photographs or cards for the child to be sent at prescribed times of the year. There should be careful discussion with all parties about the implications of such arrangements

Referrals can be made for support to be provided to birth parents in letter writing.

If direct contact is to be considered post placement/post adoption this should be carefully discussed with the post adoption team who will take over the responsibility for arranging, managing and supervising the post adoption contact after the adoption order is granted. During the first year after an adoption order in granted the family’s adoption social worker will remain involved and this will allow for careful liaison and handover to the post adoption team.

The adopters social worker will review the post adoption support plan with the family prior to the making of an adoption order. Ongoing support will be agreed if necessary at this stage.

**Medical issues**

The child is required to have a full LAC medical annually until the making of an adoption order. If the child is under two years of age the medical should take place every 6 months.

**Adoption Application**

The adopter/s social worker should assist in the completion of the adoption application once a review decision has agreed that it is appropriate for one to be lodged. ( the child must have been in the care ( under fostering regulation/ adoption regulations) of the prospective adopters for 10 weeks for an application to be submitted)

The Adoption application forms can be obtained from the County Court office (adoptions clerk) or downloaded from the internet: http://www.justice.gov.uk/

In most cases it will not be necessary for the applicants to use the services of a solicitor as the consents of the birth parents has been dealt with either by the making of a placement order, or by the giving of section 19 consent, unless this has been withdrawn, or section 20 consent (which is consent to the adoption)

If there have been significant change of circumstances and the birth parents and leave to contest the adoption order is granted by the court then applicants should seek the services of an appropriately experienced solicitor to aid their application

If a solicitor is to be used then the adopters social worker for the family gain permission from senior management for the payment of solicitors fees.

The application should be submitted to a County Court or High Court

The application should include:

* The application form in triplicate
* A copy of the placement order or consent to placement or adoption (section 19 or 20)
* The fee per child (which is reimbursable via the Adoption service).
* The child’s birth certificate
* copy of the applicants’ marriage certificate/ civil partnership certificate if appropriate

The social worker for the child and adopters social worker prepare the report for the court (Annex A of the family procedures rules part 5 rule 29) (see appendix i) and submit it as soon after the application as possible. A report must be requested from the agency medical advisor which she will prepare from up to date medical information on the child (IHA (c) and the applicants medical forms.

3 signed copies of the Annex A report should be sent to the court. The court will then set a date for the adoption hearing, usually following a directions hearing

**Adoption hearing**

Once an adoption order has been made the court will schedule a date for a ‘celebrations hearing. The applicants and the child should attend for the celebrations hearing along with the social worker for the child and the social worker for the applicants.

The adopters social worker fills in the form AD1 and sends notification of the making of the adoption order (SCS236) to the adoption agency.

**Post adoption**

If there are ongoing needs identified in the review of the post adoption support plans the adopters social worker will remain as named social worker for the family and the child for one year after the making of an adoption order.

The family is entitled to an assessment of their needs for post adoption support at any time before the child reaches the age of 18 years. This is accessed through The Adoption South East Duty system.