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Adoption Support Plan

A practitioner's guide to the Adoption Support Plan (ASP)

Published 2025

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Adoption Support Plan (AAR 31(2))[1]

The Adoption Support Plan is a key document for the child and their adopters. It brings together what is known about the child's needs. Then, when they are being matched and moving to their adoptive family, the Adoption Support Plan also sets out the support that has been identified for the child and their adopters in the short term, and what may be needed in the longer term. This will enable the adopters to feel confident in knowing what support will be available to them.

If the adopters are being matched with more than one child, each child will have their own Support Plan which should reflect their individual needs, and their needs as a sibling group.

The Adoption Support Plan is a summary of what is known at the time of the match and the child moving to their new home. Inevitably, things will change for the family, and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (AAR 36)(6)[2] set out that this Plan must be reviewed as part of the child in care reviews up to the point of the Adoption Order.

The draft Adoption Support Plan is part of the paperwork required by legislation when the proposed match is presented to the adoption panel, but it is also a document that the adopters will be able to refer to once the child is living with them, when they identify areas where they need support.

It can also be used by the adoption support team as a starting point for an assessment of support needs after the child is adopted, where that is requested.

There should be agreement about who will be the lead worker to coordinate the Adoption Support Plan – this is often the family-finding social worker based within the regional adoption agency (RAA) adoption service, but it is particularly important to clarify where an interagency placement is being made with a voluntary adoption agency (VAA).

The information needed to complete the document will require input from a wide range of individuals who have been involved in the child's life, including their foster carer, the prospective adopter/s, their family members and other significant professionals from education and health services.

Please note, use of the terms 'placement' and 'placed' have been avoided as far as possible. However, as the terms are included in both Adoption Agency Regulations (AAR) and Statutory Guidance their inclusion is sometimes unavoidable.

Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice

> *"The social work profession is guided by its values and principles of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. This means that social workers are uniquely placed to lead the way, advocating for equality in our society."[3]*

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[1] AAR 31(2) Where the adoption agency considers that the proposed placement should proceed, the agency must carry out an assessment of the needs of the child and the prospective adopters and any children of the prospective adopters for adoption support services in accordance with the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005. The agency must also consider the arrangements for future contact between the child and appropriate members of their birth family or other people important to the child.

[2] AAR 36(6e) When carrying out a review, the adoption agency must consider the arrangements for the provision of adoption support services for the adoptive family and whether there should be any re-assessment of the need for those services.

3 Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion - Social Work England.

Social Work professional standards state:

> *"As a social worker, I will not abuse, neglect, discriminate, exploit or harm anyone, or condone this by others."*
>
> *It is essential, as social workers, we continue to reflect on our own biases, values and attitudes and consider how these influence our professional practice. It is important that we use individual and group supervision to reflect on both the way we work with families and on the assessment information we gather, before making recommendations that can have life changing impact for the children and families we support.*

This report is likely to be read by the person it is written about and the people important to them. It is therefore critical that language is caring, simple and understandable. Avoid jargon, acronyms, or professional terminology that the people being written about may not understand, as this can exclude, disempower, or reinforce power imbalances.

Sensitive information should be collected and recorded in ways that are appropriate, trauma-informed, and anti-racist. Avoid language that reinforces stereotypes, erases identities, or causes harm. Descriptions should be respectful, person-centred, and free from assumptions or biases. This covers information relating to ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, complex health needs, justice-involvement, religion, and other aspects of identity. Be aware of how these areas intersect, as this can increase harm or marginalisation.

We appreciate differences in preferred terms around racially minoritised ethnic groups and acknowledge the need to avoid homogenising lived experiences (Cane, 2023). It will be appropriate to bear in mind the importance of using terms that children and families' favour. Prioritise self-identification by asking children and families at the outset what terms they prefer or identify with. Be respectful of their choices, recognising that preferred terminology may reflect personal identity, culture, and history. This applies to all aspects of identity.

Adoption Support Planning Meeting

Although not required in legislation, agencies are encouraged to follow best practice and hold a specific meeting where the draft Plan is agreed (an Adoption Support Planning Meeting) before the match is presented to the adoption panel. This will include the lead worker (usually the family finder), the child's social worker, the prospective adopters and their adoption social worker, so there is full awareness and agreement about the support that is being proposed. The purpose of the meeting is to make the Plan a "live document" that is central and meaningful to support the child and adopters coming together as a family. The adoption support service should be consulted prior to the meeting so that they are aware of any commitments being made and are able to comment on the Plan. The Adoption Support Plan will be finalised and agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting once the match has been agreed by the agency decision-maker.

General notes for completing the Adoption Support Plan

The sections in the Adoption Support Plan link to the matching grid in the CoramBAAF Adoption Placement Report (APR). They may also include updated information from what has been covered in the Child's Permanence Report (CPR) and the Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR). It is important that the information in the Adoption Support Plan is relevant to the purpose of this Plan and is up to date. It

should not just be copied or "cut and pasted" from other documents.

Reference is made, where relevant, to sections of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (AAR), the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 (ASR) and Adoption Statutory Guidance 2013 (ASG).

Where contact details are being given of services or professionals who may be providing support, please give full details rather than using acronyms. Please include current known contact details, and as much information as possible, to allow organisations to be contacted in instances where individuals may have changed.

There are specific sections that explore culture, race and ethnicity; however, issues and needs relating to this should be referenced in all relevant sections.

These guidance notes have been prepared to assist social workers in completing the Adoption Support Plan but will not necessarily cover all relevant issues for the child and the family being matched. They should therefore only be seen as helpful prompts, and the social worker should use their judgement when deciding what information to include relevant to each individual situation.

The professional network around the child and family

Information for this introductory section to the child will come from the child's foster carers, birth family and any significant people involved with them, as well as your own observations and experience of the child.

What does the child like and dislike?

This section should draw on information from the child's foster carer and help to inform the adopters as they start to prepare for the child joining their family.

Things to include would be:

- What makes the child happy? What toys/games do they like/ Do they have a favourite book, TV programme, song, etc.? Where do they like to go for a day out? What activities do they like to do?
- What foods do they like? Do they have a favourite food and is there anything they do not eat? How willing are they to try new things?
- How would the adopters know if the child is happy or unhappy? How does the child like to be comforted? Do they have a specific item that will help calm and regulate them, e.g. a pacifier?
- Is there anything they are afraid of, e.g. dogs, the dark, busy places? What behaviours does the child display when they are afraid/scared? How can the adopters support the child when they are scared/afraid?
- Has the child been on holiday? What was their experience of the holiday/s? What will the adopters need to consider in the future when planning holidays with the child?
- If the child is old enough to be involved in hobbies or organised groups or activities, identify how these interests will be supported to continue after their move to their adoptive family.

Self-care skills

How are the child's needs currently being met in the development of their self-care skills appropriate to their age? Are there areas where they are functioning above or below what would be expected for their

age? Set out what support needs will be ongoing and who would need to provide this support, separating the role that will be played by the adopters from any professional support that will be needed.

Who are the important people in the child's life including family members, siblings and foster family/families?

In this section, share details of the significant relationships the child may have had before they came into care, including any extended family members who may have cared for them on a regular basis while they were in their parent's care, with details of how and when that care was provided.

Give details of who is in the child's foster family, including both other children in the home and older adult children who they see regularly, or who provide any short breaks for them.

Where there are pets in the family, give information about them, what importance they hold to the child and if there are any issues that may have relevance for the child moving to another home where pets may be present.

If the child has significant relationships with other adults, e.g. friends of the foster family, godparents, key workers in nursery or school, significant adults in community groups such as group leaders or coaches, give details of these relationships and what they mean to the child.

Understanding the child's experiences

Give a short summary/overview of the key events in the child's early life and the likely impact of this on their development and ability to build relationships and bonds. Include the impact of pre-birth experiences and their experiences, both positive and negative, of receiving positive care and attention. What has been the impact of changes in caregivers, and how has the child adjusted and responded to the care and support they have received since coming into care?

Thinking about what has worked for this child already, set out what support they will need from their current carers, prospective adopters and other relevant professionals to help address the impact of their background experiences.

Think about important routines and rituals, and any differences in how the child responds to different carers.

Highlight any support that might be needed by the child in the future at times of transition or loss during their childhood, e.g. starting, changing or leaving nursery/schools, going on holidays, moving house, loss/death of significant people.

What support needs have been identified to help the child build and develop relationships within their adoptive family, how will this support be delivered and who will be responsible for delivering this?

This will initially be the focus of the planning for the child's transition and move to their adoptive family. For agencies using the UEA 'Moving to Adoption' model, they will be aware of the importance of giving the child and the adopters opportunities to start building their relationship through play, and gradually increasing their contact with each other before the adopters start to become involved in and gradually take over the caregiving role for the child. Social workers will continue to support this

relationship-building through their visits and reviews once the child has joined their new family. This is set out in the Adoption England guidance for social workers delivering adopter support (in development).

Set out the child's support needs as discussed with the prospective adopters and give details of workers involved in the planned support.

For some children there may be more specific needs identified around their ability to develop bonds and relationships. Agencies may plan to provide specific interventions such as Theraplay or consultations with psychologists within the agency or through CAMHS.

Give details of who will be providing this support and any funding or agreements needed to achieve this.

How will the child be supported to develop relationships outside their family with their peers, other adopted children and in their wider community?

Once children have had time to become settled within their adoptive family, they will need opportunities to develop their bonds, socialising skills and support in building their new relationships. You will want to think about current opportunities the child has been given and benefitted from, e.g. attending playgroups, activity groups, sports classes, etc., and talk to the adopters about what opportunities will be available to them, highlight any gaps in provision and how these might be met.

Understanding the child's emotional and behavioural development

Focusing on the child's emotional and behavioural development, areas to be considered include how they respond to their current carers, their sense of belonging with important people in their life, and whether they show an appropriate sense of wariness to strangers or can be over-familiar.

Where there are identified concerns, are there any indicators when things are worrying the child, e.g. disturbed sleep patterns? Is the child able to display a full range of emotions and can they regulate their emotions in an age-appropriate way? Are there situations that they find hard to cope with? Have any triggers been observed that lead to the child becoming dysregulated, and are there particular settings where this may occur?

You can use information available about the child's emotional and behavioural development that has been reported in the adoption medical report. This should be alongside updated information available from the foster carers, health visitor and any other professionals involved with the child.

Set out how any needs related to the child's emotional wellbeing or behaviour are being supported by their carers or other professionals and how these needs will be managed during the transition to their adoptive family. Identify needs that will require support in the future, how these needs will be met and who will be responsible for delivering this support.

When considering what support may be needed by the child and the adopters, it will be important to identify what support will be available from the placing local authority for the first three years after the Adoption Order, and to provide details of the RAA/VAA and other agencies that may be able to offer support after three years, where the adopters live outside the area of the placing agency.

Information about what assessments and therapeutic services might be accessed through an

application to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) can be given where it has been identified that these may be needed. Adopters should be signposted to relevant local information.

Health and medical information

Provide names and contact details of all the key health professionals involved with the child, giving their roles and responsibilities to provide an easy reference point for the adopters when the child moves in with them.

Summarise the main health needs that have been identified in the medical report for the child, including:

- the risks of inherited conditions, e.g. parental mental health or medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes, including, where known, any health issues for the child's siblings
- those conditions caused by prenatal experiences, e.g. foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)
- any physical disabilities
- any areas of developmental delay with speech and language
- any uncertainties where information is not available

Give details of any ongoing treatment being used by the child's carers, e.g. any specific skincare products, treatments for allergies or toileting difficulties, and any support being provided from services such as health visitors, speech and language therapists (SALT), or home-visiting education service (Portage) schemes.

Set out any ongoing monitoring of health issues and who will be responsible for this, as well as details of any planned or expected future appointments and who will provide information about these to the adopters.

Ensure that the adopters are clear about how any support for the child's health needs will be delivered and that they know the name of the person/agency responsible and are aware of the timescales for delivery of any services not yet in place and any review arrangements.

If the child is already in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or if there has been consideration of whether the child would be eligible for DLA, set out arrangements for transferring an existing arrangement or who would need to apply for this if it is felt the child will meet the criteria.

Where the child is identified as having a disability or significant health needs there is a separate section where the plans for the transition of the services involved can be set out. This could include their paediatrician and any therapists, specialist services e.g. physiotherapy, speech and language, occupational therapy, Portage etc. It will be helpful for adopters if you can identify who is taking responsibility for the transition of each service (this could be a professional or the adopters themselves) and if any gaps in service have been identified and how these will be addressed.

Give specific information about what adopters need to know when registering the child with a GP and dentist and expected timescales for this to be achieved. This is something that will be checked at the child's reviews after the child has moved in.

Education

Provide the names and contact details of all the key education professionals involved with the child, giving their roles and responsibilities, including any teachers, key workers, Virtual School, designated teachers, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), etc. This will provide an easy reference point for the adopters when the child moves in with them and should be updated once the child moves to their new education provision.

For younger children, give details of any informal groups they have attended to support their early development and socialisation as well as any formal access they have had to education. Give details about the type of provision attended, e.g. size of school or classes, ethnic mix within the school, and any support services provided. Information about the child's experience and how they responded, either positively or negatively, can help to inform adopters when they are looking at available options in their local area.

Where the child is going to be starting school or moving schools, adopters need to be clear about who has already been involved in supporting the child's educational needs and who they will need to liaise with to achieve a school place for the child that will meet their identified needs.

Plans for the child's transition to school should be discussed with adopters. The input of the Virtual School may be needed for any negotiations with the proposed new school around the timing and pattern of introductions to the school to fit with the child's move to their adoptive family, or where specific provisions for support are highlighted in an existing Personal Education Plan (PEP). Confirm who will provide the adopters with a copy of any existing PEP or other school reports, etc.

Adopters should be involved in discussion with existing nurseries or schools about how the transition will be managed for the child in moving to a new provision, with everyone being mindful of the losses involved for the child in leaving behind key professional and peer friendships.

Some adopters may have limited experience of being involved in supporting a child in education, so highlight what support will be available to them through information, training and social work support whilst enabling them to start to exercise parental responsibility in making arrangements for their child.

Set out how the child's educational needs are currently being supported, if this is being supported with money from Early Years Pupil Premium or Pupil Premium Plus and what support has been identified to be provided within their new educational setting. Be specific about how this support will be delivered, what needs to happen to ensure it is in place and who will be responsible for this.

For children with a disability who are in specialist pre-school or education settings set out the plans for transition, who is taking responsibility for the transition (this could be professionals or the adopters themselves) and if any gaps in provision have been identified and how these will be addressed.

If the child is currently receiving special educational needs (SEN) support or is being assessed for or has in place an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), set out how information about this support and existing reports will be shared with the adopters, what provision is in place for the child and how it is monitored and reviewed. Give details of how formal reviews will be put in place through PEP meetings, reviews of SEN support or an EHCP.

Supporting the child's identity and understanding of their past

Identity

This section should include the child's awareness of their relationship with their birth family and foster family and the development of their identity.

The development of identity and the impacts of adoption are life-long. Social workers should take an approach that is child led and goes beyond the traditional understandings of identity categories. This approach should capture layers within the concept of "identity", recognise change and amplify children's voices.[4]

Each child will have a developing sense of who they are and what is important in the world around them. This will become the basis of self-esteem and identity. There are a number of factors that build towards this: the child's physical capacities, including any disability; their social class; culture; ethnicity; language; religion; sex; and their gender identity and sexual orientation if appropriate.

Children and young people draw their identity from different sources around them: family and or carers, peers, school, wider community and social media. Singly and in combination, each of these factors will influence the way the child feels, thinks, behaves and makes relationships. It will be central to their sense of belonging to important people and their sense of community, culture and wider society. Their adopters who are caring for them and providing them with opportunities and guidance will be vital in this. Adoption itself will have an important impact on the child's developing sense of self, including the acquisition of an "adoption identity".

Researchers at Coventry University[5], in a project funded by the Nuffield Foundation, have developed the concept of the "identity see-saw" to represent aspects of identity that are important at a given point in time. 'It shows one moment in time, whilst recognising that the significance of particular aspects of identity may change based on the child or young person's experiences, choices or particular contexts.'[6]

Children should be encouraged to explore the different layers in their identity, how they think, feel and relate to different aspects of their identity, how they think about their identities in different contexts and with different people. Practitioners should therefore recognise that a child's identity may change and do their best to capture what are significant aspects of their identity right now, while also considering how their identity needs might change in time and become more or less prominent to them.

In practice, this means talking to children and their families, listening to their views about their identity, and then taking time to reflect on what this means for the child or young person and the people around them.

The child's understanding of their early life experiences will be determined by their age and stage of

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4 Cheruvallil-Contractor S, Halford A and Anand K (2024) Expressions of Self: Supporting minoritised children's identity, Dartington: Research in Practice
5 Cheruvallil-Contractor S, Halford A and Anand K (2024) Expressions of Self: Supporting minoritised children's identity, Dartington: Research in Practice
6 Cheruvallil-Contractor S, Halford A and Anand K (2024) Expressions of Self: Supporting minoritised children's identity, Dartington: Research in Practice

development, but even young children will need to have some age-appropriate level of explanation about why they are going to be moving to their adoptive family. This will often include using story books, picture books and play to introduce the understanding of different families who care for children and when children have to move.

Set out in the Plan who is doing this preparation work with the child and what the child's understanding appears to be.

Where more formal life story work has started with older children, give details of who is completing the work, when the work started and what plans there are for it continuing after the child moves to their adoptive family.

For children who are living with older siblings, it may be helpful to comment on what they are aware of from their early life experiences due to information shared between the siblings.

All children should have a "memory box" that has been created for them since being in care, which may also contain things shared for them by family members. This is an important part of the information that adopters can use to help the child to be aware of their early life experiences and support their identity. Record who is compiling the memory box for the child and whether it will be ready to move with the child. If there are things that are not available, state what efforts will be made to obtain them and by whom. Statutory Guidance suggests that the memory box can be used to 'safely store memorabilia significant to the child such as their hospital birth wristband; soft toys, letters, and celebration cards; first drawings and paintings, and photographs of birth parents, siblings, family members and other people who are important to the child' and that it must be shared at the latest by the time of the second review after the child has moved to their adoptive family.

Life story books may be the end result of ongoing life story work that they have directly contributed to, or they may have been written for a younger child to be read with their adoptive parents at a later time. A life story book is separate to photograph albums that may have been created for the child by their foster carers, recording the activities that have taken place while they lived with them. Statutory Guidance suggests that the life story book and memory box should be co-ordinated by one person, preferably the child's social worker, and should be presented to the child and adopter by the time of the second review and finally within ten working days of the Adoption Order, along with the later life letter.[7]

The later life letter is written by their social worker to a child who is being adopted, to help the child make sense of their past, but it is intended to be read later in the child's life. It can be a significant experience for an adopted young person to read a letter addressed to them in the first person about their early life experiences. It may also help adopters to think about how they continue to talk to a child about their past as their age and understanding changes. There is guidance available from CoramBAAF on writing a later life letter.[8]

Give details in the plan about who is responsible for completing the life story book and later life letter and when they will be passed on to the adopters.

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7 AAR 35 requires that every child placed for adoption should have a life story book and later life letter within 10 working days of the adoption celebration/hearing.
8 Moffat F (2020) Writing a Later Life Letter (2nd edn), London: CoramBAAF.

Outline how the family will provide an inclusive home that celebrates diversity. This could include offering a variety of toys and books that represent different cultures and family dynamics, and participating in events and festivals that celebrate various traditions and identities.

- Specify how the agency will provide resources, guidance, or additional training to help the family challenge discrimination and actively promote equality in alignment with the Equality Act 2010. This support ensures the family is well-prepared to meet the child's needs.
- Detail how the family will be encouraged to create a safe space for open dialogue, allowing the child to express their identity and experiences freely. This affirmation is critical for the child's emotional well-being and self-esteem.
- Describe plans for the agency and parents to work with schools and community services to ensure the child's inclusion. This could include advocating for representation in educational materials and extracurricular activities, as well as developing relationships with organisations that promote diversity and inclusion.

Ethnicity and culture

Give detailed information about the child's family members' ethnicity and origins so there is a greater understanding of the child's cultural heritage, e.g. there are 26 countries in the Caribbean and around 3,000 African tribes. What language is spoken by their family members? Where this is not known, set out what efforts have been made to try to obtain this information from extended family members and to gain an understanding of how this influenced the child's life so far.

Has the child been exposed to a different culture or language through living with a partner of a parent or other carer, for example?

Give details of what understanding the child has about their ethnicity and culture, how they see themselves and, where relevant, whether they have experienced any discrimination or prejudice while living in their family, from their peers within education or school settings or in the wider community where they live.

Give details of the ethnicity and cultural practices of any carers the child has lived with since coming into care, whether there have been differences for the child relating to their ethnicity, culture or language spoken, and how they have supported the child's awareness and understanding of their ethnicity and culture.

There will be differences in the ethnicity and culture of the child and the adoptive family. Explore any languages spoken in the immediate or wider family and set out what discussions have taken place about this and any support needs or resources that have been identified for the child or the adopters and how they will be met or delivered. ASG 4.8 notes that 'Where the child and prospective adopter do not share the same background, the prospective adopter will need flexible and creative support in the form of education and training and that the support plan should consider how the child's understanding of their background and origin might be enhanced.'

It is important to recognise that children's understanding and the importance they place on the relevance of this for themselves will change and develop over time, and this should be acknowledged as a future need. ASG 4.8 also notes that 'Maintaining continuity of the heritage of their birth family is important to most children; it is a means of retaining knowledge of their identity and feeling that although they have left their birth family, they have not abandoned important cultural, religious or

linguistic values of their community. This will be of particular significance as they reach adulthood.'

Religion

Give detailed information about any religious views, practices or important rituals within the child's family (e.g. there are over 100 Christian denominations and five main sects of Islam). How was this experienced by the child?

Give details of how the child identifies with their religion or faith and whether the child has been included in any religious practices or ceremonies whilst living with their current carers. Have any support needs been identified for the child during this time and how they have been met?

If the child's family members have expressed any specific wishes regarding religion and how it is observed and practised with the child, it is important to set out how these views have been considered during the matching process. Detail what discussion there has been with the adopters about how these views will be respected by them, particularly where they do not share the same religion or faith.

Give details of the adopters' experiences of practising religion and any important rituals. Is there any support the child and adopters may need in the short term or longer term and if so, who will provide that support?

Gender identity and sexuality

Identify any issues relating to gender identity or sexuality significant to the child and their experiences so far. Have there been any needs identified while they have been living with their foster carers?

Many babies and children are adopted when they are very young, but if the child is old enough to express their own gender identity, how do they describe themselves? Does this correspond to the sex they were allocated at birth?

This may be an area where more support will be needed as the child gets older and may need signposting for future support, but where there are any support needs at this stage, identify these and set out who would be providing that support.

Transition and moving in

This section covers the support for the child and the adopters for the child's transition from their foster family to their adoptive family. This will be agreed in draft during the matching and linking stage and confirmed later in the planning process. It may need to be updated after the match has been agreed by the agency decision-maker.

Set out the provisional transition plan – where using the Moving to Adoption model[9], this will reflect the three stages: Getting to know each other; Making the move; and Supporting relationships after the move. The final transition plan will then be agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting and included in the Adoption Placement Plan.

Set out who will be supporting the child, the adopters (including any existing children) and the foster carers during this process and what plans there will be for review. Include any materials that will be

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9 The UEA Moving to Adoption Model.

provided by the adopters to help with preparation work with the child, e.g. books, video/audio, toys, etc., and what information will be passed to the adopters by the foster family.

The support provided in the first month after the child has moved to their adoptive home should be seen as a priority, as the risk of breakdown is highest during the first few weeks (ASG 5.24).

AAR 36.4

AAR 36.4 sets out that the social worker must visit within the first week after the child moves in, and thereafter at least once a week until the first review (four weeks after moving in), and then at the frequency decided by the placing agency at each review.

Statutory Guidance 5.24–5.27 highlights the following points:

- Visits should be shared whenever possible between the child's social worker and prospective adopters' social worker, with clarity about which social worker will conduct each visit and good communication between them after the visits, including sharing their written reports.
- The child's social worker has the primary responsibility for ensuring the child's welfare and should on each visit see and speak to the child alone (unless this is not appropriate), with a focus on how the child is adjusting to their new home and family and to support the child and ensure their welfare.
- The adoption social worker will have particular responsibility for supporting the prospective adopters and may sometimes see them without the child being present; they may also be in contact with the prospective adopters by telephone or email between visits.
- Where a child is movingout of the area, e.g. an interagency placement that makes it difficult for the child's social worker to visit, arrangements can be made with that agency to ensure that a child and family social worker visits – but SG 5.29 highlights that it will not be sufficient to rely solely on visits by the prospective adopters' social worker.

Set out clearly in this section the different roles and responsibilities of the adoption social worker and the child's social worker in the support they will be providing to the family.

Adoption England is developing guidance for social workers delivering adopter support during the first 12–18 months of becoming a family which adoption social workers will want to be aware of.

Statutory reviews will continue to be held after the child moves to their adoptive family.

ASG 5.37

ASG 5.37 notes that the major difference will be that once the child has been placed for adoption, the prospective adopter/s who has/have parental responsibility will always have a major role and must be consulted, whereas the extent to which birth parents are consulted and involved will be a matter for the agency's discretion depending on the circumstances of the case. It will rarely be appropriate, for example, for birth parents to attend a review meeting once a child is living with their prospective adopters.

AAR 36.5

AAR 36.5 sets out that the review must consider the following:

- whether the adoption agency remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption

- the child's needs, welfare and development, and any support needed
- the arrangements for contact, and whether they should continue or be changed
- the exercising of parental responsibility for the child by the prospective adopters, and any changes needed
- the arrangements for adoption support services for the adoptive family and need to re-assess the need for those services
- the arrangements for assessing and meeting the child's health care and educational needs
- the frequency of the reviews

AAR 36.3

AAR 36.3 states that the first review must be held no more than four weeks after moving in; the second no more than three months after this; and subsequent reviews held at six-monthly intervals until an Adoption Order is made, or the child no longer lives with the prospective adopters.

Statutory Guidance

Statutory Guidance 5.35 also states that the agency may conduct additional reviews where it considers it appropriate and should always be prepared to do so at the request of the prospective adopters or the child.

Statutory Guidance notes that the first review will consider what support is needed by the child and the adopters and the ongoing pattern of visits will be agreed at that review.

The Adoption Support Plan (ASP) should also be reviewed during these meetings and there is an additional section in the ASP template for any changes and recommendation to be recorded so the Plan remains up to date.

Arrangements for the child to stay in touch with the family and people important to them

Give details of any meetings being planned between the prospective adopters and the child's birth parents, or other key family members who are caring for siblings, with whom ongoing arrangements are being planned. These meetings can help to establish the basis of the relationship going forward, and whether the plans are for indirect exchanges or face-to-face meetings. There is practice guidance[10] on setting up and managing these meetings from the work completed by Elsbeth Neil at the University of East Anglia (UEA), which can be referred to. Although these meetings are usually held during transitions, i.e. before the child moves in with their prospective adopters, they can be successfully held at a later time where this facilitates the attendance of the child's birth family members.

The rest of this section focuses on the plans for the child to stay connected with family members or other significant people, such as their current foster carers.

The Research in Practice (RIP) website provides resources from the work by Elsbeth Neil and is a valuable source of research and guidance on planning and supporting contact for all those involved.[11]

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10 https://contact.rip.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Practice_Guide_setting_up_meetings_between_-birth_relatives_and_adoptive_parents.pdf
11 Staying in touch: Contact after adoption (Research in Practice)

Also, CoramBAAF runs training for social workers to support them thinking through plans, practicalities and options, titled 'Writing plans for staying in touch'.

Set out in the grid the plans that have been agreed through the care planning process and the court hearing where the Placement Order was made[12] (if applicable).

Give details of the support agreed for these plans. Where direct meetings will be taking place, include any agreements to providing financial support for travel or supervision of these meetings. Where indirect contact will be taking place, include any agreement of whether photographs will be exchanged or available to be viewed and whether help will be available to write letters where this is needed.[13] Give details of any digital platform to be used to support staying in touch.

Highlight where extended family members have been identified as alternatives if the child's parents are not able to maintain contact. Include the names of the adults caring for any siblings who will be involved in supporting exchanges or meetings.

Provide information of any financial support that has been agreed, e.g. to cover transport costs, venue costs and/or refreshments and arrangements for these to be reviewed.

Give names and contact details for workers/teams who will be responsible for supporting and reviewing these arrangements and how any reviews would be initiated.

The adopters and their support

Legislation (AAR 31) requires an assessment of support needs for both the prospective adopters and their children to be undertaken at the time the match is being considered and for this to be included in the reports to the adoption panel.

As part of the matching process, you will have discussed with the prospective adopters their plans for taking any adoption leave, their use of any statutory entitlement to adoption leave or pay and their plans to return to work. These entitlements will depend on the nature of people's employment, whether they are self-employed and their financial circumstances, so it would be appropriate to record those plans here together with any support that has been agreed by the agency, including time-limited financial support.

As part of the panel paperwork, the original Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR) would be included along with any relevant updates. When assessing the support needs of the adopters, you should therefore be aware of any vulnerabilities highlighted in the PAR or when the adopters' approval was considered by the adoption panel and the agency decision-maker. Set out here any support needs that have been identified that relate to vulnerabilities and who will provide that support.

Where the adopters already have children in the household, it is important that their support needs are also considered in discussion with the adopters. Set out here what support might be needed by the children during the transition period and once the adopted child moves, and who will be providing the support. This might include support from other family members or professionals, e.g. teachers who are offering support. Adoption social workers should also be aware of recent guidance following the

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12 [Open access learning resources (Research in Practice)](#)
13 [Open access learning resources (Research in Practice)](#)

Cumbria Review[14] about the importance of seeking the voice of children in the family after a child joins the family as well as during assessment and matching, and finding opportunities to ensure their views are heard and recorded.

During the adoption assessment there will also have been discussion about the adopters' financial situation and any support needs arising from this. In addition to financial support relating to adoption leave or pay, set out here any suggested universal benefits the adopters may wish to explore once the child lives with them, and whether they are aware of how to apply for these.[15] If the child has had a Junior ISA (or Child Trust Fund[16] opened for them or there are other savings accounts for them, have the adopters been made aware that they will be responsible for these when the child moves to live with them and what the transfer arrangements will be?

Set out any financial support that has been agreed, e.g. any one-off payments to the adopters; whether the responsible local authority has agreed to make any regular payments and, if so, whether these payments will be for a specified period of time and whether they will be means tested. Set out also whether these payments will be subject to review and, if so, who will conduct these reviews.

Family and friends support

Often the first place that adopters will seek support is from their family and friends, some of whom will have been interviewed during their assessment and may have attended training for adopters' family and friends. It is also recognised that adopters can sometimes find support comes from people they do not expect, whilst others can be less available to them.

Set out here the key people in the adopters' network who are offering support to them once the child is placed, discussing with the adopters if this has changed since they completed their ecomap during their assessment. State what support is being offered, whether it is already in place, e.g. help with children already in the family, and whether there has been a formal meeting (often known as a family network meeting) chaired or attended by the adoption social worker where these people have discussed and agreed the support they intend to offer. CoramBAAF provides guidance about organising and running family network meetings.[17]

Another source of support for adopters can be the links and relationships they form with other adopters, sometimes already in their network or else people they have met during their adoption assessment through training, support groups or individual introductions. Give details of any other adopters the adopters have added to their support network and the support they envisage receiving from them. Identify any gaps in their experience of meeting other adopters and what further opportunities will be arranged for them.

Adoption support from the agency

Give the names and contact details for the adoption support service of the RAA/VAA that the adopters will need, and clarify at what point this service will take over providing adoption support to the family.

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14 Implications of the Cumbria Child Safeguarding Practice Review (2023) (CoramBAAF)
15 Social workers should be mindful that they are not qualified to provide financial advice but can signpost adopters to relevant sources of information.
16 Junior individual saving accounts for looked-after children (GOV.UK)
17 Davis A and Westwood S (2024) Family Network Meetings in Adoption, London: CoramBAAF

Where appropriate, there may need to be a handover between the adoption worker and adoption support workers where ongoing needs and support have been identified after the adoption order.

The RAA is responsible for providing the following services as set out in ASR 4:

- services to enable discussion of matters relating to adoption
- assistance in relation to arrangements for contact
- services to ensure the continuation of the adoptive relationship
- services to assist in cases of disruption
- counselling, advice and information
- financial support

Most RAAs (and VAAs) will have a "core offer" of support available to adopters, which is provided to all adopters and can be accessed without a formal assessment of adoption support needs under ASR 13. These services enable adopters to maintain a relationship with the agency and it is hoped this contact will encourage them to seek support as soon as they need it.

The core offer may include, but is not limited to, regular newsletters, support groups for adopters, play events for adopters and preschool children, a training programme, peer support or buddying schemes, and membership of organisations such as Adoption UK, Children and Trauma Community Hub (CATCH) or the Association of Therapeutic Parenting.

Where the adopters need a level of support that will require an adoption support assessment, give details of how this can be accessed and how information about this process will be provided to them. Where an application is being made for therapeutic support funded by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) prior to the Adoption Order being made, give details of who is responsible for making this application and any review of the provision.

Include information or signposting about where the responsibility for providing adoption support services from three years after the making of the adoption order will lie.[18]

Adoption support to the birth family

This section is set out so that it can be shared separately to the main document with any members of the child's birth family who are eligible for or will be receiving support.

The requirement to provide support to the parents or guardians of a child placed for adoption is set out in AAR 37 and ASR 4. This covers the provision of:

- services to enable discussion of matters relating to adoption
- assistance in relation to arrangements for contact
- counselling, advice and information

ASR 4 also includes the provision of support to a relative (or someone with whom the local authority

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18 ASSR 7(a) states that where adopters are living outside the area covered by the placing agency, the responsibility for providing adoption support services from the authority ceases to apply at the end of the period of three years from the date of the adoption order (except in relation to any financial support provided by the local authority where the decision to provide that support was made before the adoption order). It would then be the local authority where the adopters and child are living who would provide any adoption support, assessment of needs and the support services identified.

considers the child to have a beneficial relationship with) and to the child's sibling/s. They are entitled to:

- assistance in relation to arrangements for contact
- counselling, advice and information

Give the names and contact details for the workers in the adoption support service of the RAA that family members will need for either general support or support specific to the ongoing arrangements for them to remain connected to the child, including financial support.

Research has shown the benefits of working with the child's family members so that they can positively contribute to the child's ongoing understanding of their background and their identity.[19]

Birth parents must be offered independent support and counselling once the plan for adoption is agreed[20]. Birth parents should be supported to understand how they can continue to play an important role in their child's life post adoption. This may involve a separate service that is commissioned by the RAA/VAA or the local authority; in which case, birth parents need to have details of how they can access this support and any restrictions on how long it is available for.

Some RAAs and VAAs offer support groups to parents and other relatives or may be able to signpost to other organisations that can offer this resource.

It is also helpful in this section to set out the details of workers with particular responsibility for supporting the family members' involvement in indirect exchanges or face-to-face meetings.

Review of Adoption Support Plan

AAR 36.3 states that the first review must be held no more than four weeks after moving in; the second no more than three months after this; and subsequent reviews held at six-monthly intervals until an Adoption Order is made, or the child is no longer lives with the prospective adopter. Statutory Guidance 5.35 also states that the agency may conduct additional reviews where it considers it appropriate, and should always be prepared to do so at the request of the prospective adopters or the child.

This review section should be updated with any changes to the support needs for the child or the adopters before the child in care review takes place.

After the review, it will then be updated with any recommendations or actions agreed during the review, and a copy of the updated Support Plan provided to the adopters.

The date the report has been updated should also be noted on the first page of the ASP.

Acknowledgements

The Adoption Support Plan and accompanying guides for adopters and social workers have been developed by CoramBAAF, building on work completed by Adoption England and feedback gained

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19 Supporting birth relatives (Research in Practice)
20 AAR 14/ASG 2.31 The agency should offer the parents the services of an independent support worker – someone who can provide advice and support and is either from another adoption agency or adoption support agency.

through a pilot of the form and consultations with Adoption UK and relevant CoramBAAF forums. The Adoption Support Plan was piloted by the following RAAS in 2024: Adoption West, Adopt London East, Aspire Adoption, Adopt Thames Valley, Cambridgshire and Peterborough Adoption.