



Adoption Support Plan

An independent
reviewing officer'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 when they are being matched. Then, when the child moves 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 part of the paperwork required 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.

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 AAR 36 (6e)² sets out that this plan must be reviewed as part of the child in care reviews up to the point of the Adoption Order.

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

What is included in the Adoption Support Plan?

There are five main areas covered in the Adoption Support Plan.

1. The professional network around the child and family. This section provides the names and contact details of all the key professionals who will be supporting the adopters and child during the matching process, transitions period and their move to the family. The 'Transition and moving in' section sets out expectations about what support each of these workers will give once the child is living with the family. The information about the professionals involved with the family will change over time and can be updated when the Adoption Support Plan is reviewed.
2. 'All about the child' - This brings together all the information regarding what is known about the child's needs and the support they will need from the adopters and from the professionals supporting the family. It includes a specific section – The arrangements for the child to stay in touch with family and people important to them.
3. 'All about the adopters and their support' - This section covers the support for the adopters from their network of family and friends, and the support from the agency and other professionals.
4. 'Adoption support to the birth family' - This section will be shared with members of the child's family who will be receiving support from the agency.

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.

5. 'Review of the Adoption Support Plan' - This section will be used to inform the child in care reviews. It will cover how the child's or family's needs have changed and will record any recommendations following those meetings that add to or change the support that will be available to the family.

Reviewing the Adoption Support Plan

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

Adoption Agency Regulations (AAR 2005) 36.4 sets out that the social worker must visit within the first week after placement, and thereafter at least once a week for the first four weeks after placement. Thereafter, the pattern of visiting will be decided upon and agreed by the placing agency at each statutory review.

ASG 5.24–5.27 highlights the following points about visits:

- Visits should be shared whenever possible between the child's social worker and the prospective adopter's 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 moving out of 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 the placement, but ASG 5.29 highlights that it will not be sufficient to rely solely on visits by the prospective adopters' social worker.

Statutory reviews

Statutory reviews will be held from one month after the child moves to their adoptive family until the Adoption Order is made.

AAR 36.3

AAR 36.3 states that the first review must be held no more than four weeks after placement; 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.

ASG 5.37

ASG 5.37 notes that the major difference for reviews once a child has been placed for adoption is that the prospective adopters, who have delegated 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 has been placed with 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 any 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

ASG 5.35

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

The Adoption Support Plan should be reviewed during the review meeting. There is a section at the end of the Adoption Support Plan for the social worker to update the form with any changes during the period being reviewed to inform this discussion, and another section for any recommendations from the review to be recorded so the Plan remains up to date.

Acknowledgements

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