

## **Practice guidance for Early Permanence Placements (EPP)**

This practice guide provides clarity around the expectations for managing Early Permanence Placements within the Fostering Service working alongside One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) / Other Adoption Agency and Children's Services.

### **References to Legislation, Regulation and Statutory Guidance (England):**

Children and Families Act 2014

Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 & 2013

### **What is Early Permanence?**

Early Permanence placements allow babies and young children who may need adopting to be placed with a potential permanent family earlier than a conventional adoption. It includes placements also referred to as Fostering for Adoption (FfA) and Concurrent Planning.

Early Permanence enables a baby or young child in care to find foster carers who are ready and willing to adopt them later, if the courts decide they cannot be cared for permanently by their birth family.

### **What are the benefits of Early Permanence?**

#### **Avoiding delay**

Early Permanence helps to avoid delay in deciding a very young child's future, at a time in their life when days and weeks really matter.

#### **Minimising disruption**

Children who are in the care system from a very young age are often moved around a number of foster carers, while the courts reach a decision about who will care for them in the long term. Research has shown that this level of disruption has a negative impact on a child's mental health and development.

Early Permanence removes this disruption by placing a child early on with foster carers who would go on to adopt them, if the court decides that's in the child's best interests.

This means that, if the court agrees an adoption plan, the child has a seamless transition from foster care to adoption, without having to move from a foster home where they have settled to a new adoptive family.

#### **A chance to bond earlier**

With Early Permanence, a child can start bonding much earlier with the people who may eventually adopt him or her – in some cases a baby is placed with their early permanence

carers directly from the hospital where he or she was born. In other cases, children are placed at a very young age from family, residential assessment settings, and sometimes foster care. In all instances children are benefiting from these early placements which may become their permanent family.

### **Better understanding of a child's background**

Foster carers who go on to adopt a child will often have had a chance to get to know the baby's birth parents during the court process. They will get to know more about the baby's background and the circumstances that led to him or her being placed in care, which will support their care of the child as foster carers and adopters if adoption is the final plan. This is also a benefit for contact and life story work if the child is adopted.

### **National Early Permanence Standards**

The EP standards are a framework to guide good practice and standardisation across all agencies. The implementation and governance arrangements for EP practice are developed locally across regional partnerships.

[Early Permanence National Practice Standards.pdf \(adoptionengland.co.uk\)](https://www.adoptionengland.co.uk/early-permanence-national-practice-standards.pdf)

## **Managing Early Permanence Placements within the BCFT Fostering Service**

All children who are placed with EP carers should have oversight by the Bradford Children and Families Trust (BCFT) Fostering Service. Carers will have been assessed and approved by OAWY/Adoption Agency and will be principally managed by their Adoption Supervising Social Worker. The carers should however also have a contact individual within the BCFT Fostering Service for additional support.

### **Notification from Children's Services and/or OAWY**

Once a child has been placed, the Child's SW and/or OAWY/Adoption Agency will notify Duty Fostering of the placement.

The Duty SSW must inform the Duty Team Manager of the referral and the Duty Team Manager will allocate the EP Placement to an overseeing Practice Supervisor. Reference to the EP rota should be made by the Duty Team Manager.

Where an independent VAA has approved the EP carers and BCFT have agreed to place children with the carers, the supervision costs of managing the placements will be met by BCFT.

Where OAWY has approved the EP carers and BCFT have agreed to place children with the carers, the supervision will be undertaken by OAWY with no cost to BCFT.

## **Role and responsibilities of the allocated Principal SSW**

The Practice Supervisor will be responsible for the following:

- Ensuring the Finance Team are aware of the placement.
- Ensuring there is a LCS carer file set up.
- To book an annual review meeting with an allocated FIRO within 12-months of approval.
- To visit the EP carers for an introductory visit to complete a series of tasks and to agree to visit should the Adoption SSW not be available through the duration of the placement.
- To ensure the Early Permanence Foster Carer Agreement (EP06) is signed by the carers, the Adoption SSW, Fostering Team Manager and uploaded to the carers' LCS file.
- To intermittently receive and read the OAWY/Other Adoption Agency supervision/home visit records completed by the Adoption SSW and upload onto the carer LCS file.
- To intermittently receive EP carer weekly recordings and upload onto the carer LCS file.
- To be the contact point for the Child's SW and Adoption SSW.

## **Financial Payments**

Once the BCFT Fostering Service has been notified about an EP placement, it is important the Practice Supervisor notifies a Service Manager of the placement and the Finance Team to trigger the carers' fostering allowances. A BACS form should be completed on behalf of the carers.

EP carers will receive an entry fee allowance and the additional allowances (festival, holiday, and birthday). They can also claim mileage in exceptional circumstances, if approved by the Service Manager.

The Finance Team will need to have a 'point of contact' at OAWY/Other Adoption Agency and the name of the Child's SW (if one is allocated). They will also receive a £350 settling in grant as a one-off payment.

The Practice Supervisor is also responsible for forwarding the EP carers' mileage claims to the finance team.

Once the child has received permanent adoption matching by OAWY/other Adoption Agency ADM, the Practice Supervisor needs to inform the finance team to stop the allowances.

## **Supervision and Home Visits**

Foster carer supervision visits will be undertaken by the Adoption Social Worker. Once sent, the Practice Supervisor should upload the Adoption SSW's supervision records (EP14 Supervisory Social Worker Record of Visit) and other completed documents by the Adoption SSW, such as the Foster Carer Weekly Recordings (EP13), Health & Safety Checklist (EP11) and Family Safer Caring Policy (EP12) onto the carers' LCS file.

On allocation, the Practice Supervisor should contact the EP carers and arrange an introductory visit. During the visit, the Practice Supervisor should:

- complete a finance BACS form with the carers,
- provide a mileage claim form and explain what they may claim for,
- provide the carers with contact details for the BCFT Fostering Service,
- provide a link to the foster carers' handbook,
- explain their expectations in respect of the TSDS and other training available via the Training Hub.

The child in the EP carers' care should be visited by their CSW in accordance with statutory requirements.

### **Training and Development by EP Carers**

EP carers undertake Adoption preparation training which includes a day of Early Permanence training organised and run by OAWY/Other Adoption Agency.

OAWY will also provide Paediatric First Aid training.

The Practice Supervisor would be responsible for managing the carers completion of the TSDS. It is appropriate to apply the same expectations on EP carers as kinship carers. As they have care of a specific child, they should complete the kinship version of the TSDS workbook and have 18-months for completion.

To assist the EP carers, complete the TSDS, they should be provided with a login for the Training Hub and offered guidance by their Practice Supervisor as to useful and beneficial online training courses.

Early Permanence carers will have Fostering Network membership during their approval.

### **Early Permanence Annual Reviews**

Due to the possibility of extended care proceedings, the allocated Practice Supervisor should have consideration for the carers needing an annual review within 12-months of approval.

EP carers do not need to be presented to Fostering Panel due to their Adoption status, but their approval status should be reviewed by the BCFT Fostering Service.

The Practice Supervisor should contact the allocated FIRO and book a provisional annual review meeting within 12-months of approval. The review will be chaired by the FIRO and will take place with the Practice Supervisor via Teams.

### **Closure of Early Permanence Carers**



The Practice Supervisor should request the OAWY/Other Adoption Agency social worker informs them when the match has been made at SHOBPA. Once this has occurred the Practice Supervisor will need to inform Finance to ensure the carers fostering allowances stop at this point.

A de-registration form should then be completed.