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National
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Service



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Cymdeithas ar gyfer Maethu,
Gofal Perthynas a Mabwysiadu
Association for Fostering,
Kinship and Adoption

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Finding and Building Adoptive Families for Children in Wales

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Preface

Sarah Coldrick and Helen Hawksworth

We have had the privilege of working closely with the National Adoption Service for Wales since its establishment in 2014, in our respective roles within adoption in Wales.

In collaboration with all agencies and partners in Wales we have been involved in the development of a number of the NAS Good Practice Guides and All Wales frameworks. These include the four Good Practice Guides on Contact, Transitions and Early Support; Working with Birth Parents; and Adoption Support, together with the accompanying resources, such as the Trauma Nurture Timeline and the Contact Planning Tool.

We were delighted to be commissioned by NAS to develop the Welsh Early Permanence Framework, which places Welsh children on an equal footing with those in other parts of the UK, and the Qualities and Skills Framework, which emphasises analysis and critical thinking in the assessment and approval of prospective adopters.

The Finding and Building Adoptive Families for Children in Wales Good Practice Guide brings together all the strands from the previous Good Practice Guides and frameworks and updates core practice from pre-proceedings through to matching and approval. It draws on high-quality, up-to-date research from Wales and across the UK, including evidence on pre-meets, adoption disruption, and family breakdown, as well as important thematic analysis and practice considerations.

So many have contributed to the creation of this guide, more than can be acknowledged, and is testament to the collaborative way in which the adoption community in Wales works. Our hope is that the guide will enable and enhance current practice and the positive ways in which we find, build and support adoptive families in Wales.

Sarah Coldrick **Legal Consultant, AFKA Cymru**

Sarah has been a legal consultant for BAAF Cymru and now AFKA Cymru since 2009. Before that she was a local authority solicitor having previously worked for many years with children in inner London.

Sarah works across the permanency sector within AFKA Cymru, providing legal advice and delivering training, and working on projects for NAS and Welsh Government.

She is the adoptive parent of three daughters and has been a short break foster carer.

Helen Hawksworth **Trainer Consultant, AFKA Cymru**

Helen started work in Local Authority Children's Services in 1995, following earlier experience working overseas with children and young people and in Wales with adults with additional needs. As a social worker, she has worked across a wide range of settings, including Child Protection, Youth Justice, Residential Care, Fostering, Child Health and Disability, and Adoption.

Helen joined St David's Adoption Service as a manager in 2011 and moved to AFKA Cymru in 2018; she provides advice and training to colleagues and prospective adopters, and leads on the adoption work that AFKA Cymru does for NAS.

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Introduction

Achieving emotional, physical and legal permanence for children as early as we possibly can is an underpinning principle of the legislative framework in Wales and of all social work practice with children and families. Indeed, “the child’s welfare, throughout her life” is unlikely to be achieved without the provision of a secure, stable and permanent environment.

The decision to pursue adoption is one of the most complex aspects of a social worker’s role and adoption legislation is clear that children are adopted only if the court decides that adoption is in their best interests or if the parents have properly relinquished their child. It is considered when other options have been fully explored, and on the clear principle that every effort and support should be provided to help families stay together wherever that is possible. Where this is not possible, when a child cannot remain in their wider family or safely return home from care, adoption provides legal security, love and a sense of belonging in a family for some children. In a subtle but important shift away from “nothing else will do”, it is the *only* option for some children and has lifelong implications for all those involved.

Selwyn et al research study in 2014 concluded that adoption worked and family life for most children and their adoptive parents was good; that overall, children made extraordinary developmental progress in their adoptive family (Selwyn et al. 2014). These positive statements were reiterated in the 2022 Sonnett report which confirmed that a child who lives with a family is more likely to experience positive outcomes than those living in care, and that adoption brings substantial value to society through the permanence, stability and support it can offer children who cannot live with their birth families. (Clifford et al, 2022)

However, *whilst most adoptions achieve stability in family lives and the adoption process is intended to achieve permanency for all children, the experiences of the child pre-adoption impact their outcomes after adoption* (Neil et al, 2020). Key messages from the 2014 study are echoed in the more recent Family Routes study (Selwyn and Gardiner, 2025). Although this identifies a decrease in disruption^[1] rates for both adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders in recent years, a number of the predictors of disruption remain the same. Exposure to multiple adverse childhood trauma, older age at entry to care and leaving care, more changes of carers, and delays from entry to care to an adoption order being granted continue to be associated with greater frequency of disruption. This study concluded that adoptions are less likely to disrupt than SGOs but when they did, it was often associated with higher level of child need.

Practitioners also need to be mindful of the recent shift in focus by Rennolds et al (2025) to pre order disruption in adoption where the research has highlighted the complexity of the transition and early placement period and focused on the complex web of relationships and connections interdependent on each other for success. The four key themes explored in the study illuminate the fragility of each connection and the fallibility of interdependence when feelings and concerns were **not said**; issues came to light that were **not known**; issues were **not challenged**; thoughts and realities were **not heard**. These themes are reflected upon in the VVC Thematic Review of Pre Order Disruption (Dickinson Collins, 2025) and comparisons drawn from their own practice experience in this area.

It is difficult to imagine a more life changing act than placing a child with their adoptive family. It is a major social work responsibility and is, unquestionably, *a process rather than an event* (Farmer and Dance. 2015). This is because there are so many unknowns at the beginning but also because adopters have needs as well as capacities; some are left feeling “blamed, demoralised and unsupported” (Quinton, 2012. Selwyn et al, 2014) especially if they felt they had been encouraged to consider children who in hindsight they were ill suited to parent (Farmer and Dance, 2015. Rennolds et al, 2025). We are also conscious of the harm that unnecessary delay in achieving permanence causes for children and the devastating impact of disruptions and family breakdowns.

The recent study “Safeguarding in the context of adoption and special guardianship” recognised that safeguarding issues often arise *when families, despite their best efforts, are overwhelmed by the demands of caring for their children.... exacerbated by a lack of timely and specialist support; long waits for mental health services, inadequate pastoral support and family interventions which are not sufficiently aware of the impact of previous trauma* (Garstang et al. 2025). Trauma shapes fragile infant brains and love, whilst essential, is not enough. We know that healing happens within safe, warm, responsive relationships and that parental warmth makes a difference in relation to children’s mental health and their ability to discriminate emotions (Paine et al, 2020; Paine et al, 2023). We also know that this takes time and that ongoing, informed and accessible support is essential (AUK Wales Barometer study; The Potato Group, 2025). Finding a family is just the beginning; we also have to maintain that family, to support and develop capacity and skills as the adoption progresses, to provide scaffolding to help the family grow. The consequences of not doing so are enormous.

[1] Both the Selwyn et al (2014) research and the Selwyn and Gardiner (2025) research focused on adoptions that had disrupted post order

Across Wales, there is a strong understanding of the factors that contribute to a successful match and the common difficulties and challenges experienced in identifying families for children. This insight clearly echoes messages from research and evidence-based practice. Therefore, it is not the intention to provide a guide that adds little to what is already known and being done, but one that reinforces the best practice which already exists, and provides a clear and consistent approach around a family coming together which also aligns with other aspects of the highly regulated adoption process. It focuses on three key themes:

Process – having a good knowledge of children and adopters; ensuring clear and formal processes for tracking and monitoring; identifying and managing risk; anticipating and planning for support needs; ensuring good collaboration with up-to-date information and timely sharing between service areas and practitioners; understanding and managing resource constraints; as well as incorporating systematic learning from research and practice.

Relationships – building relationships based on shared trust and purpose/goal; managing complex emotions and expectations; planning ahead for ‘keeping in touch’.

Own feelings – understanding the sense of responsibility; values/ biases that often lie within the task of family finding; managing uncertainty and risk; and a commitment to good support and supervision.

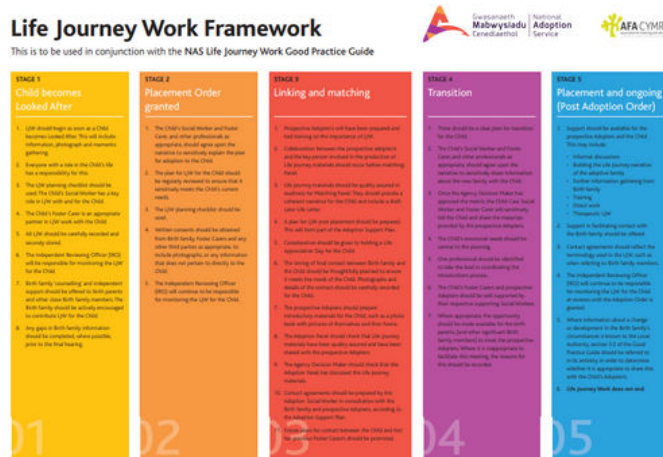
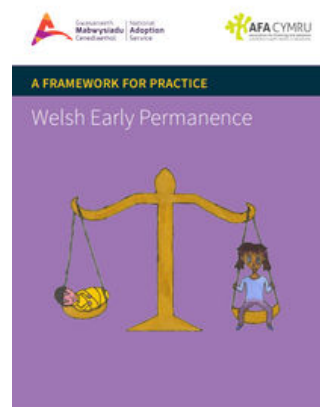
Undoubtably, adoption in today’s Wales differs significantly from its historical context. Prior to the Children Act 1989 and subsequent Adoption and Children Act 2002, placement itself was seen as sufficient to deal with the welfare issue; adoption was about finding children for people who couldn’t have their own, limited sharing of information and an “off with the old, on with the new approach”. The Act extended the Welfare Principle to match children with specific needs with parents who could meet these needs, and to provide services to help the children and the adopters in this (Quinton. 2012) and services across Wales have continued to be creative and thoughtful in finding and building families and advocating for the change needed which reflects the changing needs of children and families.

We are practicing in a way that fully acknowledges the need for clear, coherent information to be shared with every child about their family of origin and the reasons they weren’t able to stay with them that not only helps a child understand their past and give them a cohesive sense of their heritage and history, but also removes the heavy burden of blame from their shoulders ([Life Journey Work – National Adoption Service](#)). We are thinking more and more about how we gather and record information for adopted and care experienced children and guidance for England and Wales (2024) has been produced regarding this (CALGG). February 2024. The Records of Adopted and care experienced people – developing guidance for record keepers and care professionals. [Care and Adoption Records — Archives & Records Association](#)

- We know that *continuity of relationships is essential in helping children to construct their identity and to develop a strong sense of belonging, both of which are crucial to their well-being* (Care Enquiry 2013) and so we are thinking about family, relationships, loss, and identity a great deal; about how we can enable and ensure continuity in a child’s relationships and help them incorporate all that makes them who they are. ([Contact Good Practice Guide](#))
- Whilst we cannot presume that every child will want to pursue a connection, or even that it is emotionally and physically safe to do so in all cases, the focus has definitely shifted to exploring and supporting greater openness, in our communication with children, in our support of birth and adoptive families ([Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide](#)) in moving steadily towards more active and meaningful relationships, and importantly, viewing these as a protective factor rather than a threatening one.
- We are thinking about the ways we prepare and move children to their new family in much more sensitive ways with a three-stage process of introductions and more involvement of foster carers. ([Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#)).
- We are recruiting and assessing people who can provide stability to children who are older and might have had multiple moves and children with complex ethnic identities, people who are empathic and able to understand the lifelong impact of early developmental trauma, and who can accept their intrinsic connection with their child’s family through their relationship with their child. We are recruiting people who are able to keep brothers and sisters together or willing to become Welsh Early Permanence carers ([Welsh Early Permanence for Professionals – National Adoption Service](#)) whilst the court is making their decision about a child final care plan.
- We are continuing to develop adoption policy and practice in order to support everyone in the adoption triangle. Indeed, this last point has been addressed in detail in the [Adoption Support Good Practice Guide](#) with the overarching key principle of agency actions and support being seen as part of the ecology of parenting (Quinton. 2012), not simply something that takes place prior to placement or is “put in” when difficulties arise.

Concerns about “getting it right” when finding and building adoptive families continue to drive developments in Wales, to ensure children’s complex and diverse needs are properly assessed and analysed and to ensure that we have robust, analytical assessments to identify people with the suitable qualities and skills to meet these needs, people who are realistic and resilient. Paine et al (2020) noted, *the quality of parenting and the nature of the home environment play a vital role in altering the trajectory of children’s emotional, behavioural and social outcomes*. Earlier, Farmer and Dance (2012) found a direct correlation between the extent to which children’s needs are matched with the capacities of adoptive parents to meet them and found there was a very strong relationship both with **stability** – did the placement last – and the **quality** of the placement for the child. These elements were central to the development of the NAS Adoption Qualities and Skills framework ([Qualities & Skills Framework – National Adoption Service](#)) which incorporates findings from research, notably the Wales Cohort Study (Paine et al, 2020; Paine et al, 2023).

Crucially, if we are to continue to move forward in finding and building warm, responsive adoptive families with realistic expectations of the children and of themselves, we need to continue to shift from a situation in which we look for a match based on speculative information and then use services to address potential and emerging difficulties. Instead, we should continue building a system where adopters and agencies are active participants in the parenting ecosystem, one that fosters ongoing dialogue between all those who can help and which enables us to better understand and meet the evolving needs of both children and adoptive parents. This aligns with the core principles of our adoption support provision and reflects the continuous and collaborative approach within adoption in today’s Wales.



The Status and Purpose of the Guide

This guide is intended for use by all professionals involved with care planning for children, and although not exclusively, where adoption is a possible care plan.

It is constructed to build upon the existing legal framework and best practice for adoption in Wales with the aim of providing all those involved with a quality service through a consistent, individualised approach to family finding and building. We look at what needs to be considered and what needs to happen at key stages of the family finding process, right from the start of children becoming looked after up to their move to their new family or a change in care plan – and everything else in between.

This guide stands alone. However, there are references throughout to the other NAS Good Practice Guides and frameworks as well as other relevant materials. These include:

- [Contact Good Practice Guide](#)
- [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#)
- [Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide](#)
- [Adoption Support Good Practice Guide](#)
- Welsh Early Permanence framework [Welsh Early Permanence for Professionals – National Adoption Service](#)
- Adoption Qualities and Skills framework [Qualities & Skills Framework – National Adoption Service](#)
- Life Journey framework [Life Journey Work – National Adoption Service](#)
- NAS/CAFCASS Cymru/ADSS [Practice Guidance: Children Relinquished for Adoption](#)
- [All Wales Adoption Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Safeguarding Wales](#) Procedures

Each section in the guide sets out:

The legal framework where appropriate, with any **relevant statute set out in red**, **regulations in blue** and **case law and general principles in green**.

What needs to happen at each stage to achieve best practice and what must be done by the child's social worker and/ or the adoption social worker as well as other professionals involved in the child's plan. This takes into account that some aspects will be done concurrently and some consecutively.

Appendix 1 sets out who this guide is intended for, their roles and responsibilities and the terminology used in the guide.

In each section of the guide, there is a specific heading relating to **brothers and sisters**. This reflects the significance of these relationships, and what needs to be done from the start to prioritise their development and continuity.

The **guiding principles** for this guide are as follows:

- Effective processes that keep adoption on track and account for decisions made
- Good quality information that is regularly updated about the children with a plan for adoption and the adoptive parents who might parent them
- A consistent and individualised approach that takes account of a child's right to remain living in Wales, to be placed with their brothers and sisters if possible, and to move to their new family within a reasonable timeframe
- Creative use of a range of family finding strategies in Wales that are individual to each child and outlined in their Family Finding Plan
- Timely and appropriate referral to the Adoption Register for Wales
- Ongoing commitment to family building once the child is placed

At the heart of all we do is the **voice of the child**

- I have a right for decisions made about where I grow up to be made very carefully and as soon as they can be as days really matter for me.
- I have a right to understand why this particular family was chosen for me and to know that you are thinking about the whole of my life, not just the here and now. I know this is hard but it's what I need you to think about.
- I have a right to live with my brothers and sisters if I can. If I can't live with my brothers and sisters, I have a right to keep in touch with them and know how they are doing.
- I have a right to expect that your thinking and decisions focuses really hard on me being able to grow up in Wales. My Welsh identity is very important to me. If this is not possible, I have a right to understand why decisions were made for me to grow up outside Wales
- I have a right to keep in touch with people who are important to me if it is safe for this to happen
- I have a right to know my story. This will really help me understand who I am.

The Adoption Register for Wales (ARW)

It would not be possible to have developed this guide without including full consideration of the part that the Adoption Register Wales plays in family finding for children. The Register forms part of our legal framework in Wales and provides a clear framework within which practice in Wales sits.

What is it and what is its purpose?

The Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) is a secure, national bilingual database that serves as a linking and family finding tool for children awaiting adoption and prospective adopters in Wales. The Register is funded by Welsh Government, managed by the [National Adoption Service](#) for Wales and hosted by [Link Maker](#), and contains profiles of both children and approved adopters.

The Register has statutory duties set out in the [Adoption and Children Act 2002 \(Joint Adoption Arrangements\) \(Wales\) Directions 2015 as amended in 2019](#) with specific legal requirements for local authorities and the adoption regional collaboratives acting on behalf of local authorities as adoption agencies. [Regulation 16](#) sets out minimum legal requirements of the adoption regions in relation to children and prospective adopters and states:

(1) Where a local authority is seeking an adoptive placement for a child and —

(a) one month has elapsed since the date on which the local authority was authorised to place the child for adoption; and

(b) the local authority has not made a decision to match the child with prospective adopters, the local authority must provide the child's details to the Wales Adoption Register established by the Welsh Ministers

(3) Where a local authority has approved a person as a prospective adopter and —

(a) one month has elapsed since the date of approval; and

(b) the local authority has not made a decision to match the prospective adopter with a child for adoption, the local authority must provide details of the prospective adopter to the Wales Adoption Register established by the Welsh Ministers.

The purpose of the Register is twofold:

1) To support the family finding process and reduce delay by providing the widest choice of families from across Wales (and when appropriate, other parts of the UK). As the Register can be accessed by prospective and approved adopters, it provides an early opportunity for them to think about the child or children they may consider they can parent before exploring these links further. This ensures that a suitable match is found as quickly as possible for each child. The Register supports effective collaboration between professionals and with prospective adopters, which in turn promotes more of the right matches for children.

It does this in a variety of ways in addition to the national database including active linking through quarterly **Practitioner/Manager meetings, profiling events** with regional adoption collaboratives and VAAs, and annual Register events such as **Exchange Days** and **Adoption Activity Days**. (see below for more detail)

2) To reduce delay for children in Wales waiting for adoption by monitoring and tracking children and adopters for whom family finding has slowed down or become inactive. Reasons for this inactivity might be due to agency process, a lack of contingency planning within the Family Finding Plan, or no available families to meet the needs of the child/ children.

The Register provides regular data and reports on children and adopters to the National Adoption Service, and provides monthly updates of numbers of children and adopters on the Register to regions and VAA's which in turn ensures an accurate national picture for Wales. This helps inform targeted recruitment strategies and media and marketing based on the needs of children waiting.

As this function is entirely dependent on timely and effective provision of information, details must be provided in line with the requirements set out in the Directions, even if a match looks as though it will be made within or shortly after the expiry of one month from the date of authority to place the child, or date of approval of prospective adopters.

Training on the use of the Register is regularly provided for all staff and the Adoption Register Manager attends Regional Adoption Manager's meetings on a quarterly basis to share data and information and to address any issues that may impact on family finding.

[Adoption Register Wales Resources – National Adoption Service](#)

Referral to the Register

What needs to happen

Children – See Flowchart 1

1) All children for whom the local authority has authority to place for adoption (placement order or consent) must be added to the Register **within 1 month** of this authorisation **even if a potential match has been identified**. The adoption social worker and child social worker will work together to develop and upload the child's profile to the Register.

2) Social workers should think about the purpose of the child's profile when deciding what to include. The detail included will be dependent on whether the Register is being used as an active family finding tool or whether is for monitoring the course of the family finding plan as a potential link has already been identified.

Welsh and English versions of profiles will always need to be provided, including updates. This needs to be built into timescales. Any additional information to the profile e.g. CAR/B does not need to be translated.

Each region will have its own process for ensuring the quality and original timing and updating of the profiles which includes appropriate photographs of the child and additional materials, like videos, if they are available.

3) When the child's profile is uploaded to the Register, there is a facility built in that allows regions to set the level at which they identify and progress a link. This will have been recorded on the child's Family Finding Plan:

➤ **If a potential match has been identified or likely to be identified from within their regional resources with a clear timeframe of no longer than 3 months from placement order, or with prospective adopters from another region/ VAA who has adopted an older sibling.**

In these circumstances, the information provided to the Register can be basic details only. Refer to **"When a local match has already been identified"** in [ARW Guidelines](#). These profiles can be updated if necessary, i.e. if a potential link within the regions does not proceed and a widened search is necessary.

➤ **If the child's profile is for the purpose of identifying potential links.**

Effective monitoring and forecasting of assessment and approval activity will enable regional teams to determine at or before ADM stage whether a suitable match is likely to become available from within the region within three months of a placement order being granted. If this is not likely to be the case, provision should be made to share the child's details with other regions /VAAs in Wales as soon as possible and no later than 3 months of the placement order being granted. A **full bilingual profile** should be prepared for this purpose.

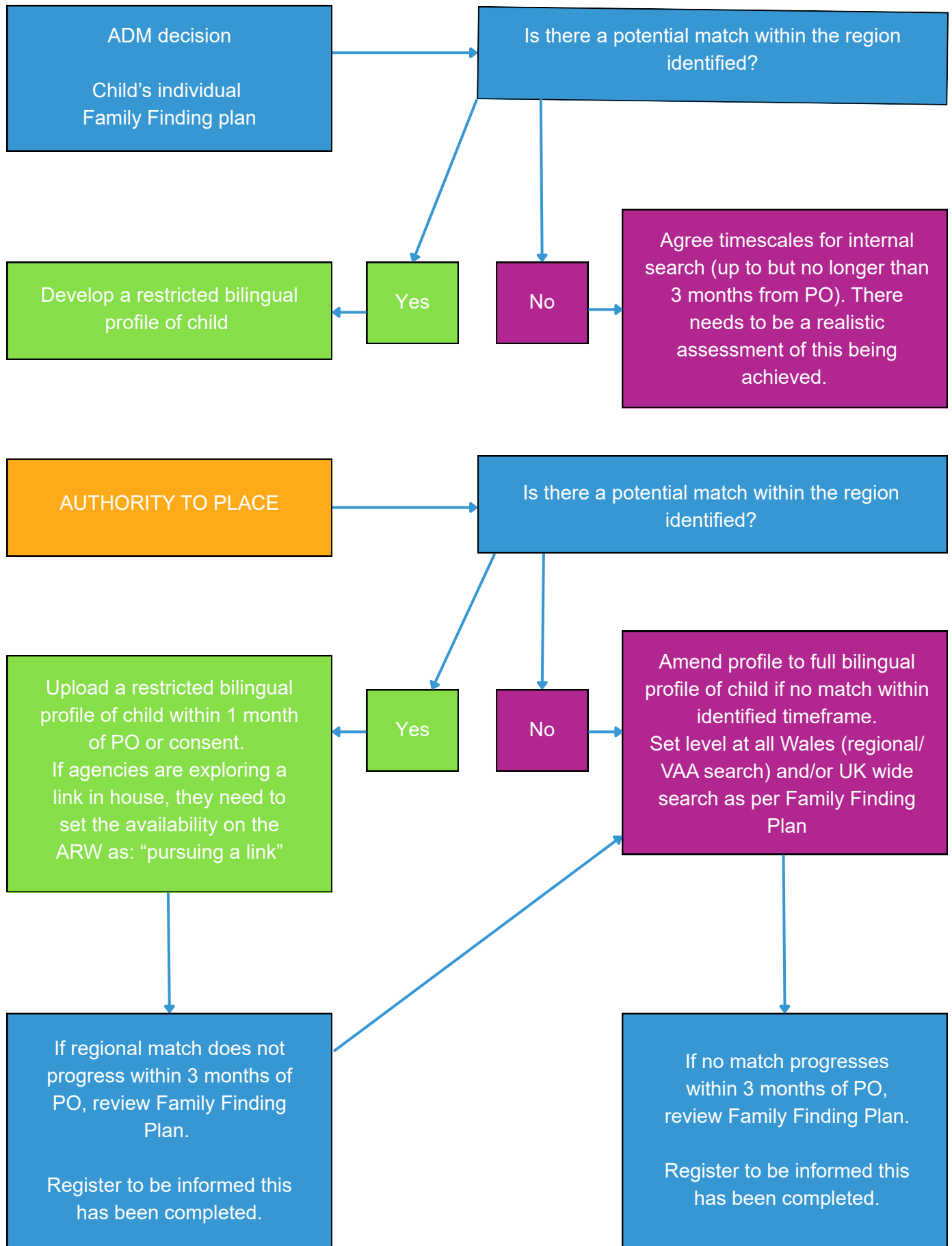
Similarly, effective and timely inter regional/ VAA collaboration across Wales will be able to identify whether any potential links are available or likely to be available within a limited timescale. It is imperative that all avenues are explored within Wales and via the ARW, and recorded on the child's Family Finding Plan and Record before any decisions are made to widen the search. However, in order to ensure there is no unnecessary delay, if there are no appropriate links available within Wales, or specific reasons why a placement outside Wales should be sought immediately (as recorded on the Family Finding Plan and Record), consideration will then be given to the child's details being opened UK wide, via Link Maker as soon as possible. This should be no later than 3 months from the date a full profile was uploaded to the Register. These actions should always be reflected in the child's **Family Finding Plan. Refer to Inter Register Protocol of [ARW Guidelines](#)**.

The full profiles should be no more than 1000 words: an engaging summary of the child that captures the essence of who they are, their presentation, likes and dislikes, and any health and development issues. This should be enough to identify potential links but not be a repeat of information in the child's CAR/B. Training on how to write a good profile is regularly provided by the Register.

Any potential links identified can be followed up with discussions with the child's social workers, adoption social workers and prospective adopters where further information can be disclosed.

4) The Adoption Register Manager will frequently track and review all children referred to the Register, noting date referred and date placement order granted, whether timescales identified in the child's Family Finding Plan have been adhered to, referral to the Adopting Together Service (see below) and any other relevant agency actions taken to avoid delay. This will be particularly important for those children who have been waiting for longer to be matched and will inform necessary actions to be taken by the Adoption Register Manager, including more regular meetings to share information and discuss potential links across Wales.

Flowchart 1



Families

1) The Register is designed to be a more adopter led service and there should always be open discussion between prospective adopters and their adoption social workers to agree how they will use the Register. Refer to Appendix 1, [ARW Guidelines: Information for Prospective Adopter and Privacy Notice](#).

All prospective adopters must be encouraged to work collaboratively with the agency to complete their profile and manage any activity regarding exploring potential links. It is really helpful to set clear parameters around issues, including the priority of finding Welsh families for Welsh children, initiating contact with other professionals, and requesting information to ensure that a consistent and collaborative approach is maintained.

A profile of prospective adopters must be completed and uploaded to the Register as soon as possible following the ADM decision on suitability to adopt and **no later than 1 month** of this decision. Refer to Appendix 4, [ARW Guidelines: Adopter Profile Flowchart](#). Prospective adopters should also be offered the opportunity to provide a video to be uploaded.

Welsh and English versions of profiles will always need to be provided, including updates. This needs to be built into timescales. Any additional information does not need to be translated. There needs to be a robust quality assurance process built in, including agreement for the ASW to make amendments as necessary.

As with the child, social workers should think about the purpose of the adopter's profile when deciding what to include. The detail included will be dependent on whether or not the Register is being used as an active family finding tool or for monitoring purposes only.

➤ **If a potential match has been identified or likely to be identified from within their regional resources with a clear timeframe of no longer than 3 months from ADM suitability to adopt decision.**

In these circumstances, the information provided to the Register needs to be basic details only and for statistical purposes.

These profiles can be updated if necessary i.e. if a potential link within the regions does not proceed and a widened search is necessary.

➤ **If the adopter profile is for the purpose of identifying potential matches:**

Refer to Appendix 2, [ARW Guidelines](#) Inter Register protocol.

If a match has not been identified from within the region within 3 months of ADM suitability to adopt decision, or specific eligibility criteria applies e.g. specific nationality/ethnicity, the prospective adopter's profile can be made available outside the region.

Any potential links identified can be followed up with discussions with the child's social workers, adoption social workers and prospective adopters where further information can be disclosed.

As with child profiles the information uploaded in an adopter profile should not be more than 1,000 words. It should be a summary of information, sufficient to enable the Register to identify possible links and not be a repeat of the assessment. Adopters should be offered the opportunity to provide a video clip to be uploaded. This will not need to be translated but again will need to be quality assured by the Agency.

2) The Adoption Register Manager will frequently track and review all adopters referred to the Register, noting date referred and date of ADM suitability to adopt decision, and review those who have been waiting, including timeframe, whether on hold, refusing matches and/or leaving the process. This will allow a more accurate picture to be achieved.



Other Register functions/ events

- **Adoption Register Wales Practitioner Manager meetings.**

The purpose of these quarterly meetings is to discuss and monitor the use of the Register and compliance with statutory functions and agreed timeframes to ensure accuracy, currency and consistency across all regions/ VAAs in Wales.

A primary function will be to consider those children waiting the longest and any additional actions that could be taken but also to discuss prospective adopters who are waiting longer or on hold.

The meeting is also a key mechanism for planning Register led family finding events including Online Profiling events, Adoption Activity Days and Exchange Days. See [Adoption Register Wales – National Adoption Service](#) for further information.

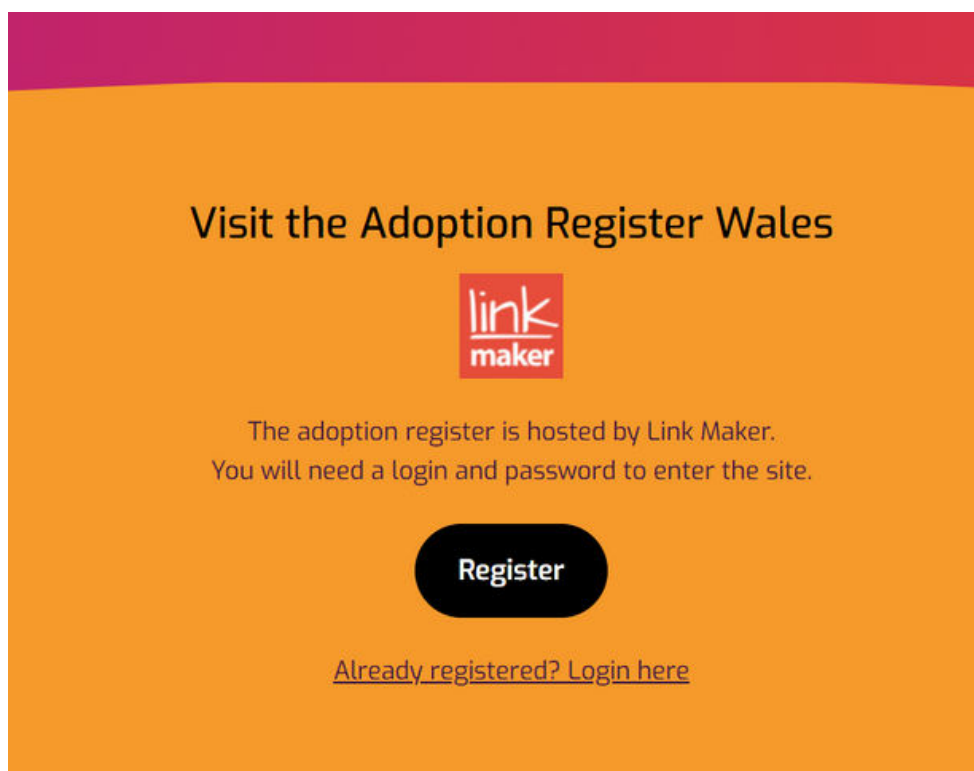
- **Monthly online drop ins.**

In order to enable regular discussion between family finding practitioners across Wales and reduce delay in family finding for children, the Register will facilitate monthly online drop-in sessions for regions/ VAAs with the sole focus of sharing profiles of children and adopters. These will be open to any relevant practitioner e.g. Recruitment and Assessment Managers, FFSW/ ASW, VAA managers/ ASWS.

Children – Due to numbers of children, it will not be possible to develop a profile booklet of all of them for the purpose of sharing at the monthly drop ins, and this service will not be applicable for all of them anyway. However, it will be useful to access information on specific children from the Adoption Register Wales for discussion in the drop ins. Regional practitioners will notify the Adoption Register Manager in advance of the online drop of which children they would like to discuss in order for them to access their Register profile.

For those children who have not yet been referred to the Register (SBPA decision made but placement order not yet granted), and for whom a preliminary in house regional search has not identified any potential links (either with approved prospective adopters or with those due to be approved within 3 months), a specific profile should be developed for sharing at the monthly drop in. At this stage, this will be for information sharing purposes only as an interagency fee might not have been agreed. Should a potential link be identified, funding should be sought and agreed at the earliest opportunity.

Families – all regions/ VAAs will have a profile booklet of prospective adopters approved (full profile); those with panel date within 6 weeks (restricted profile).



Pre Proceedings

1.1

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Children Act 1989

**Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
(Parts 3 and 4)**

**Public Law Outline (PD 12A): PRACTICE DIRECTION
12A – CARE, SUPERVISION AND OTHER PART 4
PROCEEDINGS: GUIDE TO CASE MANAGEMENT**

The Public Law Outline (PLO) forms part of the rules which dictate how care proceedings are conducted. The pre proceedings part of the PLO starts with a legal gateway or legal planning meeting where the local authority considers care proceedings.

What needs to happen

It may seem premature to the child's social worker to start thinking about the information needed for family finding at the pre proceedings stage. However, information about the child at this stage, as well as information about birth parents, brothers and sisters and wider family members is just as important for identifying, building and supporting an adoptive family as it is in working towards reunification or planning for kinship care.

Information gleaned at a stage in the family's life where care proceedings have not yet started can often be the type of information that easily gets lost at a later date. There is often a more relaxed and positive relationship between parents, family members and the local authority; informal details about the family and the child can be obtained (e.g. why a child's name was chosen, who in the family has curly hair like the child, the names of family pets when the child was small etc) and recorded for the purposes of completing the CAR/B and Life Journey Work, if that is the plan for the child's future.

Adoption work is complex, and it takes time to build knowledge and experience in this area of practice; research highlights the importance of collective decision making, good interagency liaison and consistent messaging.

Whilst it is acknowledged that each Regional Adoption Collaborative has its own protocol for early alerts and referrals, the general principles below apply to all.

Legal Planning meeting at start of pre proceedings

The Regional Adoption Service (Family Finding Team Manager or equivalent) should be aware through their set processes and collaboration with the CSW and legal team of any children where there is legal advice that the threshold criteria have been met and where adoption is part of multi-track planning. There will always need to be a Child Referral form completed by the CSW as this form triggers all necessary actions by the Regional Adoption Collaborative – see Chapter 2.

- *The principles and practice of Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) should be embedded in care planning and decision making from an early stage and routinely considered alongside other options for permanence ([Welsh Early Permanence for Professionals – National Adoption Service](#)).*

Welsh Early Permanence should always be considered where there is a high possibility of adoption when sufficient information is known about a family.

What is critical in decision making is that evidence is properly gathered, analysed, tested and agreed which clearly establishes the benefits of WEP for a particular child or children in question. This evidence should also clearly identify a realistic analysis of the risk of reunification with parents and extended family and ensure this is manageable. (Welsh Early Permanence. A Framework for Practice).

- The CSW should always have up to date and accurate knowledge of the different options for permanence and what these mean for the child in the immediate term as well as across their lifetime. Regional adoption practitioners will be available to provide advice on this including changes in practice around keeping in touch arrangements, timescales and the process.
- If a family meeting/ FGC hasn't happened, the CSW to identify opportunities for this as a means of identifying realistic options for permanence as well as to ensure continuity in relationships with people who are important to the child.
- The CSW should submit a Child Referral form to the Regional Adoption Collaborative no later than 12 days following the Case Management Hearing – See Chapter 2 for more details.

Family Meetings/Family Group Conference (FGC)

Research evidence has shown that the use of Family Meetings or Family Group Conferences (FGC) at pre proceedings stage can keep children with their families and out of care. (Foundations, 2023). They may identify family members who can get lost once proceedings start, perhaps because they are not putting themselves forward as kinship carers or they have a difficult relationship with parents, people who have been important to the child in providing security, warmth and stability within the family.

If adoption is the plan for the child, these family members may be the very people who could provide the child and adoptive family with a 'keeping in touch' arrangement that helps the child's development of a healthy dual identity.

Individual Responsibility

If a family meeting or FGC has not occurred pre proceedings, the CSW will need to instigate this (with support – see service responsibility below) at this stage to enable all key members to be identified. The purpose of the meeting will be multi-functional:

- *Get a real sense of how the child fits within this network and their identity as part of it*
- *Enable the CSW to further explore potential and realistic options for permanence for the child within this network*
- *Establish what support is available for the birth parents within the extended family and friends network for the immediate, medium and long term*
- *Gather information relevant to the CAR/B and the child's Life Journey Work (LJW)*

Service Responsibility Relating to Family Meetings

- *Each area to identify a single point of contact (SPOC) for support and assistance in preparing and facilitating a Family meeting or Family Group Conference. Although the CSW should assist in preparation and attend this meeting, they should not hold primary responsibility and should not chair the meeting (Ch.1 Care Proceedings. [Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide](#)).*

Adoption Referral Process for children

The Regional Adoption Collaborative will have a clear and readily accessible Adoption Referral process with information and timescales and a robust system for recording and tracking activity. The Adoption Referral process will include:

- **When to refer a child.** A Child Referral should be completed by the CSW and submitted to the Regional Adoption Collaborative no later than the date of the Case Management Hearing (Day 12 of proceedings).
- **What should be included in the referral**

- **How to set an ADM date/who will do this** and to keep the adoption team informed of the court timetable
- **What needs to be included in the ADM pack** if CSW is recommending a care plan of adoption, timescales for submission, details of the meeting itself and who should attend, timescales for the decision being made
- **What the next steps are** if a "should be placed for adoption" decision is made. This will include submitting an application for a placement order; confirming address of birth parents; notifying the region immediately if a placement order is granted to prevent any delay in Family Finding.

If Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) is being considered, there is a WEP specific Child Referral form. [WEP Child Referral Form](#)

Work with Parents (Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide)

Having compassion for parents who harm their children can be hard, especially when they are hostile and resistant; we might worry that showing empathy for them might be misconstrued, that we are condoning their behaviour and ignoring a child's experience. There is no question that we always have to prioritise the child; they are vulnerable and need our protection but essentially, we are working with both a vulnerable child and a vulnerable adult. In the same way we think about a child's behaviour in the context of their experiences in order to understand their presenting behaviour and respond with empathy and compassion, this relational approach is a prerequisite to supporting parents during both care planning and the family finding process.

- It is imperative that the CSW is honest with parents and family members, right from the start of the pre proceedings process, that adoption may be a care planning option but that nothing at this stage is sure and that so much depends on the work undertaken during the PLO pre proceedings process and the outcome of any care proceedings.

This includes early information about WEP if this is being considered. A range of leaflets and a short animated film have been developed for this purpose. WEP information will also need to be provided to the parents' legal representatives. See section 8 [Welsh Early Permanence for Professionals – National Adoption Service](#)

- CSW should provide early information and if appropriate, referral to services for parents. Information about services available in each area, eligibility and how to refer can be found here. [Birth families – National Adoption Service](#)
- CSW need to be aware of work within the parameters of the [NFJO Born into Care research and best practice guidance and resources](#) which inform multi-agency practice when the state takes safeguarding action pre-birth, at birth and in the immediate follow-up period, after discharge from hospital.

Brothers and Sisters

It is widely recognised in policy and legislation that if children enter local authority care and cannot return to their parents, it is generally better for them to be fostered or adopted with their brothers and sisters. This is important because for many people sibling relationships can be the longest lasting relationship and can also provide continuity and support throughout life. However, in reality, many siblings are separated permanently in the care system and by adoption. (Selwyn & Saunders. 2012)

- These longest lasting relationships are significant for each child's identity, their sense of history and belonging, and validation of shared experiences (Ottaway, 2012). Thinking about brothers and sisters early is essential, not just in terms of whether they should remain living together and how this can be supported, but also about how they can remain in touch with each other should this not be able to happen.
- Involvement with the family at this stage provides an opportunity to observe and assess the children's interactions and attachment with each other and their place within the overall structure of the wider family. A failure to properly understand these relationships whilst brothers and sisters are living together can lead to decision making that permanently severs very important ties and has long lasting implications for their future.
- When brothers and sisters are involved, the CSW needs to always consider doing a **Together or Apart** assessment at an early stage. This will inform family finding going forward, particularly when children are separated when an interim care order is granted and they are placed in different foster homes.
- Placing brothers and sisters together can be positive and may be more stable, but the quality of relationships with each other is very important to assess. Some children will need to be placed separately.

Service Responsibility should ensure that there are sufficient expertise and confidence in completing sibling assessments.

- When we think about brothers and sisters, we need to think about shared biological relationships and shared experience. Research often highlights how paternal half siblings or other children that the child might consider their sibling are ignored; direct work with the child and information gathered from Family meetings will provide this detail.
- Chapter 2 & 3 will address what needs to be done when a child has older siblings already in an adoptive family.

Outside the Public Law Outline

Relinquished children.

What needs to happen

- CSW to complete a referral to the regional adoption collaborative as soon as they become aware that a parent may choose to give their child up for adoption by consent under **s19 and s20 ACA 2002**. A Family Finding social worker will be allocated and offer Birth Parent Counselling (in line with [Regulation 14 AA\(W\)R 2005](#))
- The legal duties in relation to the child remain with the local authority and a CSW will be allocated immediately to meet with both parents along with the ASW to ensure they fully understand what adoption means and are willingly agreeing to this.
- Medical consent paperwork needs to be completed prior to referral to the Medical Advisor for an Adoption Medical.
- If the local authority is fully satisfied that both parents fully understand the implications of their decision and believes the child "should be adopted", the case is presented to adoption panel for recommendation before going to ADM.
- The NAS/ Cafcass Cymru/ ADSS [Practice Guidance: Children Relinquished for Adoption](#) should always be adhered to. This includes referral to Cafcass Cymru.
- Once a "should be placed for adoption" decision be made and the relevant consents formally obtained, the adoption agency may proceed to place the child for adoption.

From Care Proceedings to the Making of the Placement Order

The Legal Framework

Children Act 1989

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (Part 6)

Public Law Outline (PD 12A): PRACTICE DIRECTION 12A – CARE, SUPERVISION AND OTHER PART 4 PROCEEDINGS: GUIDE TO CASE MANAGEMENT

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015

This chapter covers the period from the commencement of care proceedings (ie when the application is issued by the court) to the date the placement order is made, usually at the conclusion of care proceedings.

What needs to happen

The PLO, once care proceedings have started, ensures that delay in deciding on the child's future is kept to a minimum. In recent years, particularly in Wales, this means that the care proceedings will often conclude before the expiry of 26 weeks, especially if the majority of the assessments have been undertaken pre proceedings.

It is essential, therefore, if adoption is part of the multi-track planning process, or is in fact the chosen care plan at the start of proceedings following pre proceedings work, that work starts straight away in pursuing the plan for adoption in anticipation of a care plan being made for adoption and the application being made for a placement order.

A placement order will only be granted if the court determines the child is at significant risk and that the needs of the child cannot be met by the parents or extended family within reasonable timescales, and that the child's needs across their lifetime can only be met by adoption.

Analysis of reasons for delay showed that it was essential that all professionals were realistic, especially if it is considered that a child might wait longer for a family and/or if a family was not readily available within regional resources or within Wales.

Some local authorities have appointed a practitioner specialising in adoption work to support the CSWs with all aspects of the process and to assist in monitoring progress from referral to Adoption Order. This can really make a difference in ensuring good matches are made on the basis of accurate and up to date information but also because good communication and effective collaboration between the childcare teams and regional adoption collaborative from the start to track and review the progress of adoptions for children can avoid delay. It will also ensure that a group of experienced practitioners are able to support and advise the CSW in making key decisions.



Child Adoption Referral

See Appendix 2 for All Wales Child Adoption Referral template
[Family Finding Good Practice Guide and Resources](#)

- CSW needs to complete a referral using the Child Adoption Referral template as soon as the care plan includes adoption as a possible outcome. **This should be done at the very latest by Case Management hearing on or before day 12 of the care proceedings.** Accompanying documents required should be identified in an Adoption Referral Checklist and attached. Receipt of the Child Referral form by the Regional Collaborative triggers all actions required and therefore, is crucial.

There are specific time sensitive deadlines to meet at this stage including completion of the **child's Adoption Medical** which is essential for a 'should be placed for adoption' decision. It is usual for the Medical Advisor to require at least 12 weeks from the referral to the ADM date to allow sufficient time to complete the medical, and CSW should always be mindful of this.

- The Regional Adoption Service needs to be available to offer support and advice to the CSW as part of a **Referral Planning discussion**, with an agreed process to provide this discussion prior to specific allocation within the adoption team. This discussion will ensure that all relevant issues are addressed prior to ADM decision.
- In order to prevent delay, the Regional Adoption Service will take a lead on arranging Adoption Medicals and allocation to ADM with formal monitoring processes to ensure the child's plan for adoption remains on track; this makes a big difference to outcomes for children. (Quinton, 2012)
- Where the Medical Advisor is unable to complete the medical report due to late referral, the CSW will need to either make representations to them directly or seek to re-timetable the proceedings.
- The CSW should always keep their legal team updated about any changes to the timing of medicals and ADM decisions.
- The Regional Adoption Collaborative will open a child's adoption case record.

Statutory Reviews and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

The regulations governing these are set out in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015.

The IRO continues to have an important role in providing oversight and quality assurance of the care planning process. In order to fulfil this role, they need to be provided with relevant information and documents in a timely manner as appropriate to the stage of care planning. For example, direct work with the child and Life Journey materials; Child's Family Finding Plan and Record when completed; work with birth family; Adoption Support Plan when completed.

See Chapter 4 for further information on requirements from placement of the child with prospective adopters.

See **APPENDIX 3** for LJW checklist. This should be shared with the IRO and used as a monitoring tool to confirm progress and quality of Life Journey work in the child's reviews.

The IRO will not only ensure that relevant actions have been completed by practitioner/s but also provide feedback to the LA and adoption agency on quality and whether any gaps are evident. At this stage, it will be particularly important to confirm work that has been completed with the child to help them understand what is happening, and Life Journey materials that are being gathered to support their ongoing understanding.

- The child's 2nd review will focus on the permanence options being discussed and the IRO needs to ensure that all information/ evidence has been considered; this will include information to inform the child's support and contact plan and information from the child's family to inform Life Journey work. The IRO will have access to the child's **Family Finding Plan & Record** when this has been developed.
- Very often, subsequent children in proceedings will have the same IRO as their older brothers or sisters who have already been placed for adoption. They might be the only professional who has holistic and long term knowledge of the family and are vital in providing information when the CSW is compiling the **Contact Planning tool** in proceedings and the **Trauma Nurture timeline** is being completed by the ASW at matching planning stage.
- If there is a different IRO for the younger children, there needs to be a clear communication plan between them and the CSW.

Allocation of the Family Finding Social worker

- Regional Adoption Managers will be aware of children with a possible care plan for adoption from their early alert system/ Regional Referral discussions and will have a process for allocating within their teams.
- Allocation of a Family Finding Social worker should be as soon as possible and no later than 28 days from date of referral. Timing of this should take account of the necessity to secure an Adoption Medical date and ADM decision date, as well as the requirement to complete Birth Parent Counselling prior to ADM decision.
- Consideration should always be given to previous involvement with the family.
- The Regional Adoption Collaborative will open the child's adoption case record and will work collaboratively with the CSW to offer support and advice; this will include arrangements to complete the child's Adoption Medical, prepare the paperwork for the ADM and complete the child's **Family Finding Plan & Record**. They have a key role in ensuring that good quality and accurate details of the child's needs are available at the point of referral and to ensure this is updated by the CSW as the case progresses. This includes offering guidance on assessing and understanding the child's needs across their lifetime, including those of brothers and sisters, and how these can be captured effectively in the child's CAR/B.
- The FFSW can use the [Trauma Nurture Timeline](#) (TNTL) template to make notes about the child's early experiences. (The aim is for all children with a plan for adoption to have a TNTL completed). This will help when completing the Adoption Support Plan and Matching paperwork.
- The FFSW will make arrangements to visit the foster carer and if appropriate, the child, to gather further information, including information for the child's Life Journey materials. This usually happens soon after the placement order has been granted and will always be guided by what the child understands is happening. This visit can be really useful in establishing the support needs of both the child and the foster carer for the next stage in the adoption process. (Refer to [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#) for more information).
- Effective communication between the childcare teams, fostering teams and the regional adoption teams will ensure consistent messaging and a realistic approach to family finding with the capacity to broker disagreements if they arise.
- There needs to be regular discussions between the regional Family Finding and Recruitment and Assessment teams about active child referrals and assessments/ approvals. This will enable the FFSW to provide an accurate evaluation of potential regional resources prior to ADM decision and placement order, or whether there needs to be an early decision to widen the search in order to proceed without delay. Collaboration between the adoption teams will enable early sharing of information about a child with prospective adopters either post approval or during their assessment.
- FFSW will continue to track each case until final hearing and formulate/amend the **Family Finding Plan & Record** as appropriate. They will proactively identify potential links for the CSW to consider, and agree in conjunction with them, any matches to pursue.
- FFSW will create a child's profile in consultation with the CSW and upload to the Adoption Register within agreed timescales (see Chapter on Adoption Register Wales).
- Regional Adoption Collaboratives and VAAs across Wales will produce a profile booklet of prospective adopters to include 1. those approved 2. those with a panel date within 6 weeks
- Regular in-house discussions/profiling meetings will be able to identify any potential adopters in earlier stages of their assessment who might be a potential link for specific children. If these potential in-house links fail to materialise, the FFSW should commence preliminary discussion with other regions/ VAAs in Wales about potential links without delay. Guidance around information sharing at an early stage (prior to placement order) is set out below. It is only when exploration of potential links within Wales has been exhausted that consideration can be given to widening the search; this decision will always be made in conjunction with the Adoption Regional Collaborative.



Birth Parent Counselling

Although the CSW has responsibility to ensure that the child's family understand that adoption is one of the options being considered and running parallel with others assessments of family/ connected people and to seek their view on the potential plan for adoption, there is a legal requirement to provide counselling for, and to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the parents of the child, termed "Birth Parent Counselling" ([Regulation 14 AA\(W\)R 2005](#)).

- This requirement is met by the Regional Adoption Collaborative; it is not counselling in a therapeutic sense but to explain the procedure and legal implications of the adoption process and to establish the parents' wishes and feelings on a range of issues and to start to identify support needs for keeping in touch arrangements. This applies where consent is given for a child to be placed for adoption, and when it is not given.
- The Working with Birth Parents Guide advocates maximising independence from decision making for the child as far as possible in providing this service and suggest that this can help build a relationship of trust that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.
- The ASW/ FFSW will provide an "Information for Birth parents" leaflet to parents and offer to meet with them prior to the "should be placed for adoption" decision. Prior to this meeting taken place, the CSW needs to confirm that the parent is aware that adoption is being considered as a possible plan and to provide any known information about risks in providing this service. A report from this meeting is part of the suite of documents that is submitted to the ADM.
- *Acknowledgement and accommodation should be given by the CSW and ASW that birth parents might not be able to engage at this point for a variety of reasons, rather than framing a blaming narrative like "hard to reach" and "difficult to engage" which lays responsibility at the birth parents door (p. 11. [Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide](#))*
- Regional Adoption Collaboratives will have the facility to offer "Birth Parent Counselling" up to an adoption order being granted and subsequent arrangements after this point.

Direct work with Children

In the past, we have thought that children often appeared able to easily adapt to new circumstances and people but we now know that even very young children will be affected in a number of ways and will experience distress, loss, grief and fear when they have already been exposed to early adversity such as abuse and neglect and experienced the loss of significant people in their lives. The child's voice is not always well documented with particular challenges associated with this given the very young age of many of the children placed for adoption (Dickinson Collins, 2025). Some agencies report an improvement following the introduction of a Transitions practitioner or a practitioner whose main focus is on supporting children before and during transitions.

It is important that children have an accurate understanding of what is happening in order to process and make sense of their experience; this starts from the earliest point of involvement with the family and is built on as their plan progresses.

- ASW to advise and support the CSW with any direct work with the child when adoption is being considered as a possible plan. At this early stage and depending on the age and level of understanding, the child needs to understand why the CSW is involved and why they have been removed from their family. They need to understand what foster carers do and what the CSW is doing to make sure they are safe and have all they need to grow up healthily.

Refer to [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#) Transitions and Early Support and [Life Journey Work – National Adoption Service](#) for more information on the LJW framework and Direct work plan for the child when a child is moving to an adoptive family.

Children involved in family court proceedings often describe a sense of being 'left in the dark' about what is happening in court, including at the end of proceedings when important decisions about their lives have been made and research has shown that this can leave them feeling that their views are not considered important (Rehill at al, 2022; Tisdall & Morrison, 2012 taken from Writing to Children – a toolkit for judges. 2025). Most children will be too young to understand the complex decision making process taking place on their behalf but their voices should be listened to and captured so that their presence is felt in the court arena.

- The revised CAR/B focused more on capturing the voice of the child and similarly, in the event that a disruption meeting is held, the report from this meeting should ensure that the voice of the child is captured (Dickinson Collins, 2025). See Chapter 5 for more information on how this can happen.

Working with Parents

Birth parents describe care proceedings as adversarial and traumatic and describe a lack of compassion and kindness as well as a lack of communication and information sharing (Alper, 2019). It is often hard for parents who are distressed and frightened to retain information about important things like contact arrangements and whilst there is clear evidence of the consequence of delay for children, the 26 week timescale has been argued as insufficient for birth parents to evidence sustained change (Gupta and Lloyd-Jones 2014; Mason et al 2019).

(p.9 [Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide](#))

- CSW will need to seek the views of the child's parents on the potential plan for adoption.
- CSW should be aware of any support for the child's parents that might be available and provide them with information / make a referral if appropriate.



Working with Foster Carers

For some looked after children adoption by their foster carers can be an extremely positive route to permanence. It builds upon existing attachments between the child and their primary care givers, enhances the security and stability of the child's membership of the foster family and reduces the need for a placement move resulting in continuity of care and less disruption for the child.

Applications by foster carers should be dealt with in a positive and timely way and factors such as age, ethnicity, and health should not be reasons for automatically excluding people as prospective adopters. However foster carers will not automatically have over-riding priority when considering potential matches for the child – **the child's long-term welfare and interests are the primary consideration and whether the prospective adopters can meet and support the child's needs throughout childhood and beyond.** ([National Adoption Service All Wales Policies and Procedures](#) Section 15.6 Foster Carers Application to Adopt the Child in Placement & Appendix 84 GPG Foster Carer Applications).

- There needs to be effective communication between the CSW, SSW for the foster carers, and the ASW not only to ensure that the child's needs are known and being met, but also to explore any intentions of the foster carer to seek permanence with the child placed with them and what this might look like i.e. application to adopt or SGO and whether these intentions are supported by all the social work practitioners involved. Responding in a fair and balanced way at this point in proceedings will mean that later challenges are avoided.
- All professionals involved need to refer to the All Wales policy regarding applications from foster carers to adopt children in their care – see link above, which outlines any actions to be taken.

Brothers and Sisters

Unless there is clear risk of abuse or other justification, brothers and sisters with existing bonds should not be separated. Research has highlighted that brothers and sisters placed together experience greater stability and that older children separated from siblings after they have lived together (either at home or in foster care) were at particular risk of placement disruption and a poor sense of belonging (Meakings, Sebba and Luke. 2017).

- Policy and practice in Wales prioritises the placement of brothers and sisters together. This needs to be clearly reflected in recruitment strategies with practice that is risk sensible and proactive in identifying support packages needed.
- If a **Together or Apart** assessment has not been completed at this stage, the CSW should prioritise this to inform their decision making and analysis within the CAR/B.
- When a younger sibling is born or referred to the Regional Adoption Collaborative, early information sharing with adoptive parents of older brothers or sisters should be prioritised. This is important for both their child's life journey information but also to give them time to think about the possibility of the children being placed together if this is the care plan for the younger child.
- In all cases, there should be consultation between the CSW and the Regional Adoption Collaborative before any discussion is held with the prospective adopters. This is essential as the CSW is unlikely to have access to all relevant and up to date information.
- All known professionals who have been involved with the family should be consulted – for examples, this might include an Adoption Support social worker; if fostering, a SSW; a VAA ASW (the agency that has assessed and supported the initial placement will know the family best and will have a view of any potential impact of another child joining the family, and therefore should always be consulted).
- The decision on who visits the family for an initial discussion will be led by the Regional Adoption Collaborative; it is likely to include a joint visit by the CSW and ASW. See guidance below for early information sharing.
- In all cases, the impact on each child must be carefully considered, both of placing together or separately. If the decision is to place the children together, practitioners should always be aware of support needed to help the older child with any reliving of their own experiences of transition.

- In order to minimise delay, a follow up discussion should happen once a “should be placed for adoption” decision is made to seek clarification about whether the older sibling's adopters wish to be considered as potential adopters for the younger child. Again, this needs to be done in consultation with the original assessing/approval agency.
- If they do wish to be considered, information about the adopters will be shared with the CSW and information of the child's needs will be shared with the adopters by their ASW. In some cases, brothers and sisters may have been placed with different adopters and if this is the case, visits to each family must take place. The CCSW and FFSW will decide whether they wish to proceed with any of the families.

Early information sharing (this could be prior to placement order for the child/ approval of prospective adopters) should provide sufficient detail to allow the prospective adopters to make an informed decision about proceeding. They will already have significant background information from the older sibling that is with them but will need an update in relation to this individual child's experiences and needs.

- Focus on the importance of sharing information about the new sibling for the purposes of life journey information for the older child
- Ensure that sufficient information is shared to enable the family to consider the younger child's needs and whether or not they wish to be considered. This will involve sharing a summary of the child's medical needs/ CAR/B rather than sharing the specific documents at this stage
- Think about contact needs of both children, especially if they are unlikely to be placed together

Information shared with prospective adopters should include:

- The CAR/B when written. Any additional information not already known by prospective adopters i.e. about this particular child's circumstances and needs should be anonymised at this stage
- The Regional Adoption Collaborative will ensure that those with PR for the child give consent to information being shared. This will be LA as there will be an ICO in place in majority of cases.
- In all cases, there should be a record of what documents have been shared (at all stages of the process), whether any of these documents have been redacted, and what these redactions are in order to comply with Post Commencement Regulations and obligations.
- Prospective adopters will be made aware of Post Commencement regulatory requirements and entitlements i.e. that the adult adoptee (from age 18) has a right to access all the information that was shared with them as prospective parents and adoptive parents.

Adoption Assessments

- If the prospective adopters, CSW and ASW wish to proceed, the decision on which agency will complete the 2nd time assessment will be reached by the professionals involved and in consultation with the prospective adopters. This decision will take into account a number of factors, including the prospective adopter's choice; existing relationships they have with agencies; distance - both in terms of the assessment and subsequent support provision
- If the prospective adopters wish to remain with the original approving agency, their wish should be respected. If this is the case, the LA needs to be aware that an interagency fee will be paid and will have to agree this if they wish to pursue the sibling link.

Thinking about Welsh Early Permanence in relation to brothers and sisters

If appropriate, consideration should be given to placement of a child with their siblings' adopters either post placement order or during proceedings as per the **Welsh Early Permanence** framework. There is an information leaflet available for prospective WEP carers as well as dedicated WEP preparation training that builds on the generic Preparation to Adopt training available from regions/ VAAs.

- If there is sufficient time to complete a dual approval as prospective adopters and foster carers, this can be done as set out in the Welsh Early Permanence framework [Welsh Early Permanence for Professionals – National Adoption Service](#).
- In some circumstances where the assessments of WEP carers are advanced but not complete, there is a facility to place a sibling using [Regulation 26 Care Planning and Placement Regulations 2015](#).

APPENDIX 4 covers the use of [Regulation 26 Care Planning and Placement Regulations 2015](#) in these circumstances and outlines when it is appropriate to use this route.

If a sibling placement is being considered either through Welsh Early Permanence or not, the procedure for assessment will depend on a number of issues and take into consideration the following:

- The date of their original approval and the original advice provided by panel
- The length of time the first child has been with them and whether an adoption order has been granted
- The impact on both children of being placed together
- Preparation of both children
- The assessment of any additional support needs once the subsequent child is placed

Where it is considered that the child already adopted or placed for adoption is of an age and has a level of understanding to know what is happening, his or her views should be sought and considered as part of the decision making process.

- Preparation of children already in the family, whether biological or adopted, should always be included in planning. There are resources available to support social workers with this. See [Story Book and Activity Book for Children](#). WEP specific resources: [Welsh Early Permanence for Siblings – National Adoption Service](#).

Contact between separated siblings

- CSW needs to be thinking about contact when siblings are to be separated. Refer to [Contact Good Practice Guide](#).

In terms of a family finding strategy and plans for contact at placement order stage:

Re S (Placement Order: Contact) [2025] EWCA Civ 823

Here the Court of Appeal, in considering whether a s26 contact order should be made, created a distinction between:

1) A child where continuing direct sibling contact is considered necessary for the child's future welfare,

As opposed to:

2) A child where the achievement of an adoptive home is the overreaching goal and sibling contact is desirable as opposed to a pre-requisite

It is helpful to look at each individual child and make a decision as into which category the child falls. If it is the first, then there is an expectation that there will be a s26 contact order, although this does not necessarily have to be a precise order, but may allow for a degree of flexibility (both from placement order to placement and then placement to adoption order). If the child is in the second category, where maintaining contact is secondary to achieving an adoptive placement, then a s26 order will not be necessary.

- There is always the opportunity to have a recital of the expectation of sibling contact / brother and sister keeping in touch arrangements, made on the face of the order. The contact planning tool will be very helpful here in setting out the local authority's plan for contact both before and after the adoption order.

Nationality/Immigration Status

- Article 7 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child states that every child has “**the right to acquire a nationality**”; it is essential to establish the child’s nationality and immigration status at the earliest point in proceedings.

- CSW to apply for a passport for the child.

In Re Y (Failure to Clarify Immigration Status [2024] EWFC 159, the High Court set out what should happen within care proceedings, whatever the care plan:

1) Part 12 Family Procedure Rules 2010 and Practice Direction 12A make clear that in proceedings under Part IV Children Act 1989 the court must consider ‘at the outset of proceedings’ issues arising from the subject child being a foreign national or the family having a connection to a foreign jurisdiction;

2) The court should make a Standard Direction on Issue and Allocation within one day of issue seeking disclosure from the Home Office via Form EX660 of the information on the immigration status of the child and the parents;

3) Once that information is available and pursuant to Stage 2 of the PLO, the parties must, at the Advocates Meeting, and the court must at the Case Management Hearing, identify any issues from the child’s immigration status and finalise further directions for securing the evidence or expert opinion required to address those issues at the IRH, or at the final hearing if one is required before a final order is made;

4) It is not acceptable for issues regarding immigration status to be left to be investigated at the IRH or final hearing and even less acceptable for them to be left unresolved at the point the court makes the order.

Name Changes

A child’s name is important. It is part of their identity, and its significance is recognised in both the [United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child](#) and in [primary legislation \(Adoption and Children 2002\)](#).

In the Court of Appeal in Re D, L and LA 2003, Butler-Sloss stated:

To change a child’s name is to take a significant step in a child’s life. Forename or surname, it seems to me, the principles are the same, in general. A child has roots. A child has names given to him or her by parents. The child has a right to those names and retains that right, as indeed the parents have rights to retention of the name of the child which they chose. These rights should not be set to one side, other for good reasons.

Butler-Sloss considered adopters’ rights to change the name of a child placed in their care for the purpose of adoption. This judgment firmly concluded that adopters should not change the child’s name prior to the granting of an Adoption Order. Emphasis was placed on the priority of the “identity principle” unless in exceptional circumstances in which the justification of the “welfare principle” may be applied, ie that it is necessary for the child’s welfare and ultimately their safety.

(NAS Procedure for Changing a Child’s Name at Adoption).
All Wales Adoption Policies and Procedures.

If there are exceptional reasons (usually very serious safeguarding ones) where a change of name is being considered, there is a formal process that should be followed as outlined in the above document.



The Child's CAR/B

The purpose of the Child's Adoption Report is to enable the agency decision-maker (ADM) and, where there is adoption by consent, the adoption panel, to discharge their functions under the [Adoption Agencies \(Wales\) Regulations 2005](#) and subsequent amendments, including compliance with the welfare checklist in [section 1 of the ACA 2002 Act](#). These are:

- to recommend/decide whether the child should be placed for adoption;
- to recommend/decide that the child should be placed with prospective adopters;
- as the source of essential information to the prospective adopter/s when first approached by the agency about a child to enable them to decide whether to proceed with the matching process;
- as a source of important information about the child's background and heritage to the adopter/s once any placement is made;
- as a source of important information for the adopted adult about their life history and heritage.

The [Annex B Report](#) provides the evidence required to support the application made by the local authority for a placement order and meets the requirements of [Practice Direction 14C Family Procedure Rules 2010](#). Along with other documents submitted to the court, it will enable the court to decide whether adoption is the right plan for the child and whether a placement order should be made.

(CAR/B (Wales) Guidance and additional resources. Coram BAAF.)

- ASWs need to be available to support the CSW with the child's CAR/B as appropriate and especially if they have limited adoption experience.
- The revised CAR/B (Wales) has an increased focus on capturing the child's current and predicted needs across their lifetime with a strong focus on identity and keeping in touch arrangements. It also places greater emphasis on capturing the child's and birth family voice within the document.
- CSW need to be familiar with the **NAS Contact Planning tool and guidance** <https://adoptcymru.com/contact-guidance-and-toolkit/> and be able to utilise them in their analysis and planning within the CAR/B. There is an expectation from Cafcass Cymru that this will be part of the proceedings.
- CSW need to be familiar with tools that help them think about and analyse a child's identity needs in a holistic way; these include the AFDiT framework <https://transracialadoptionframework.uk/the-framework/> and Nuffield Foundation research and resources around Understanding the Identities of Children in Care. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/news/understanding-identity-among-minoritised-children-in-care>
- Any proposed name change (first or surname) and the reasons for this should be included in ADM paperwork.



All aspects of a child's sense of self that the AFDiT framework covers

Contact Planning for Different Stages of the Care Planning for Adoption Process

Contact is about relationships; it is dynamic and transactional and people affect and are affected by it. Refer to [Contact Good Practice Guide](#). It is essential to think about relationships that are important to the child at the earliest stage, how these are assessed and maintained during proceedings, and what the changes might be going forward. There are different legal requirements in relation to contact at different stages of the process and it is useful to remind ourselves of these.

Key messages from research (NFJO, 2020) highlight the need to:

- Focus on the quality of contact.
- Listen to the views of children and young people.
- Recognise the significance of siblings, grandparents, wider family and friends.
- Ensure that all involved are clear about the purpose of contact.
- Ensure that contact plans are tailored to each child and regularly reviewed.
- Ensure skilled professional support is available.
- Not only do we need to accept that no one type of contact is the best fit for everyone, we also have to think about the legislative requirements at different stages of the process.

During the care proceedings s34 CA 1989 will apply to contact.

- Under **s34(1)** the local authority has a duty to allow 'reasonable' contact between the child and their parents.
- Contact orders are often made during the course of proceedings under either **s34(2)** or, more often, **s34(3)**. These orders may continue or be amended through the course of proceedings.

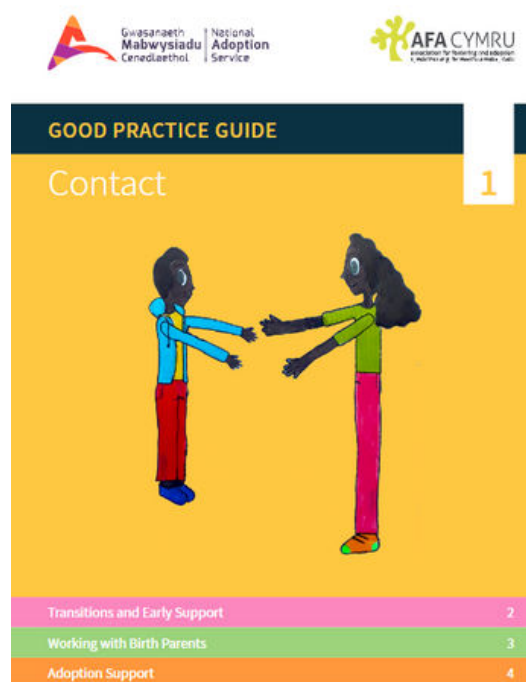
Once a placement order has been made the provisions of **s26 ACA 2002** take the place of **s34**. There is no longer the duty to provide reasonable contact.

Planning for post adoption contact needs to take account of two elements:

- 1) Contact to take place **during the course of the placement order**, both before and after transitions and placement.
- 2) Contact once an adoption order is made

S26 contact needs to provide the transition into post adoption contact arrangements. Historically, this has often meant a plan for the decrease and cessation of direct contact with a plan for indirect/letter box contact. However, now that post adoption contact is planned in a much more child centred and focussed way, through the use of the **Contact Planning tool**, the contact planning for the period of the placement order needs careful thought and arrangements made to enable all concerned to work towards successful post adoption contact/keeping in touch arrangements.

It is very important to plan for these two different types of contact separately and to make clear in the care plan. The fact that contact is reduced or ceased under s26 during transitions and the early days of placement does not mean that there is an automatic assumption that no direct contact will take place once the adoption order is made.



See APPENDIX 5 for All Wales Family Finding Plan & Record template

[Family Finding Good Practice Guide and Resources](#)

- Every child will have a **Family Finding Plan & Record (FFPR)** agreed with the child's social worker and family finding social worker. It is a live document that needs to be reviewed and amended until a suitable match has been identified; it will set out steps to be taken to achieve a good quality match with minimal delay, and record decisions and actions taken.
- The child's **FFPR** will assist the CSW when completing the final care plan for the child and the family finding timetable.
- The **FFPR** will be available to the IRO and reviewed as part of the child's looked after reviews.
- For those children where potential matches have been generated early, minimal detail will be required in the **FFPR** but will still remain an important document to refer to and review as necessary.
- The **FFPR** will be completed by the Family Finding Manager/ASW in consultation with the CSW/TM at an initial Adoption Planning meeting or equivalent **following the ADM decision** that the child "should be placed for adoption". The **FFPR** will be linked to the court plan and will inevitably be running alongside other permanence plans initially.
- **Prior to ADM**, there will need to be sufficient information available to the Agency Advisor on the following (see Referral Planning Discussion p.17).
 - Whether this is a sibling placement and any considerations around this
 - Outline of the child's future keeping in touch needs as identified in the Contact Planning Tool
 - Whether there are potential links within region which will be available within a timescale of no more than 3 months from placement order being granted
 - Information from early discussions with foster carers
 - Whether there are any known risks in addition to those identified in the Contact Planning tool, which could include geographical considerations and consideration of changing the child's first and/or surname
 - An overview of potential links within Wales. This will include families approved or to be approved within the next 3 months, alongside a plan for agreeing the interagency fee should this become payable.

- Whether there are identifiable characteristics that suggest that this child is likely to wait a considerable time for a permanent family, and whether the **Adopting Together Service** should be considered

This will inform early decision making at ADM stage to minimise delay about the potential need to widen the search; identification of clear reasons if a placement is being sought outside Wales; consideration of Adopting Together; funding considerations.

- Formal family finding activity should have started as soon as authority to place for adoption has been obtained (placement order or parental consent). The child's **FFPR** will outline any preparation work needed to be completed prior to this and following the ADM decision.
- The **FFPR** will be reviewed at each CLA review and Adoption Planning meeting and updated as required. Any adaptations will be done in consultation with the CSW.
- The **FFPR** will not replicate existing documents e.g. CAR/B but will instead refer to relevant documents for information about the child's current and future needs, and essential matching criteria and review any further assessments/ expert reports that are requested.
- The **FFPR** will consider the child's previous, current and future keeping in touch arrangements and support needs of all parties with specific details informed by the Contact Planning tool.
- Specific and additional family finding requirements for more complex children, including children aged 4 and over, children in sibling groups, children with complex health or developmental needs should be reflected in their **Family Finding Plan & Record**. Adopting Together Service must be considered for children when it is apparent that they have waited, or are likely to wait longer for a match to be found.
- The **FFPR** will identify preparation for adoption work to be undertaken, by whom and with timescales. This will include consideration of whether a **Trauma Nurture timeline** be completed/ **Understanding the Child Day** be arranged at matching planning stage; direct work with the child and Life Journey work; plans for transitional contact; and early thinking of the Adoption Support Plan.
- Where there is/ or likely to be a placement made within a different region (either with another region or a VAA), practitioners will need to refer to the **Cross Regional Support guidance** available with regards to the provision of adoption support [All Wales Adoption Policies and Procedures](#).

What should be included in the child's Family Finding Plan & Record

1) Key information

Child's full name, date of birth, local authority

Child's social worker details

Child's family finder's details

Date plan first prepared and who was consulted

Child's legal status: ADM date; scheduled date of final hearing; placement order date; Parental consent to adoption date.

2) Child's needs and essential matching criteria, and any action needed

Ensure adoption referral form or CAR provided is up to date. Any action needed, by whom and when.

Detail any essential matching criteria identified (e.g. ethnicity, religion, geography) that require wider search a) outside region b) outside Wales

Is this a sibling placement?

Does the child have siblings already adopted? Any action needed, by whom, when and outcome – to include exploring with adopter's agency if different; contact with adopters to advise of birth of another sibling; keeping in touch arrangements; explore possibility of placing children together and on what basis.

Is there an up-to-date profile and photo/video of the child available? Any action needed, by whom and when.



How the child's keeping in touch needs will be met (using Contact Planning tool), to include:

- **A meeting between the prospective adopters and birth family members** (specify who will be involved, and briefly outline when, where, preparation and support). Include any reasons why this shouldn't/cannot be considered
- **Indirect contact arrangements** if appropriate (specify with whom, what form this will take, whether photographs/ videos/ cards etc can be exchanged, frequency, and support)
- **Face to face direct contact** if appropriate (specify with whom, frequency, support needed). If face to face contact would not be appropriate, outline rationale from NAS Contact Planning tool
- **Any hybrid arrangements** e.g. digital contact (specify platform, with whom, frequency and support). This will need its own risk assessment and is likely to complement other arrangements e.g. when siblings have been separated, they could "meet" virtually in between in person contact sessions.

3) Family Finding Activity

Any other actions that will be taken prior to conclusion of proceedings and on granting of a placement order. What has been done/planned, by whom, date and outcome.

- Creation of a **child's profile**
- **Referral to ARW** (as outlined above in Adoption Register chapter). Timescale for review and action
- Proactive participation in **regional and national family finding opportunities** until a match is identified. These will include informal practitioner exchange, profiling events, exchange days, activity days (with available details of when these will take place).
- Consideration of **media profiling** linked to National Adoption week, and in parallel with other searches.

Whether there are **potential links within the region** with clear timeframes for review. Each region will have a clear idea prior to ADM decision whether there are any potential matches from within their regional resources which will be available within a timescale of no more than 3 months from placement order being granted. If this is not the case, further discussion is needed immediately in order to prevent delay. **See Adoption Register Wales chapter for actions required.**

Discussions with foster carers to identify the child's needs and establish whether they have any plan to seek permanency with the child. Any action needed, by whom, when, and outcome.

Decisions about widening search within Wales and agree funding with identification of any specific requirements. This should always align with national agreements and be done as soon as possible and no later than 3 months of the placement order being granted. Priority should always be given to placing children within Wales.

If a **placement is being considered outside Wales**, there will need to be clear reasons for this documented in the Family Finding Plan e.g. geography, ethnicity etc. This should include why the decision was taken and why it was prioritised over the child's cultural identity needs; how the child's cultural needs will be met should the placement outside Wales proceed; how adoption support will be delivered effectively both immediately and in the long term. **See Adoption Register Wales chapter for actions required** and refer to Inter Register Protocol: Appendix 2, ARW Guidance.

The child's details will be opened to UK wide as soon as possible and only if potential links within Wales have been explored, and no later than 3 months from the date a full profile was uploaded to the Register.

Consideration of **Adopting Together Service** if appropriate (reasons for this and at what point it is initially considered and then reviewed).

4) Preparation for Adoption

This section will include all areas that need to be considered as part of the preparation for adoption and will facilitate discussion on which are relevant for this child. For all areas, it should be clear about who will be responsible with timescales and outcome.

Completion of the **Trauma Nurture timeline**/consideration of whether an **Understanding the Child Day** be arranged at matching planning stage.

Completion of an **Adoption Support Plan** to meet identified needs of all parties.

Practical and Financial Arrangements

Interagency fee

Financial support for child and proposed family

Preparing the child:

All children will need preparation and life journey material, with the age and understanding of the child determining the level of direct work and engagement. See [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#)

- Direct work to ensure understanding of why they are looked after and why a new family is needed. Actions needed, by whom and when, outcomes
- Preparing for Farewell contact. Actions needed, by whom and when, outcomes
- Sharing information about their new family and preparing for the move. Actions needed, by whom and when, outcomes
- During introductions. Actions needed, by whom and when, outcomes
- After the child has moved. Actions needed, by whom and when, outcomes.

Preparing for Contact

The first date/ arrangements for indirect/ direct contact outlined above will be clarified when prospective adopters are identified and confirmed at 1st Adoption Review.

The arrangements for ongoing post placement/ post adoption contact will be outlined in the post adoption contact agreement.

- Farewell/Transitional Contact once a match is identified and before introductions start depending on needs of the child (specify with whom, and briefly outline when, where, arrangements and expectations including who will receive photographs, preparation and support)
- Settling in letter from adopters (expectations and timescales, usually within 4-6 weeks of being placed for adoption)
- When letter is received, the regional adoption team will contact the recipients (specify who) to confirm they wish to receive this and explore any support required to provide a letter in return
- Specify any planned check-ins with adopters and birth family e.g. 12 months and 3 years post Adoption Order as an opportunity to review current contact arrangements and whether any changes are required, and whether any additional support is needed. ([Adoption Support Good Practice Guide](#))

Preparing the Adoption Support Plan

Adhering to the principles of the Trauma Nurture Timeline when compiling the Adoption Support Plan is beneficial, as it helps to identify what the child has experienced from pre-birth to present and any genetic issues that might impact as well as anticipated needs as a result of their experiences.

ASW/FFSW and CSW need to consult with or include an Adoption Support social worker at an early stage to help identify predicted needs.

5) Signed agreement from all parties with clear **plans for review** of the child's Family Finding Plan to ensure any requirements are revised, when necessary, rather than leaving decisions to individual CSWs (see **Learning and Planning meeting** as suggested format for review).

- Specify when this will be done initially and by whom, and subsequent frequency
- Consider actions taken to date, specifically whether consideration is being given to separate siblings or to place outside Wales
- Consider child's needs and any updates needed, and who will complete these
- Consider any other actions to ensure all avenues have been thoroughly explored

Sufficient time should always be given for any potential matches to be explored before alternative options for permanence are considered. All regions need to follow guidance for changing a child's care plan which is set out in Chapter 5.



Agency Decision Maker (ADM) “Should be placed for adoption” decision.

The ADM must be satisfied that adoption is the only permanence plan that will meet the child's needs across their lifetime, having considered all relevant assessments and reports submitted as part of the care proceedings and the **s1 Adoption and Children Act 2002** principles. They must also take into account the lifelong impact of separation from the birth family, including siblings where this is part of the proposed plan.

- CSW needs to schedule an ADM decision making slot at the time of referral and keep the Regional Family Finding Manager or equivalent updated of any changes. They will attend a meeting, usually with their manager alongside the Agency advisor. Legal advice may be sought if required and should be sought if there is a possible change to the timetabling of the decision.
- Information available to the Agency Advisor will inform decisions made at this stage about whether there is need to extend the search outside the region.
- The ADM makes the decision following that meeting having considered all the information provided.
- If the ADM makes a “should be placed for adoption” decision, this allows the local authority to apply for a placement order which will be considered by the court.
- CSW to refer to CAR/B guidance for additional actions needed for a placement order application
- Birth parents need to be informed in writing of the “should be placed for adoption” decision (**Regulation 19(3) AA(W)R 2005**) with good practice of this being done within 5 working days of the decision being made. Responsibility for this action may rest with either the child's social worker or Regional Adoption Collaborative. **Reg 19(3) AA(W) 2005 Adoption Agency must, if their whereabouts are known to the agency, notify its decision about whether the child should be placed for adoption and any decisions in relation to contact arrangements in writing to**
 - (a) *The parents of guardian to the child*
- The decision that the child should be placed for adoption will be considered during the care proceedings and is expected to be made in time for the local authority's final care plan (for adoption) to be filed in time for the **Issues Resolutions Hearing (IRH)**. Even though parents are (or are able to be) legally represented, the parents must be notified separately, with a copy of that letter going to their legal representatives.

Following the ADM decision

- The FFSW will monitor progress to the final hearing and develop a **Family Finding Plan & Record** for the child (see above) in conjunction with the CSW.
- The CSW will notify the FFSW as soon as the placement order is granted and provide copies of the care order and placement order to the Regional Adoption Collaborative for their records.
- If the child's care plan ceases to include adoption, the Regional Adoption Collaborative will close the child's adoption case record.

Time limits on placement orders

S21(1) ACA 2002: A placement order is an order made by the court authorising a local authority to place a child for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the local authority.

Re A (Placement Order) (Imposition of Conditions) [2013] EWCA Civ 1661; H&J (Placement Orders) [2024] EWCA Civ 429

- The court has no jurisdiction to impose conditions on a local authority's search for prospective adopters
- The court may not 'restrict' a local authority (e.g. by imposing a time limited search)
- However, the court may voice an 'expectation' which may then be reflected in the local authority's care plan
- Therefore, the CSW should resist any undue pressure for a time limited search imposed by the court as this is neither helpful nor within their jurisdiction.
- However, in line with [reg 37\(8\)AA\(W\)R 2005](#)

If the child is not placed by the 1st 6 month review i.e. within 9 months of the placement order being granted, the local authority must at that review

a) Establish why the child has not been placed for adoption and consider what further steps the authority should take in relation to the placement of the child for adoption; and

b) In light of that, consider it remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption

Permission to disclose documents from the court bundle

Prior to the final hearing, it is useful to consider whether there should be standard directions included in the final care orders where there is a plan for adoption to cover permissions to share information from the court bundle. This would then be the basis for disclosure of documents to adopters as part of the matching process. Regional Adoption Managers should discuss this with their legal teams and consider a proposal to their local courts.

These standard directions would include:

Permission is granted to the Local Authority to disclose at its discretion any document from the Court bundle and to include the Judges/Justices Reasons, to any of the following:

- 1) Any Independent Reviewing Officer for the child
- 2) Any members of the child's CLA review
- 3) Any foster carer for the child
- 4) Any person or professional organisation providing or proposing to provide therapeutic support, assessment or placement to the child
- 5) Any person or professional organisation providing or proposing to provide therapeutic support and /or assessment to the parent
- 6) Any Local Authority undertaking a parenting or carers assessment in relation to the parent
- 7) Any Local Authority providing POVA services to any parent
- 8) Into any future care proceedings or into any anticipated care proceedings in which a PLO letter has been served concerning any child of the Respondent Parents, or into any Adoption and Children Act 2002 proceedings concerning the parents and/or child
- 9) To the Regional Adoption Service and to any adoptive parents for the child

From Placement Order to Identifying a Potential Link

The Legal Framework

Adoption and Children Act 2002

Part 30 Family Procedure Rules 2010

Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005, as amended

This chapter covers the period of time from the making of the placement order to the identification of a potential link. What needs to be remembered is that [reg 37 AA\(W\)R 2005](#) now also applies in respect of reviews in addition to the [CPPCR\(W\)R 2015](#).

What needs to happen

The ability to make a good match depends critically on the provision of good quality information about the child and good quality information about the prospective adopters as a foundation. We use the word foundation here judiciously because we know that a child's needs will change over time and in response to their circumstances and that the impact of developmental trauma will be lifelong for many, if not all, of them. We also have to accept that despite all our best efforts, our search to understand a stranger has real limits, we will never know the whole truth, and we might have to be satisfied with something short of that (Cleaver and Rose, 2020). It is almost inevitable that there will be some situations where the impact of parenting will not be fully understood, and some when information has been minimised or concealed during assessment (Rennolds et al. 2025)



Alongside robust assessments of prospective adopters which test their motivation and resilience, and which also tests whether their understanding of children's needs go beyond the theoretical, we always need to be vigilant and respectfully uncertain. We need to move beyond a one dimensional approach that stifles professional judgements and approaches and does not challenge assumptions, and always keep the child and their safeguarding at the heart of our practice. Critically, we need to ask, "So what does this information tell us about this person's suitability to adopt, now and into the future, and about their learning, development and support needs?" ([Qualities & Skills Framework – National Adoption Service](#))

- Given the significance to our learning and development across the adoption sector, it is vital to maintain ongoing reflection and review of themes identified in placement breakdowns as well as a coordinated plan for implementing practice recommendations. The placement of children will always have some reliance on interagency placement, and therefore, best practice would suggest that this be done on a pan Wales basis to ensure consistency and confidence across the whole sector.
- There is All Wales guidance available for adopters and agencies in responding to potential allegations from children who are placed for adoption. This should include the reasons allegations might occur and a consistent agreed response if they do. Refer to **Safeguarding-Allegations: Information for Adopters** [All Wales Adoption Policies and Procedures](#).
- Good collaboration and early information sharing that will have already happened between the child's social worker and regional adoption team means that plans can progress without delay once the authority to place for adoption has been granted by the court.
- To assist with the family finding process it might be helpful for the Regional Adoption Collaboratives/VAA's to have a profile booklet of prospective adopters approved (full profile); those with an imminent panel date (restricted profile); those with panel date within next 3 months (restricted profile).
- There needs to be regular, proactive review of prospective adopters waiting to be linked with robust exploration of those who repeatedly refuse potential matches for whatever reason. This should always be done within a safeguarding context and caution exercised to avoid stretching capacity beyond assessed limits.

Working with Birth Family

There are many critical turning points in the process of adoption, and this is one of them. Whilst the child's future welfare has been safeguarded, we need to carefully consider the ongoing support and involvement of the birth family, both in terms of preventing future children being harmed and also as they will continue to have a role in the child's life. (p.14 BP GPG)

As parents are parties to proceedings and will be legally represented, they will know that the placement order has been made and that they have a right to apply for permission to appeal the making of the placement order and, at a later stage, seek permission to make an application to the court for revocation of the placement order. However, in accordance with case law (see Re W below) and best practice duty to keep birth parents informed:

- A letter needs to be sent to birth parents following the making of a placement order confirming that the placement order has been made and providing information to them on their right to seek permission to appeal the making of the placement order (see below) and subsequently, their right to apply for permission to make an application for revocation of the placement order (See Chapter 4).
- Whether or not the birth parents took up the initial offer of "Birth Parent Counselling", a further session should be offered to ensure they understand the reasons why the child is being placed for adoption and to help with any unanswered questions. This will also provide an opportunity to gather more information for the child Life Journey materials and Trauma Nurture Timeline. It may be very difficult for the birth parents to contemplate, let alone accept, the transition that is happening and they will be at their most vulnerable. Therefore, although we always have to be guided by the child's needs and agenda, sensitive support that takes account of where the birth parents are emotionally is essential.
- The support offered needs to help them think about keeping in touch arrangements, what this will look like from the point of identifying a match for the child and then into the future. This will include a meeting with the prospective adopters.
- If the birth parents have not been able or willing to consider a referral to birth parent services like Reflect prior to this time, this should be discussed with them again.
- We also need to be thinking about other members of the birth family besides parents, and especially **brothers and sisters**.

Brothers and Sisters

As well as numerous identified benefits, research also reflects the demands of sibling placements and the stress and anxiety involved in trying to meet all their needs simultaneously (Selwyn and Saunders. 2012). When training and assessing prospective adopters for sibling groups, there are certainly additional elements to consider.

- Preparation training and assessment discussion need to ensure prospective adopters have a realistic understanding of the advantages of shared history and experience and how this can offer huge benefits in terms of belonging, identity formation and supportive relationships. They also need to understand the real challenges as new adoptive parents of responding to more than one child who has experienced early trauma, what inter sibling competing demands can look like and how to respond to these.
- We need to think about how we prepare families and children to adjust to a new dynamic and build in the right kind of support at different stages. This will include direct work with the children being placed together, as well as consideration of any existing children in the family and those siblings within alternative arrangements.

We need to think about older brothers and sisters meeting prospective adopters and how to support them with ongoing keeping in touch arrangements. There are resources available to help prepare children already in the family – see [Story Book and Activity Book for Children](#).

WEP specific resources: [Welsh Early Permanence for Siblings – National Adoption Service](#)

- In some cases, practitioners will need to consider whether a time limit should be imposed for family finding for a sibling placement before other options are considered. This will always be a difficult call to make, and sufficient time should always be given to explore all relevant options of an adoption placement together before moving to this stage.
- In the event that practitioners are considering separating children who were originally assessed as needing a sibling placement, good practice would always dictate that a Learning and Planning meeting is held (See Chapter 5).

Application for permission to appeal upon the making of the placement order

Under the [Adoption and Children Act 2002](#), the parties to the proceedings have the right to apply for permission to appeal within 21 days of the making of the order ([Part 30 Family Procedure Rules 2010](#)).

In [W & Ors \(Implementation of Adoption Plan Pending Appeal\) \[2024\] EWCA Civ 837](#) (25 July 2024), Lord Justice Baker held that a local authority should take no steps to implement a placement order and care plan for adoption until after the expiry of the 21 day period for filing a notice of appeal against the order.

What does 'implement' mean and amount to?

- 1) Continue with family finding as usual
- 2) If there has been an early identification of prospective adopters (bear in mind this is the first three weeks following the making of the placement order) pursue linking and matching, including panel recommendation and ADM decision if appropriate
- 3) Do not pursue anything that involves the child/ren in any way or commence introductions
- 4) Open communication is key to ensuring that the local authority, the parties and the court all understand each other's positions and that the parties have a fair opportunity to challenge any actions the LA propose while at the same time allowing the LA to carry out preparatory work which would avoid further delay if an appeal is not granted.
- 5) For WEP placements, refer to Chapter 10 in the WEP Framework [Welsh Early Permanence for Professionals – National Adoption Service](#). In order to comply with the principles outlined in the case law above, a formal review using Carers Review template 2 should not take be completed until after the expiry of the 21 day period and the formal foster carer resignation should not happen before this time.

Nationality/Immigration Status

A child's nationality and immigration status should have been clarified during the care proceedings. If that is not the case, then this should be dealt with as a matter of urgency before any links and matches take place. The making of an adoption order in respect of a child who is not a British Citizen, in favour of an adopter or both adopters who are not British Citizens, does not confer British Citizenship upon the child. This can lead to major complications, post adoption, if not resolved before.

Name Changes

Surnames

[S28\(3\)\(a\) ACA 2002](#): Where a child is placed for adoption, a person may not cause the child to be known by a different surname, unless the court gives leave or each person or guardian of the child gives written consent.

As outlined in the previous chapter, changing a child's name for whatever reason needs to be carefully considered and our learning about the long term implications for the child, adopted adult and birth parents must always be taken into account.

If there are exceptional circumstances meriting a change of surname, then the local authority should have sought leave to change the name at the time of the making of the placement order. These circumstances would be safeguarding concerns affecting the safety and well-being of the adoptive family. Other than in these exceptional circumstances, as part of the matching process, prospective adopters will understand that the child will be known by their existing surname until the making of the adoption order.

First names/forenames

Early discussions and training with prospective adopters will have reflected the significance of a child's name and it is important that all practitioners involved continue to reflect the same position. They will be told that is usual for the child to take their adoptive parents' surname when the adoption order is made but no change in the child's forenames will be supported unless the circumstances set out in the agreed process are met. (NAS Procedure for Changing a Child's Name at Adoption [All Wales Adoption Policies and Procedures](#)).

The child's name should be considered as significant as other aspects of their identity when considering a suitable match. If prospective adopters are not able to accept the child's name and understand that it is part of their identity, then this may not be the right match. We have to consider that this might be tied in with wishes and feeling about parenting which doesn't incorporate the realities of parenting through adoption, and this would need to be explored further.

Prospective adopters should understand that the child's social worker will have undertaken the relevant risk assessment, where appropriate, to identify if a change of name, upon placement, is necessary.

A Team Approach: Working Together, Shared Decisions

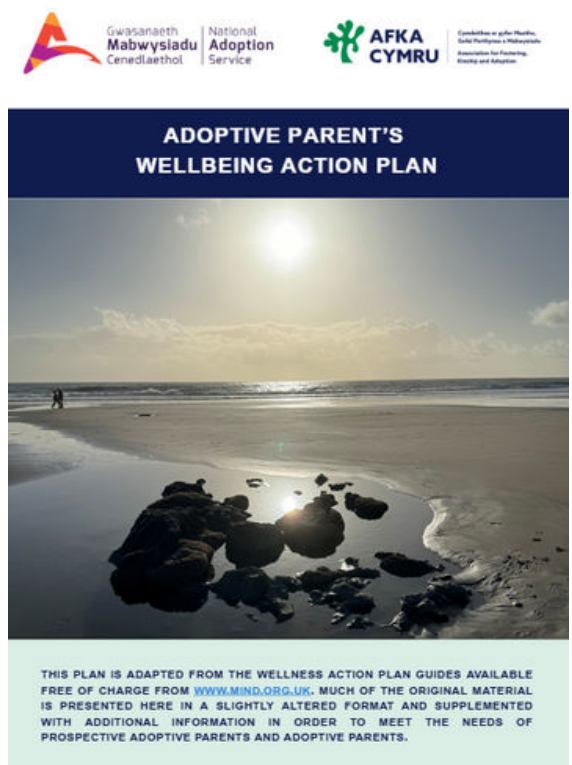
We have to analyse the information we have about the child and families and make evidence informed decisions that can be justified in the present but also retrospectively. We have to be able to predict as accurately as we can using our judgement and experience that these particular prospective adopters will be able to meet the needs of this child or children across their lifetime. There will always be a level of uncertainty in this decision making and there will always be competing work pressures. This is why it is always best practice to build trust in the professional network and draw on knowledge and experience of adoption, to work together and share decisions. Good supervision is essential to facilitate reflective practice and to support collaboration.

- **Foster carers** are included as part of this professional network. Refer to [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#). Research (Rennolds et al. 2025) highlights the importance of foster carers being heard and having their views taken into account when decisions are being made about the child. We have to acknowledge that unspoken or unheard strong feelings are likely to impact relationships and affect cooperation and trust, with huge implications for future outcomes, and so we need to mitigate this at all costs.
- A significant proportion of **prospective adopters** identify physical and/or mental health needs prior to a child being placed with them; these will have been explored in assessment and a conclusion reached that these are well managed. However, there is some prevalence of issues associated with adversity and/ or usually well managed issues being triggered by the emotional impact of caring for a child who has experienced early trauma on top of a very intense preparation and introduction process. Therefore, detailed exploration and understanding of potential stress triggers and responses is required.



Changes to emotional health and wellbeing of adopters is recognised and explored in Dr Lynn Snow's research on Post Adoption Depression "And how are you today?" This research advocates a pathway for screening for Post Adoption Depression thereby normalising prevalence, and a coherent set of resources to support families (Snow, 2024). The [Adoptive Parent's Wellbeing Action Plan](#) is a self-reflective tool completed by prospective adopters/adoptive parents that can be used to develop awareness of stress triggers and responses and a way to communicate these to people who offer support. It is based on an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health, to help identify what keeps us well, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem. The **Adoptive Parent's Wellbeing Action Plan** provides a valuable opportunity to open up conversations between a prospective adopter and their social worker at any stage of the process – in assessment, post approval and during matching, and post placement in order to better understand needs and experiences and ultimately better support wellbeing.

- The FFSW will continue to work with the foster carer and CSW to identify a direct work plan for the child and also prepare them for the expectations of post placement contact. See [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#). This latter point is now more consistently promoted within matching documents, although does not always follow through in practice. Reasons for this are unlikely to fall into one category; early preparation and ongoing support can address some.



Review of the Child's Family Finding Plan & Record

- The CSW will notify the FFSW as soon as the placement order is granted and provide copies of the care order and placement order to the Regional Adoption Collaborative for their records.
 - FFSW will arrange a meeting with the child's social worker to review the child's **FFPR**. The purpose of this meeting will be to update any details in Section 1 and 2 and ensure agreed actions have been completed or will be completed within an agreed timescale. The FFSW will ensure that the child's CAR/B is up to date.
 - If the FFSW has not yet visited the foster carer and the child, if appropriate, arrangements for this will be agreed. Clarification of any plans by the foster carer to seek permanency with the child should be discussed.
 - Specific focus at this stage will be on **Section 3: Family Finding activity**.
 - A potential match might have already be identified from within regional resources and some early information shared. If this is the case, arrangements will be made to continue this progress and proceed to a visit to the prospective adopters (see below).
 - If this is not the case, the FFSW will maintain an up-to-date record of activity, including reasons why links were or weren't pursued.
 - It is really helpful for the FFSW and CSW to have an open discussion at this point about expectations of family finding activity for the child and to set some clear parameters around key issues including use of the ARW; the priority of finding Welsh families for Welsh children, and widening the search if necessary without delay; sharing information and making decisions. This will ensure that a consistent and collaborative approach is maintained and that all professionals are realistic. Utilising the expertise and experience within the adoption service is essential, especially when thinking about predicted support needs of children and families.
- Creation of a **child's profile**. The FFSW will take a lead on preparing this in conjunction with the child's social worker.
- **Referral to ARW**. All children for whom the local authority has authority to place for adoption (placement order or consent) must be added to the Register **within 1 month** of this authorisation **even if a potential match has been identified**. The FFSW and CSW will work together to develop and upload the child's profile to the Register.
- Proactive participation in **regional and national family finding opportunities** until a match is identified; this should be as creative and flexible as possible based on the needs of the individual child and does not have to follow a set process or format. FFSW will provide clarification of what these include (both ARW led events and others), their role, and expectations of the CSW.
-
- The FFSW will be aware from internal information sharing whether there are any **potential matches within regional resources** currently available or are likely to become available within the timescales of no more than 3 months of the placement order being granted. If this is the case, information sharing between the FFSW and CSW will happen as a priority (in some cases, preliminary information might have already been shared)
 - If the above is not the case, or the potential regional match/matches identified is not suitable, decisions about widening the search should be taken and agreement for funding should be sought. Priority should always be given to placing children within Wales and will always be considered before widening the search across the UK unless there are specific requirements for doing so.
 - **Decisions about widening search within Wales** should always align with national agreements and be done as soon as possible and no later than 3 months of the placement order being granted.
 - If a **placement is being considered outside Wales**, there will need to be clear reasons for this documented in the Family Finding Plan & Record e.g. geography, ethnicity, placement with a sibling etc. See **Adoption Register Wales chapter for actions required** and refer to Inter Register Protocol: Appendix 2, [ARW Guidelines](#).
- The child's details will be opened to UK wide as soon as possible and no later than 3 months from the date a full profile was uploaded to the Register. Funding for Interagency fees needs to be confirmed.
- There needs to be sufficient scrutiny of the decision to place outside the region or outside the country. Any potential impact for the child in terms of maintaining relationships with people who are important to them and accessing the right support should be thoroughly considered and should always recognise the importance of identity formation and cultural connectedness.
 - The CSW in consultation with their manager and the FFSW/ their manager will consider whether a referral to the **Adopting Together Service** is appropriate (see below). There are additional funding implications for a match identified through Adopting Together and funding agreement should be in place prior to the referral being completed. The Adoption Together referral form is completed by the CSW. Email AdoptingTogether@stdavidscs.org for further details, or speak with the Adopting Together Service Manager on 029 2066 7007.

- In order to comply with [reg 37\(8\)AA\(W\)R 2005](#), the adoption agency has a duty to review by the 1st 6 month adoption review i.e. within 9 months after placement order why the child has not been placed and whether adoption should remain their care plan.
- The FFSW will share information about the CSW, in conjunction with their manager, and in discussion with the FFSW will consider potential matches sent to them in a timely manner which avoids delay and/or the potential match being lost. The expectation is that a decision whether to pursue a link identified is confirmed within 2 weeks of the CSW receiving the PAR.
- Once the decision has been confirmed to pursue a link, the child's CAR/B and other relevant information and documents will be shared with the prospective adopters by their ASW. They will be supported to consider the information in the CAR/B and think about the child's lived experiences and the impact of their early trauma. Their social worker will be able to help them explore what it might be like to care for this child or children within the context of their family and circumstances.
- If after considering the information shared with them about the child or children, they wish to proceed to explore the link further, arrangements will be made for the CSW to visit their home. See below.
- **ASW will record the list of all documents shared with prospective adopters on the child's adoption file.** This will include information about whether documents were shared in redacted or full form; if redacted, details will be included about what these were. This will ensure that the agency in future years will be able to fully comply with the provisions of [Section 60 ACA 2002](#) & [Access to Information \(Post Commencement Adoptions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2005](#).

Sufficient time should always be given for any potential matches to be explored before alternative options for permanency are considered. All regions need to follow guidance for changing a childcare plan which is set out in Chapter 5.

Placing a child outside Wales

I have a right to expect that your thinking and decisions focuses really hard on me being able to grow up in Wales. My Welsh identity is very important to me. If this is not possible, I have a right to understand why decisions were made for me to grow up outside Wales.

- The decision to place a child outside Wales should always be carefully considered, and reasons clearly recorded in the child **Family Finding Plan & Record**.
- There is an agreed process in place to consider options for children whose needs cannot be met within Wales. Central to this is effective and proactive use of the Adoption Register for Wales by all practitioners, including ensuring relevant children are visible to all Welsh regions and VAAs and ensuring that early alerts remain a focus across the service.
- Consideration should always be given to the child's cultural identity and how this will be met. There are a number of tools that can help practitioners think about and analyse a child's identity needs in a holistic way; these include the AFDiT framework <https://transracialadoptionframework.uk/the-framework/> and Nuffield Foundation research and resources around Understanding the Identities of Children in Care. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/news/understanding-identity-among-minoritised-children-in-care>

See Chapter 4 for the legal requirements relating to matching and placing a child in either England or Scotland.



Adopting Together Service

This service will consider referrals for all children in Wales who have been or are likely to be waiting the longest for a permanent family. These children may typically be over 4, from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, part of a sibling group, or children who have additional complex needs or uncertainty regarding their development. The Service offers tailored support to adopters through assessment, enhanced training and therapeutic interventions, pre and post placement with a new family. It is a psychology led service with direct consultations and support from the same psychologist throughout the adopter's journey. In addition to therapeutic transitions and enhanced adoption support, the Service can offer a family finding placement strategy through child specific campaigns, and targeted recruitment.

There are two tiers for referral to the Adopting Together Service:

1) Where it is known from the outset that children are likely to wait longer for a placement, they should be referred to the service without delay; these would include children with complex needs, larger sibling groups, children with specific or profound health needs etc.

2) All other children who have or are likely to wait longer than 9 months. A discussion with the ATS Service Manager would also be advised prior to this if there is a risk of the child's plans changing or them being separated from siblings.

- CSW and FFSW need to discuss the needs of the children identified as early as possible with the Adopting Together Service Manager at St Davids Adoption Service, particularly if they fit the two categories above. For some children it may be evident during the latter stages of care proceedings that a placement may be harder to achieve. In order to maximise the time available for specific targeting and recruitment of families for these children, discussions with the Adopting Together Service Manager should be considered at the earliest stage with a view to a referral being made as soon as the child meets the criteria.
- Joint consideration between the ATS Service Manager and the ARW Practitioner Manager will take place on those children who are waiting, or likely to wait over 9 months on the ARW and not yet referred to the Adopting Together Service. This will ensure that these children are referred to the Service in the absence of an identified match. The ARW PM will continue to liaise with the Regional Adoption Manager to explore this for children where referrals have not been made.
- Whilst it is in the child's best interests for discussions to begin at the earliest opportunity, this will not replace existing family finding activities within the region and the plan would be for both to run concurrently.

Email: AdoptingTogether@stdavidscs.org
for further details, or speak with the Adopting Together Service Manager on 029 2066 7007.



Information Sharing with Prospective Adopters

Adopter preparation has consistently faced the challenge of ensuring that prospective adopters not only receive information about children's experiences and the impact of these, but also that they are able to assimilate and understand it, beyond a purely intellectual level particularly if they have professional experience of children. The challenge in assessment of gathering sufficient evidence of realistic expectations when prospective adopters have no real frame of reference, and thinking critically about what this means cannot be underestimated. The challenge in family finding and building adoptive families for children in Wales is to ensure that prospective adopters are not only confident that there has been sufficient professional rigour in gathering, recording and understanding information about a child but that this professional commitment continues, from the start of exploring a potential and through into placement, in helping them understand what it means for them as potential parents for that child.

- When a potential link has been identified for a child, there needs to be an open and transparent process of sharing information and well-informed support to ensure this information is understood. Initially, this responsibility rests with the ASW and expands across the professional network should the link progress.
- A full copy of the child's **CAR/B** needs to be available to the prospective adopters; they will receive an updated copy prior to Matching Panel should the link progress.
- The FFSW will need to discuss the child's keeping in touch needs and the expectations for prospective adopters within these, and the support they can expect.
- Other relevant reports and documents will need to be shared with the prospective adopters; this might include (not exclusively) school or nursery reports, information from the foster carer and health professionals. Refer to section on **Permission to disclose documents from the court bundle** in Chapter 1.
- The **Trauma Nurture Timeline** should be shared with prospective adopters to help them think about the child's lived experiences, what these may mean for his/her development, and the kind of parenting and care he or she may need, now and in the future.
- If a change of name has been considered, adopters will be made aware of the reasons for this and their views established. If this is not the case, ASW should make the prospective adopter aware of the agreed national position regarding a child's first name and surname.
- The main objective at this stage is to ensure that prospective adopters have sufficient information and understanding about a child's needs and their background to enable them to make a well-informed decision about whether they would wish to proceed to explore the link further. The ASW will be able to reflect on initial responses to the information and tailor subsequent support accordingly. This information sharing and understanding will continue should the link proceed as detailed in Chapter 4.
- **Photographs**, and where possible, **videos of the child** or children should be made available to prospective adopters at the start of the process of considering a link. This allows prospective adopters to move beyond the often difficult nature of written information and helps them hold the child in mind as they move through the process.
- If the link does not progress, the prospective adopters will return or destroy any information relating to the child.
- If they have not already done so, the ASW will record the list of all documents shared with prospective adopters on the child's adoption file. This will ensure that the agency in future years will be able to fully comply with the provisions of the [Section 60 ACA 2002](#) & [Access to Information \(Post Commencement Adoptions\)\(Wales\)Regulations 2005](#).
- The ASW will ensure that the prospective adopters are aware of the entitlement of an adopted person, post 18, to all the information that was provided to them at the time of the adoption.

Considering more than one potential link

Identifying the strengths and risks of prospective matches in adoption is crucial to adoption stability and outcome success (Quinton 2012).

- As already stated, it is important to have open discussions between professionals about expectations and responses regarding potential links and this has become even more important with the use of Link Maker with the potential for large number of links to be generated for some children or prospective adopters.
 - Where more than one potential link is being considered, decisions should be guided by a structured, evidence-informed process that objectively considers the needs of the child alongside the capacities of each prospective adopter.
 - The **Bath Spa Strengths And Risks Matching Tool (STAR)** is a resource that was developed to identify strengths and risks in proposed matches and can be used at any point during linking and matching. It provides an opportunity for professionals to reflect on their confidence in the relative strengths and risks of each proposed match. These resources are available through your regional licensing agreement with CoramBAAF.
 - Visits to more than one family should only be taken if a decision cannot be made on the available information and should be restricted to a maximum of 2 families. Both families should be made aware of the circumstances and be given the opportunity to withdraw from being considered for this child or children if they wish. The timing of the visits should be carefully considered and should always be within a close timeframe and ideally within a week of each other.
 - Professional discussions should be prioritised following visits and decisions should be made and prospective adopters need to be informed in a timely manner.
- The purpose of the visit is to explore the link further with the prospective adopters, with those who know them and the child well. It is an opportunity for all parties to ask questions to inform their decision making. Prospective adopters should be made aware of timescales for decision making and be clear of any expectations on their part.
 - Following the visit, the prospective adopters and the CSW will need time to reflect on the visit and decide whether they each wish to proceed with the link. Whilst adequate reflection time should always be afforded to the family, there should be minimal delay in professionals making this decision, and prospective adopters should be informed of the outcome no later than 3 working days from the date of the visit.
 - In some cases, the CSW may request a second visit before making a final decision about whether or not to proceed. In these cases, prospective adopters should be made aware of this as soon as possible and the visit should take place within 1 week of the original visit. The reason for the second visit should also be shared openly with the prospective adopters.

When an identified potential match has been refused by the CSW

There are a number of factors that affect the quality of matches. As already identified, the foundation is good quality information about the child and the prospective adopters, information that is regularly updated and where difficulties are not minimised. Good collaboration between professionals will ensure a proactive and varied family finding approach that minimises delay but which also does not compromise on the essential needs of children or the capacity of prospective adopters to parent them. There must also be a willingness to revise non-essential requirements when necessary and avoid striving for what is thought to be the “ideal” family.

- Decisions on whether or not to pursue a match should not be made in isolation, and should always be discussed between the CSW and FFSW with management oversight. When a match presented for a child is refused, the CSW must provide clear reasons in writing to the FFSW. If appropriate, a meeting can be held to discuss the reasons for refusal and to consider whether the match might be considered suitable with additional support.

Visits to a Potential Family or Families

This is an emotionally charged time for prospective adopters as the enormity of what they are doing is becoming very real. Professional responses should reflect this.

- Once the family and the CSW have confirmed that they wish to proceed to explore the potential link further, a visit to the prospective adopters' home needs to be arranged. In order to prevent delay, this visit should take place as soon as possible and no later than 2 weeks from the decision to proceed.
- This visit should include the prospective adopters and their adoption social worker; the CSW; the family finding social worker.

Statutory Reviews and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

The IRO will continue to review the child's care plan and should have access to an up-to-date **Family Finding Plan & Record**. There are additional elements to requirements at this stage that need to be considered (See [Reg 37 AA\(W\)R 2005](#) below). These can be addressed within one meeting although consideration should be given to the involvement of parents/ those with parental responsibility and limiting their access to elements of the meeting that address adoption planning for the child. This aligns with [Regulation 46 AA\(W\)R 2005](#) which states there is no longer the duty to ascertain the wishes and feelings of parents or those with PR ([Reg 46 AA\(W\)R 2005](#)) or to promote contact with parents.

In line with best practice in terms of keeping those with parental responsibility informed, it is suggested that these persons are not invited to reviews but there should be arrangements in place to ensure they are informed of the outcome of each review by the IRO.

Refer to Chapter 2 for **Contact planning for different stages of the care planning for adoption process**

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 will still apply but regulation 37 AA(W)R 2005 will also apply in respect of reviews from the date of the placement order.

Reg 37(3): from date of placement order to date of placement:

Reviews

- Not more than three months from date of placement order
- Thereafter not more than 6 months after the last review

Until the child is placed

Visiting requirements remain under the CPPCR(W)R 2015 until the child is placed for adoption and taking into account individual circumstances.

In line with [reg 37\(8\)AA\(W\)R 2005](#):

If the child is not placed by the 1st 6 month review ie within 9 months of the placement order being granted, the local authority must at that review -

c) Establish why the child has not been placed for adoption and consider what further steps the authority should take in relation to the placement of the child for adoption; and

d) In light of that, consider it remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption

- The IRO will continue to monitor all the safeguards as set out in the Care Planning and Case Review Regulations (e.g. Is the placement safe? Does it continue to meet the child's needs? Has the appropriate direct work been completed with the child? Are the LJW materials completed and are they of good quality?)
- The IRO will confirm that the care plan remains adoption for this child and will review the child's Family Finding Plan and Record and ensure that relevant actions have been completed/ or are on track.

From Linking to Matching Panel

The Legal Framework

Adoption and Children Act 2002

Part 30 Family Procedure Rules 2010

Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005, as amended

Refer to Appendix 6 for the full legal references to the regulatory framework in respect of the proposed placement for the child.

This chapter sets out the regulatory framework from the point a successful link proceeding to matching panel / ADM decision. For any good practice guidance following the matching panel decision, refer to the [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#).

What needs to happen

The key question given that many children will have already formed their own internal working models in the context of adversity is the impact this may have on the adoptive parents and the adjustment that both the child/ren and the adopter/s need to make in establishing a new pathway for development. There is the related question of how to explore this prior to the placement being made – in other words – ‘What might this mean in terms of matching?’ (Simmonds J. in Adoption Matching Practice Guide. 2016).

We have already identified that research and thematic analysis often highlight issues around prospective adopters' expectations of the child or of adoptive parenting per se that are not rooted in reality, and that having no frame of reference to what they are about to embark on complicates this. If these unrealistic expectations are then further complicated with issues like a lack of stability in relationships or changes within a family after a child has moved, the strength and longevity of the placement will be compromised.

- The principles behind the **Trauma Nurture Timeline** and **Understanding the Child Day**, as outlined in the [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#), reflect our growing understanding of the impact of developmental trauma. They also respond directly to consistent feedback from foster carers and adopters, who have often said they lacked sufficient information about a child or didn't fully understand the effects of early trauma. This approach is a way of “bridging the gap” for prospective adopters between expectation and reality, by systematically gathering information from the child's CARB, and other reports as well as from people involved with the child to build up a picture of the child's experiences, both pre and post birth. By actively encouraging the process of “wondering” about the potential impact for the child, the timeline and meeting explores the child's “inner working model” and thinks about potential triggers and soothers.
- If there is agreement on both sides to proceed with the link, opportunities for the prospective adopters to gain more information about the child from other sources will be arranged as a priority. This will include meetings with the Medical Advisor and their Health Visitor; their foster carers; the child's school or nursery if relevant. These will enable to prospective adopters to build to fuller picture of the child or children in order to make an informed decision about proceeding to Matching Panel.

There are several things are happening at once at this stage, with progression ultimately depending on the outcome of the information sharing with the adopters and decision by all parties regarding proceeding to panel.

Process

- To minimise delay, **dates should be secured** as early as possible, especially for the meeting with the Medical Advisor, but also for the professionals Matching Meeting and Matching Panel. These can be cancelled if need be.
- **Paperwork** for the Matching Meeting and Matching Panel will start to be prepared; in particular, the Adoption Placement Report (APR) and Adoption Support Plan (ASP). Link to [Contact Good Practice Guide](#) and [Adoption Support Good Practice Guide](#).
- ASW will ensure that the process remains **focused and updates** monitoring system.

Direct work with child

- Consideration should be given to any direct work needed with the child, with details of when this will start and who will be involved. Once the plan for adoption with the prospective adopters has been confirmed, the direct work with the child should start and move through the stages identified in the [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#).
- Progression is dependent on work with the child being completed e.g. before the Farewell contact, before introductions etc.

When thinking about the timescale required between communicating to the child that a new family has been found and specifying the day of the move, a number of factors in her world should be considered. These include: the child's age (chronological and emotional); their capacity to tolerate the experience of transition; the capacities of the current and new families to tolerate the experience; the length of time the child has been in the current placement; the quality of their relationship with the current foster family; and the number and experience of transitions the child has already undergone (Browning, 2015).

Preparation of the adoptive family

- When appropriate, prospective adopters can be supported to prepare a **Family Book and video**.

Existing children within an adoptive family, whether biological or not, are recognised as a potential vulnerability. In order to respond in the best way possible, whole family systems needs to be considered during matching and transitions processes (Meakings et al, 2017) and consideration should be given to all family members meeting early on (Browning, 2015). Where there are existing children in the family, the ASW will provide support in preparing them for their new brother or sister. See [Story Book and Activity Book for Children](#)

WEP specific resources: [Welsh Early Permanence for Siblings – National Adoption Service](#)



Contact Planning

- Planning for **Farewell/Transition Contact** should start. Link to [Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide](#).
- The timing of Farewell Contact needs to be carefully considered and based on the individual circumstances of each case. The decision on when to proceed with Farewell contact must be taken in consultation with the adoption service and take into consideration the following:
 - The needs of the child as a priority, and the time they need to process what is happening before moving to the next stage
 - The principle of avoiding delay for the child wherever possible
 - Being proportionate and mindful of the needs of birth family and the support available to them.
- Discussion and **planning for the meeting between the prospective adopters and birth family** should start. This should be standard practice unless there are extenuating circumstances. Link to [Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide p.20 & 21](#).

Time for reflection

- Throughout the linking and matching process, there should be time built in for prospective adopters to **reflect on and process** what they have heard, particularly after meetings with the foster carer and Medical Advisor, the Understanding the Child Day and Pre Meet. The **relationship with their ASW** will be key to this; the trust they will have developed will enable them to be honest about any anxieties or concerns. These discussions should include expectations around the child's name and keeping in touch arrangements.
- There should also be opportunities to revisit the [Adoptive Parent's Wellbeing Action Plan](#) as things progress; this will be particularly beneficial during introductions and post placement.

Next Stages: Information sharing with Prospective Adopters

Meeting with the foster carers not only provides a valuable opportunity for the person who knows the child best and is caring for them on a daily basis to share key information with the prospective adopters, it also provides an opportunity to start to develop a positive relationship between the adults. This foundation is hugely beneficial when we move into the introductions stage and can be central to its success.

- Prior to this meeting the foster carers social worker will support them to think about the detail they need to share with the prospective adopters in order for them to gain a comprehensive understanding of what it is like to care for the child on a daily basis. There will be professional support at this meeting; the foster carers' SSW and ASW need to attend especially as this is the first meeting.
- Foster carers will not be given detailed personal information about the prospective adopters but should have some general information to help them think about the child in that family. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the foster carers will be given information about where the prospective adopters live.
- This time is charged with high emotion on both sides and there is a potential for mismatched perceptions and miscommunication. There should be clear expectations and support for all parties available as well as adequate time for reflection and sharing of any issues or concerns. A failure to facilitate this could mean much bigger challenges in the immediate and long term future.
- Foster carers should be asked to bring photographs (and videos if possible) of the child to the meeting; if the match progresses, there should also be ongoing sharing of photographs with the adopters within agreed parameters as this helps relieve anxiety during the difficult time of waiting to meet the child but also helps to build connections.
- Foster carers should also be supported to understand expectations of them should the match proceed; this includes their important role as the secure base for the child at the time of transition to their new family and of maintaining relationships after the move.

Research has shown that the emotional experience of the child, particularly their experience of losing their foster carer, loses centre stage in people's minds during the transition to a new family, leading to what is described as a "blind spot" (Boswell and Cudmore, 2017). Struggling with conflicting emotions and anxieties of their own, adults have tended to interpret a child's behaviour, for example, of compliance and lack of distress as them being "fine" rather than questioning what might be going on at a deeper level. Boswell and Cudmore., 2014, 2017) Refer to [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#) p.3.

Meeting with Agency Medical Advisor

Having the opportunity to meet with the Agency Medical Advisor is a crucial step in the decision making process for prospective adopters before the potential match is presented to Matching Panel and the ADM for approval. The Medical Advisor is able to provide detailed information and answer questions about the child's health and development, as well as information about any family medical history that is known and potential implications for the child.

- In addition to meeting with the Medical Advisor, it is also important to consider whether there are other health professionals involved with the child who will be able to provide specific information to aid prospective adopters understanding and decision making. These will include the child's health visitor, and any specialists e.g. speech and language therapists, dieticians, neo natal abstinence service etc. These or equivalent local services are likely to remain involved in some capacity post placement.

Visiting the child's nursery or school

If the child is of school age or attends a nursery provision, it will be really important not only for professionals to gather information to inform their assessment, but also for prospective adopters to have an opportunity to meet with the child's key worker at the school/nursery to help build a picture of them in this setting. It might not be possible to complete the visit prior to the Matching meeting or panel but a date should be secured as soon as possible.

Thinking about an Understanding the Child Day

Following a shared decision by professionals and the prospective adopters that the match is likely to process, consideration should be given to convening an Understanding the Child Day. Whilst all children will benefit from and need careful consideration of their trauma history and functioning, for very young children with less complex care history, a whole day event might not be necessary. (p.17. [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#))

- This provides an opportunity to explore in more detail the child's birth family history, pre birth and early life experiences, and potential implications for them and the family, often in the absence of any frame of reference.

This gave the adopters and myself not only clarity and factual information but reassurance about who the children were, what they needed as well as more certainty about the match – this is a much surer footing in which to begin any adoptive placement. Child's social worker. (P.19. [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#))

Pre-Meets

First meetings of children and their prospective adoptive families are extra-ordinary life events. Other scenarios in which human beings who are not biologically related meet for the first time with the expectation that they will have a life-long relationship are rare. The ethical implications of allowing children and their prospective adoptive families to meet before formal approval and how this is done must be carefully considered. However, it is also essential to address the potential risks for the child and their prospective family associated with initiating formal introductions without prior interaction. (Blackmore. 2025).

Historically, practice around meetings between children and their prospective adopters prior to a formal match being agreed have been inconsistent in Wales. In some cases, their purpose has not been well understood and expectations around them have been unclear. Best practice would advocate pre meets for all children, with the caveat that case by case considerations should always inform decision making. This marks a broad shift towards the formation of adoptive families with the concept of family 'building' at its heart, rather than family 'finding.' (Blackmore. 2025).

The purpose of Pre-Meets

Pre-Meets provide an opportunity for prospective adopters to meet a child before formal matching takes place and are part of the pre matching panel information sharing stage. Similarly to an UTCD, pre meets are considered where there is high certainty of a match progressing to panel. They should not be confused with the "Getting to know you" stage of introductions but can play an essential role in ensuring this goes smoothly.

For some children, a Pre-Meet may be considered beneficial in the early stages of the matching process, especially if the child has complex health/behavioural issues or for a larger sibling group. In some cases, the Pre Meet can take place in an Adoption Activity Day or other planned activity arranged by the Register or region.

Benefits and Challenges

For the prospective adopters: "Brings the child to life" and helps the prospective adopters gain a deeper understanding of them; helps to manage their expectations about the child ; helps build confidence in the match and start to build an emotional connection with the child; tests emotional response to the child and an opportunity to reflect; begins the process of psychological adjustment to parenting this child and what this will mean; relieves anxieties before introductions start. It can also create an opportunity to voice any concerns they might have and for these to be thoroughly explored with their ASW. In some cases, this might result in prospective adopters withdrawing from a match before making a final commitment. Careful consideration needs to be given to the involvement of any existing children as it is recognised that this dynamic is a highly influential factor in terms of placement success. Involvement of children might not necessarily happen at the initial meeting but could be included in subsequent meets.

For foster carers: helps them feel involved in the matching process and be able to voice their thoughts or any concerns; provides reassurance and starts to build confidence that this is right for the child; helps them visualise the child with the family; begins the process for them of psychological adjustment to a new role with the child. Importantly, this meeting can build on the trust between the adults which continues to set a positive foundation for the next stages.

For professionals (including panel/ ADM): helps build confidence in the match and the opportunity to respond to any issues prior to formal matching. It also provides an opportunity for professionals to conclude this is not the right match with clear reasons for this.

For the child, most importantly: helps the child start to get a sense of who their new family will be; provide reassurance; an opportunity for them to ask their social worker or foster carer questions; to help them understand what is happening, how important they are and the decisions about their future are.

Expectations and Preparation

- It is important to set clear parameters for any Pre-Meets that are arranged and it might be beneficial to hold an “expectations meeting” for all parties. This will ensure everyone agrees to the Pre Meet happening and understands the reason; agrees who will attend; agrees location and length of the Pre Meet; agrees level of interaction between the foster carers, prospective adopters and the child. A Pre Meet does not necessarily mean that a match will automatically proceed and either the agency or the prospective adopters can withdraw if they no longer think the match is suitable.

Careful planning should ensure the venue and timing does not clash with birth family contact. The adoption service will take the lead in planning the Pre Meet and will include the CSW and SSW for the foster carers.

- Although consideration should always be given to any existing children in the family, it is not always advisable to include them in the Pre Meet. However, there are different views on this with some advocating early engagement between the children as beneficial to future stability (Blackmore. 2025). Therefore, consideration should be given to some involvement of existing children on a case-by-case basis, depending on the age and understanding of all children involved. Once the match has been agreed, all existing children will be included in the Introduction Planning.
- There needs to be agreement of how the prospective adopters are introduced to the child or children, and this will again be dependent on the age and understanding of each child. There should be no presents or photos exchanged and no discussions about adoption during the session.

Brothers and Sisters

An event like an **Understanding the Child Day** can really help prospective adopters understand what it will be like responding to more than one child who has suffered significant loss and trauma. It will help them understand the sibling dynamic better as well as the individual needs of each child. It can also help inform:

- Introduction planning, especially when children are in separate foster placements; whether to place simultaneously or consecutively.
- The length of time the children need to settle before starting school and how long both parents should ideally be at home.
- Support that is needed, both professional and from the prospective adopters' informal network

Preparation of the Child

It is essential that each child is properly prepared for the Pre-Meet and helped to understand the purpose of the meeting, dependent on their age and understanding. The foster carer's role in this cannot be underestimated; their spoken and unspoken reassurance to the child will be essential.

- The foster carer and their social worker will have been helping the child (depending on their age and development) to understand that they need to be adopted and that the adults are looking for families who are suitable to adopt them.
- The child should be reassured that the foster carers will be with them throughout the meeting.
- The child should be reassured that they do not have to talk about anything or answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable.
- The social worker and foster carer should explain the purpose of the pre-meet and that this is one of many ways in which the social worker is trying to find the right family for the child.
- Social workers and foster carers should be honest and let the child know that there is no guarantee that a certain family will be the right one, but that the child should focus on having a good time and enjoying any activities during the meeting.
- If the adopters do not express interest in the child after the pre-meet, the child should be told that the people enjoyed meeting and playing with them, and that the social worker and foster carer want to consider other people too – with the message, ‘We want to get the right family for you’.

Adoption Panel and the ADM will want to see Adoption Support Plans reflecting the support needs of a sibling placement with sufficient detail. They also have to address any ongoing keeping in touch arrangements, especially with separated siblings. There should be no justification of siblings not knowing about each other at the very least, and the reasons why they weren't able to grow up together.

Work with Birth Parents

Birth parents often describe feeling in a state of limbo whilst waiting for adoptive placements to be identified and show a fractured understanding of what is happening. They continue to adjust to their child being permanently removed and many hold onto the hope of the child returning to them despite the serious and ongoing concerns that led to that decision. Keeping in touch with birth parents, offering information and sensitive support can help them to manage their expectations and face the reality of the situation.

Application for permission by parents and others to make an application for a revocation of placement order.

The Statutory Framework

1) A placement order, granted under s21 ACA 2002 authorises a local authority to place a child for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the authority.

2) This authority to place is curtailed by s24(5), which states:
Where,

(a) An application for the revocation of a placement order has been made and has not been disposed of, and

(b) The child is not placed for adoption by the authority,
The child may not without the court's leave be placed for adoption under the order.

The child may not without the court's leave be placed for adoption under the order.

3) It is, therefore, unlawful to place a child (the date of placement being at the end of introductions and when the child finally moves to the adopters) whilst there is an application for a revocation of placement order in place.

The Case Law

The case law looks at the time before such an application is made, when either:

- a) An application for leave (permission of the court) to make an application for a revocation order has been made under s24(2) – leave is required to make the substantive application, or
- b) The local authority / adoption agency has knowledge of the parent's (or other family member's) intention to make such an application.

The cases *Re F (Placement Order)* [2008] EWCA Civ 439 and *(R (On the Application of EL) v Essex County Council)* [2017] EWHC 1041 (Admin) held that strict adherence to the terms of s24(5) is not enough to demonstrate good practice and, consequently, procedural fairness towards the parent:

- Lack of good practice can amount to procedural unfairness and in public law terms a finding of procedural unfairness amounts to acting unlawfully;
- Where there is procedural unfairness, the parent could seek an interim injunction to prevent the placement taking place.



How to Act Lawfully and Ensure a Smooth introduction and Transition Period

It is important that there is an agreement between the regional collaborative and child's local authority for ensuring that effective communication takes place with parents. It is advised that the regional collaborative takes responsibility for sending out the letters outlined below but they will rely upon information from the child's social worker. For example, information might arise at a statutory review if parents attend, which the child care social worker will need to pass on.

The following good practice should be adhered to:

- Keep parents informed about the progress of family finding, post placement order. A letter should go to parents, following the making of the placement order, giving information on their right to appeal the making of the placement order (see above) and then their right to apply for leave to make an application for revocation of the placement order.
- Once a placement has been identified, a meeting should take place to inform the parents that, unless they issue an application under [s24\(2\) ACA 2002](#) for leave to revoke by a certain date, it will proceed with the matching panel, ADM decision, introductions and placement. This meeting should take place once a placement plan has been made, at the matching meeting or equivalent.
- Following this meeting a letter should go out, by process server, which gives 21 days' notice of the agency's intention to go to matching panel /ADM and to then place the child. The letter will also urge birth parents to seek legal advice.

The above should be done as a matter of priority at the same time as booking a panel date.
- If a meeting with parents did not take place before the letter was sent, invite the parents to meet and discuss and ensure that they understand the contents of the letter.
- Following the sending of the 21 days' notice, pursue matching panel, ADM decision and any other preparations (e.g. meetings with Medical Advisers, meetings with foster carers, 'Understanding the Child' days or equivalent).
- Notification to the birth parents should be provided to inform them of the ADM decision as soon as possible after panel recommendation and ADM decision has been made. [Reg 34\(4\) Adoption Agencies \(Wales\) Regulation 2005 \(as amended\)](#)
- If an indication is given, at any time, by parents or others, that they intend to make an application for leave, continue with all preparations apart from introductions and placement.

- If an application is made for leave, continue with preparations as above but do not plan introductions until the leave application has been heard. Consider holding a further placement planning meeting to consider the consequences of the delay.
- If an application for leave to revoke the placement order is successful you need to cease the introductions/placement but you may then apply to the court for leave to place the child under [s24\(5\)](#).
- If no application is forthcoming, proceed with introductions and placement. Only cease this plan if you receive notification of an application to revoke the placement order.
- In some exceptional circumstances, where there are repeated applications for leave to revoke the placement order, there is the option of applying to the court with a [C2 application \(Family Procedure Rules 2010\)](#) for leave to place the child. This may not be strictly necessary but in some situations may be justified to ensure the prevention of unnecessary delay.
- If there is a prolonged delay post matching panel, which affects the well-being of the child – e.g. where the foster placement cannot accommodate a delay, consider approving the prospective adopters under the 'foster to adopt' provision under [s81\(10\)\(11\) SSWB\(W\)A 2014](#) (the one situation where it may work as there will be a 'should be placed for adoption' decision and a matching decision).

Once the child has been placed for adoption, the birth parents only opportunity to challenge the plan legally is once the application for an Adoption Order is made.

Planning for Farewell/Transitional Contact

(See earlier comments)

Refer to Chapter 2 for the different legal stages of contact, at this stage **s26 ACA 2002**.

- Planning for Farewell Contact should be prioritised in Matching Planning stage but will not generally take place until after Matching Panel and ADM. However, individual circumstances will need to be considered in all cases and priority given to the needs of the child whilst also being proportionate and sensitive to the needs of the birth family. There will always be a challenge with the timing of this and there will need to be sufficient time between the Farewell Contact and the beginning of introductions for the child to be able to process what is happening. The decision about when to proceed with Farewell contact will always be taken in consultation with the adoption service.
- Timing is key throughout as it is important for the child to have sufficient time and support to process things between all stages and especially before being introduced to their new family.
- Think about practical arrangements: venue, transport, who will arrive first, etc.
- Think about who will be involved; whether separate sessions need to be arranged for each parent; are there additional family members that need to be considered, especially older siblings and maybe grandparents.
- People need to know what to expect: what is expected of them and what will happen during the time. Think about photos, exchange of gifts, planned activities.
- Think about support: before, during and after.

Refer to Appendix 10 in [Contact Good Practice Guide](#).

Meeting between Birth Parents and Prospective Adopters

We know from experience and research that a well planned, sensitively managed meeting between parents and prospective adopters can and does lay the foundations of a positive lifelong relationship (Neil, 2010). It makes it so much easier to have subsequent contact with someone you have met and talked to, rather than just read about and this can lead to better quality 'settling in' letters and ongoing contact. It also provides a valuable opportunity to provide reassurance, understanding and empathy for all parties.

- At this stage it will also be important to think about brothers and sisters, and other family members too, especially if there is planned ongoing contact
- Whilst this meeting should ideally be planned to take place during the matching stage - unless risks are unacceptable or cannot be managed with support - it is important to recognise that this is a particularly vulnerable time for both birth parents and prospective adopters. Therefore, the overriding message should be that "it is never too late" for this meeting to happen and it could be arranged later.



Proceeding to Panel

Once all available information has been shared with prospective adopters and all parties agree to proceed, the ASW will liaise with the CSW and confirm the panel date and actions required prior to panel. This will include updating the CAR/B and preparing the child's Life Journey materials in order for draft copies of the Life Journey Book and Later Life Letter to be available at panel.

Prior to panel

- A **Professionals Matching meeting** will be convened. This will be chaired by an Adoption Manager and will always include the CSW, the prospective adopters ASW and the FFSW. It will also be helpful to involve an Adoption Support practitioner especially if prior consultation hasn't occurred.
- In this meeting the child's **Adoption Placement Report (APR)** and their **Adoption Support Plan (ASP)** will be considered and agreed. Therefore, a draft copy of these documents will be completed and shared with the Chair at least 2 days prior to the meeting.
- If the placement is with an external agency, the **Interagency Agreement** needs to be completed by the FFSW and the prospective adopters' ASW prior to the Matching Meeting.
- The **APR** is the key document that supports the matching process. It is completed after a potential match is identified and before it is presented to Adoption Panel with prospective adopters having the chance to comment on it. It should provide the necessary information for adoption panel and ADM to make informed decisions about placements and meet regulatory requirements ([Regulation 32\(3\) The Adoption Agencies \(Wales\) Regulations 2005 as amended](#)). If the match proceeds past introductions and a planning meeting, the APR informs the final placement decision.
- Other supporting documents will also be made available to the Chair. These will include: the PAR, panel minutes, ADM decision; the CAR/B, ADM minutes; TNTL/UTCD minutes; name change document; direct work completed with child and a draft LJW. These will be discussed and outstanding actions confirmed; including updating the child CAR/B. [All CAR/Bs need be up to date (within 3 months) before being presented to Adoption Panel].
- Adoption support is a crucial and expected part of becoming an adoptive family. Good knowledge of the children and their experiences will enable practitioners to formulate an **ASP** which reflects in appropriate detail how the child's current and predicted needs will be met, with the commitment to review and revise the plan at regular intervals and as required. Refer to [Adoption Support Good Practice Guide](#).

- Specific consideration should be given to the proposals for keeping in touch and confirmed. Support needed to enable and maintain the child's keeping in touch arrangements, and where responsibility rest for this, will be confirmed. The CSW and ASW will ensure that relevant agreements are completed with the birth family and prospective adopters. Refer to Appendices 5 - 9 Contact GPG for Contact Agreements.
- Any decisions regarding additional specialist support, including those requiring a financial commitment must be confirmed prior to proceeding to panel.
- The ASW needs to confirm whether the prospective adopters have met with the foster carer, Medical Advisor, school/nursery and outcome of these meetings. If any have not happened at this point, confirmation needs to be provided that all will happen before attendance at panel. Similarly, Pre-Meets will be considered on a case by case basis but best practice is that these should happen when it is known that a match is proceeding to Matching Panel and before it is presented at panel.
- Arrangements for Farewell/Transitional Contact will be discussed if final arrangements are not set out in the APR.
- Arrangements for the meeting between prospective adopters and birth parents will be discussed and confirmed.

Following the Matching meeting:

- The APR and proposed ASP will be shared with the prospective adopters by the ASW, allowing them sufficient time (10 working days) to consider and make comment. The ASW will ensure that the prospective adopters fully understand the Delegated Parental Responsibility on placement. The ASW will also ensure that their Family Book / DVD is being/ has been completed.
- When all documents are complete and signed, the suite of documents for panel will be compiled. This will include:

- 1) Up to date CAR/B (no more than 3 months of panel date)
- 2) Adoption Medical (including most recent update and record of Agency Medical Advisor's discussion with prospective adopters)
- 3) ADM record of decision
- 4) Up to date Foster Carer Report (no more than 3 months of panel date)
- 5) Prospective Adopters' PAR
- 6) Approval panel minutes
- 7) Adoption Placement Report
- 8) Adoption Support Plan
- 9) Draft Life Story Book and Later Life Letter
- 10) Prospective adopters' Family Book

All documents will be available to panel members a minimum of 2 weeks before the date of panel.

Adoption Panel and ADM decision

The regulatory framework for Adoption panels is set out in the Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005, as amended.

The panel has a key role in matching in ensuring that the child's current and predicted needs have been properly assessed; that the prospective adopters have a good understanding of these, and that the proposed match is a good one. Panel also needs to ensure that any support needs for all parties are appropriately addressed within the Adoption Support and Contact Plans and that the proposed transitions plan is robust. As per the general theme throughout this guide, these functions cannot be completed robustly and safely without good quality information.

Placing children outside Wales: additional considerations for Adoption Panel

Placing Welsh children in England

Although the ACA 2002 applies to both England and Wales and the Welsh and English regulations are almost identical, reg 34 AA(W)R 2005 only allows a match with adopter who have been approved under the Welsh regulations.

- This is a regulatory requirement only and there is no necessity to question the validity of the suitability approval made in England. This approval need only be considered and recorded in writing in order to comply with reg 34 and can essentially be an endorsement. This will happen at panel where the match is considered and need only take a number of minutes.
- Therefore, at matching panel, there should be a recommendation that

'This prospective adopter is approved as suitable to adopt under regulation 30A Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulation 2005, as amended'

This recommendation must take place before proceeding to a matching recommendation.

- The ADM will make the decision
- 'This prospective adopter is approved as suitable to adopt under reg 30B Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005, as amended'**

This decision must take place before proceeding to a matching decision.

Placing Welsh Children in Scotland

In the event that a child from Wales is to be matched with adopters approved in Scotland, practitioners should be aware that there are different regulations in force across the two countries and therefore different practice requirements. The CoramBAAF/AFKA Practice Note 'Matching children from Wales with adopters approved in Scotland' <https://afkacymru.org.uk/practice-notes/> provides clarification around practice and procedures for placing children from local authorities in Wales with Scottish approved adopters (under the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007).

Reg 34 AA(W)R 2005 only allows a match with adopters who have been approved under the Welsh regulations. Although the Scottish PAR is very similar to the Welsh PAR, the regulations do differ in minor ways and the Practice Note should be followed.

The placement of children at a large geographical distance will always provide challenges and vulnerabilities and the adoption support plan must address, in detail, how the family's support needs will be met. This will include:

- Regulatory social work visits for the child
- Statutory reviews
- Adopters' support (Scottish and Welsh adoption agencies to collaborate)
- Any needs of the child arising that fall outside adoption support needs

Following Panel

Following panel and recommendation, the panel pack and Adoption Panel minutes will be shared with the Agency Decision Maker to make a decision regarding the match. This should be made within 10 days of the Adoption Panel date.

Notification to the birth parents should be provided to inform them of the panel decision as soon as possible after this decision has been made [Reg 34\(4\) Adoption Agencies \(Wales\) Regulation 2005 \(as amended\)](#).

Moving Forward to Placement

The transitions stage of a child moving to their new family is hugely significant for the child, for the adults who are caring for them, and for the adults who *will* be caring for them. The NAS Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide highlight best practice and offers an attachment and trauma informed framework for navigating transitions to adoption and a co-ordinated approach for early support [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#).

Assessment of suitability, linking and then matching set the scene for a lifetime of opportunity, possibility and development for the adopters and the child. The responsibilities on the agency and the adopter/s are enormous and the desire must be to get this right from the outset. But the life-changing actions and decisions that constitute adoption involve much uncertainty. It is the capacity and ability to grow, develop and rise to the challenge as family life emerges that are key to success. And it is relating and relationships over time that sustain this. (Quinton, 2012).

Throughout all the National Adoption Service guides, we recognise that relationships are key: relationships with people who are important to the child and especially brothers and sisters; relationships that build trust within (and in) the professional network; relationships with foster carers and adoptive parents that help them feel safe. We continue to build a system that is robust and which minimises delay for the child but also one where there are opportunities for “wobbles”, for honest reflection, for changing decisions about the future. And we continue to build a system where the voice of the child is heard, in their CAR/B when we are planning their future and in matching reports, but also when a change of plan is being considered as well as in disruption reports. This latter point is the guiding principle in **Chapter 5** where we think about those children where care planning for adoption is changing.

The impact of repeated traumatic relational experiences for a child, the insecurity and the feel of real and terrifying danger this creates for them affects all aspects of their development and responses from early childhood to adolescence (Parker et al, 2024: Paine et al, 2025) – and these challenges can be lifelong. Just as the child’s past continue to shape their present and future vulnerabilities, Parker et al. (2024) also acknowledge that adoptive parents are navigating the formation of a new parental identity—one that, unlike other forms of parenthood, is often complicated by the need to reconcile the reality of adoptive parenting with expectations that may have been significantly different.

It is essential that we remain involved with the families we have helped to create, recognising that our role does not end at the point of placement or legal adoption. We are part of the wider ecology that surrounds and supports the family—offering guidance, advocacy, and intervention when needed – and which contributes to long term stability, helps build resilience, and ensures that children and their adoptive parents are equipped to navigate the evolving challenges of adoption across the lifetime of their family.



Chapter 5 - Children where care planning for adoption is changing

The Legal Framework

Time limits on placement orders – this has already been covered in Chapter 2 but is worth mentioning again.

S21(1) ACA 2002: A placement order is an order made by the court authorising a local authority to place a child for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the local authority.

Re A (Placement Order) (imposition of Conditions) [2013] EWCA Civ 1661; H&J (Placement Orders) [2024] EWCA Civ 429.

- The court has no jurisdiction to impose conditions on a local authority's search for prospective adopters.
- The court may not 'restrict' a local authority (e.g. by imposing a time limited search).
- However, the court may voice an 'expectation' which may then be reflected in the local authority's care plan.

Unless there is a good reason, CSW should always avoid planning for a time limited search. If a decision has been made that 'nothing else will do'/'only adoption will do', there is no reason why that decision/principle should cease within a specified period.

When the Local Authority Make the Decision to Revoke the Placement Order

Despite best efforts, it is not always possible to achieve a suitable match for some children and we must think about the impact on them of protracted timescales and uncertainty. Changing a child's care plan is a major decision to make and must not be taken lightly; there always needs to be robust evidence that everything possible has been done to achieve a suitable match.

As stated in earlier chapters, in line with [reg 37\(8\)AA\(W\)R 2005](#).

If the child is not placed by the 1st 6 month review i.e. within 9 months of the placement order being granted, the local authority must at that review:

- a) Establish why the child has not been placed for adoption and consider what further steps the authority should take in relation to the placement of the child for adoption; and
- b) In light of that, consider it remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption.

The decision to change the care plan from adoption rests with the local authority, not the courts. Any application for revocation of a placement order is made to the court after this decision is made and the consequences of failing to follow an agreed process when care planning for adoption is changing should be well understood. This can include unnecessary drift and uncertainty for the child and significant challenges by the court.

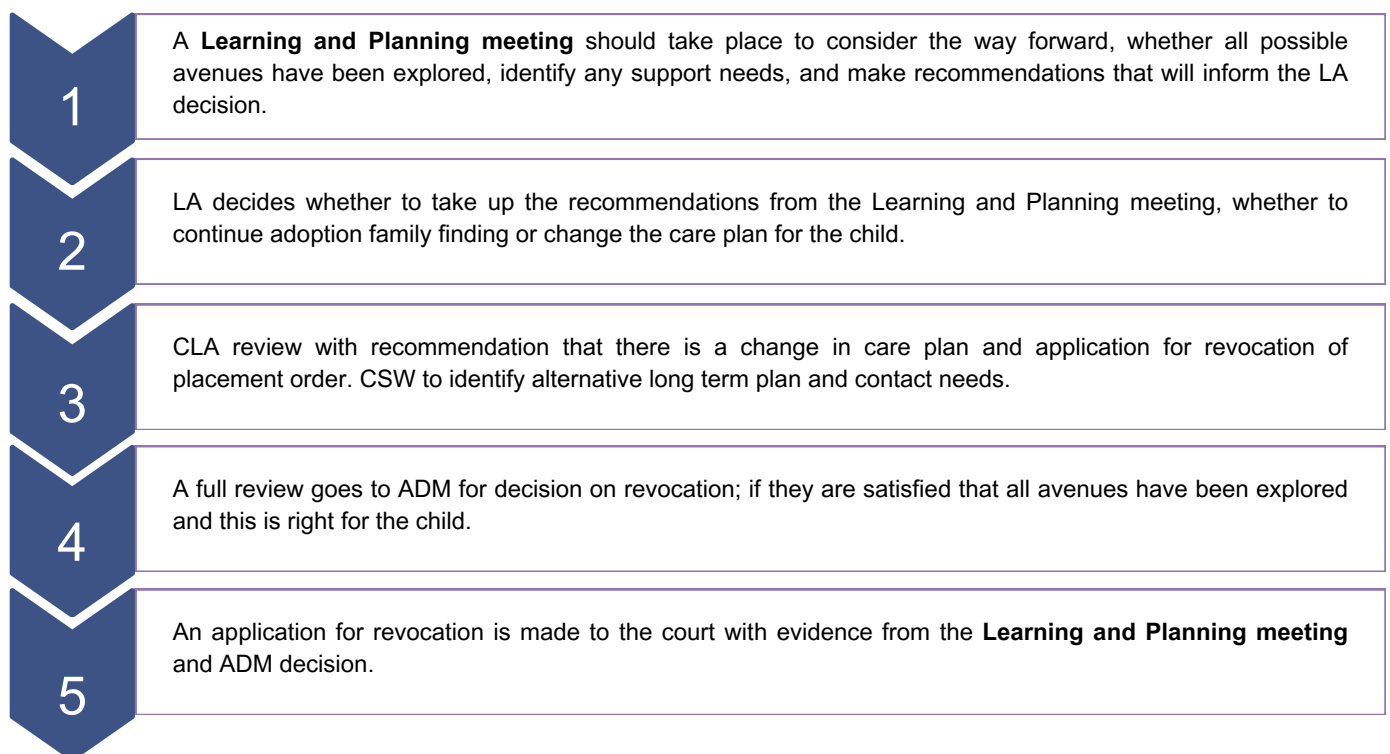
What Needs to Happen

A revocation of the placement order will indicate that the child is no longer signposted for adoption and plans for their future care, including keeping in touch arrangements, need to be reviewed.

- CSW in consultation with the Regional Adoption Service will follow an agreed process that starts with a **Learning and Planning** meeting (see below) and concludes with an application to court to revoke the placement order. The Learning and Planning meeting essentially acts as a review of the child's Family Finding Plan & Record for adoption with some additional elements to evidence accountable decision making for the child in later years.



5 Step Process



• The local authority will have indicated to the court in the care plan of its timetable for family finding. The court will need to see that there is no unnecessary drift in either family finding for an adoptive placement or changing the care plan if an adoptive placement cannot be found.

Given the likely time delay between the decision to make the application to revoke the placement order and the making of the order, consideration needs to be given to whether family finding for adoption should continue until such time as the application is heard:

a) If the child is still going to have to move (from the current short term foster placement to a long term placement), then it is proportionate to continue the family finding until the application for revocation is made, and in fact to carry on for as long as possible before the application is placed before the court, in order to maximise any potential for finding an adoptive placement. The court can, therefore, be satisfied that all reasonable attempts have been made but have sadly failed. The adoption family finding could run concurrently with family finding for a long term foster placement. It has to be remembered that the child is subject to a placement order to give effect to a care plan for adoption and until that order is revoked that plan should continue.

b) If the plan is for the child to remain in their current foster placement, then it is appropriate for active family finding to cease once a care planning meeting has taken place and the Head of Service has agreed the change of plan. Having made that recommendation and decision it may feel destabilising to all concerned, not least the child, if family finding continues up until the date of the application for revocation.

Reviewing Keeping in Touch Arrangements

Under a Placement Order the child is subject to s.22 ACA 2005 where there is no duty to promote or allow contact, as there is in s.34(1) CA 1989, when the child is looked after.

In *Re B (A Child)* [2016] EWFC B10 the family court held that the local authority was in breach of the child's article 6 rights (in denying his children's Guardian the role of scrutinising his care plan in a revocation hearing) and article 8 rights (in not reviewing his contact arrangements). In this case the child's revocation application was delayed for a number of years and there were numerous family members with whom the child may have benefited from having contact.

Learning and Planning Meeting (LPM) within Adoption Planning in Wales

What is an LPM?

- A structured meeting which **reflects, learns, plans** and **acts** and where support and challenge are part of the process
- Led by a facilitator with a good knowledge of care planning for adoption (preferably, but not necessarily, someone who has not been involved in the care planning for the child)
- Involves all those practitioners working with the child/ren concerned (list)
- Fosters good working relationships and an understanding of each other's perspectives
- Evidences decision making for the child with a report that will sit on their file and inform their Life Journey work
- Confirms a recommendation at the end of the meeting as to the child's continued care plan for adoption
- Notification to the Adoption Register for Wales of change of plan

What is the purpose of an LPM?

To ensure that, where possible, a child retains the right to an adoptive family where a placement order has been made.

The purpose of these meetings is threefold:

- 1) To ensure that every appropriate avenue for family finding for adoption has been explored.
- 2) To support care experienced adult to understand why decisions were made in an accessible format that is sensitive to their circumstances.
- 3) To identify the needs of the service: the notes of the meeting can be used by NAS to identify the needs of the service by capturing information on children whose plan was for adoption but not realised.

When will it be used?

The format of the Learning and Planning Meeting can be used for any review of a child's Family Finding Plan if this is helpful although there are specific circumstances when it should always be used.

These will include:

- For children who have a care plan for adoption and a placement order has been made but where the plan is at risk of changing to long term foster care as family finding for adoption appears to be coming to an end.
- In some cases, for brothers and sisters who are at risk of being separated (when they have been assessed as needing to stay together).
- When there has been an adoption placement disruption, in order to review whether the plan for the child should remain adoption.

When will it not be used?

- In the exceptional circumstances where the plan is for the child to be reunified with parents or placed with kinship carers.
- Where foster carers are wishing to adopt and that plan is supported by the child's social worker, following a proper analysis of the implications of that change of plan.

Acknowledgements

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- Those who were willing to share drafts of local practice, and share their experience and inspiring examples of good practice to assist our learning and development.
- Jess Coldrick (young adopted person) for her illustrations
- Dr Jenny Blackmore for sharing her research on pre meets and practice in Wales.
- Laura Betts, Welsh Early Permanence Coordinator, for developing such a valuable resource for preparing existing children in a WEP family, and for allowing this to be adapted as a preparation tool for all existing children with a family.
- All the prospective adopters and adoptive families that have helped us learn and develop our practice
- And most importantly, as with all of the development work we do in Wales, the voices of the children and young people who have taught us so much and continue to do so.

REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES



North Wales

Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham



Mid & West Wales

Ceredigion, Powys, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire



South East Wales

Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Caerphilly, Newport



Western Bay

Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend



Vale, Valleys & Cardiff

Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan



Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption



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Who this guide is intended for, roles and responsibilities, abbreviations and terminology

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

The guide is intended for use by all professionals involved in care planning for children where adoption is a possible option for permanence. These include:

1) **The child's social worker (CSW).** The child's social worker is the practitioner who, as an agent of the local authority, holds overriding parental responsibility for the child, through an interim care order under s38 and care order under s31 Children Act 1989 and, if a placement order is granted, under s 21 ACA 2002, until such time as an adoption order is made. The child's social worker is responsible for care planning for adoption and for the decisions in relation to family finding and matching with prospective adoptive parents following close collaboration and advice from the regional adoption collaborative. The guide is designed to assist the child's social worker, regardless of their experience in adoption work, to ensure that they meet their statutory, regulatory and good practice duties in relation to the child for whom they have responsibility.

2) **The regional adoption social worker (ASW).** Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements (Wales) Directions 2015 each local authority in Wales places the responsibility for assessing and approving prospective adopters, family finding, matching, introductions and placement, and adoption support to adoptive families and birth families, to one of the five regional collaboratives: SEWAS, VVC, Western Bay, Mid and West Wales and NWAS. In some regions, there are dedicated family finding teams whilst in others, roles are generic. The guides are constructed to help the regional collaboratives and voluntary adoption agencies in the sharing and development of good practice across the country. It also aims to help the adoption social worker and child's social worker be clear on their areas of responsibility and where they need to work together. The 'ASW' refers to the relevant social worker undertaking a particular piece of work (assessment / family finding / adoption support). **References to the family finding social workers in some parts of the guide uses the abbreviation FFSW.**

Childcare social workers are "Act Qualified" professionals representing the children in care and adoption social workers are "Act Qualified" professionals representing the prospective adopters.

3) **The voluntary adoption agency social worker.** Where the prospective adopter has been assessed and approved by one of the two voluntary adoption agencies operating in Wales, St David's Children's Society and Barnardo's Cymru, then there is an additional component, in that the VAA social worker works with both regional adoption social worker and the child's social worker. In this guide we use the **same abbreviation ASW** to denote voluntary adoption social workers although it is clear that these are aligned to the prospective adopter/s.

4) **The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).** The IRO has a critical role to play in the care planning and reviewing for a child whose care plan is for adoption. The guides refer to the functions of the reviewing process throughout, in order that all those involved with a child's progress to permanency can utilise the reviewing framework for maximum efficacy.

5) **The Children's Guardian.** The role of the Guardian in care, placement and, sometimes, adoption proceedings, provides an important independent element to the process of planning for a child's permanency through adoption. Guardians are employed by Cafcass Cymru. The guides will provide useful clarity and detail to Guardians on the practice expected and developing across Wales.

6) **Members of adoption panels and Agency Decision Maker (ADM).** The guide provides clarity on the practice expected and developing across Wales. Recent developments that will be included in paperwork available to panels and ADM are the Contact Planning tool and the updated Adoption Support Plan.

TERMINOLOGY

There are few fields more sensitive than that of adoption where terminology – who is called what – is concerned. It is important, for the sake of legal clarity as well as a respect for the individuals concerned, that the same terminology is used throughout the guides.

- 1) Prospective adoptive parents remain 'prospective adoptive parent(s)' through the assessment process, approval and placement of the child, right through until the adoption order is made, where they become 'adoptive parent(s)'
- 2) The child's parent(s), that is biological parents, remain 'parents', as they retain their parental status until the adoption order is made, whereupon they are termed 'birth parents' to distinguish them from the adoptive parents, who now have full parental responsibility. However, for the purpose of the guides, biological parents are referred to as birth parents.
- 3) Child's social worker not childcare social worker

Appendix

2

All Wales Child Referral Form



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

[Insert regional logo]

Referral Received:
Date Allocated:
Allocated to:

CHILD REQUIRING ADOPTION

REFERRAL TO (INSERT REGIONAL COLLABORTIVE)

All sections need to be completed.

Name of Social worker/Team and E-mail address	
SW supervising the case holder or Team Manager and their E-mail address :	
Name of IRO and E-mail address	
Date and time of next LAC review	
Date of most recent LAC admission	

CHILD INFORMATION (WHOM ADOPTION IS BEING CONSIDERED FOR)

Surname				
Forenames				
Gender				
Date of Birth				
Ethnicity				
Place of birth				
ID Number (LA or regional collaborative unique child number):				

CURRENT PLACEMENT INFORMATION

Name of Carer		
Type of Placement (Foster/Kinship/birth parent)		
Is this an out of county address?		
Children referred above in this placement		
Address		
Postcode		
Telephone number		
Name of carer's agency e.g. TACT/LA or Family Placement		
Supervising Social workers name and contact details		
Date Placement commenced		
Date became looked after if different		
GP DETAILS		

Local Authority Logos to be added if appropriate.

INFORMATION ON OTHER SIBLINGS IN THE FAMILY (OR PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED)

Surname	Forename	Gender	Date of Birth	Family Link (maternal/ paternal)	Placement/ Living arrangements	Current contact with children referred

BIRTH FAMILY INFORMATION

Name of mother		DOB		Ethnicity	
Address					
Postcode					
Telephone number					
Name of father of 1 st child (if more than one child referred)		DOB		Ethnicity	
Address					
Postcode					
Telephone number					

IF MORE THAN ONE FATHER PLEASE GIVE DETAILS BELOW

Name of father		DOB		Ethnicity	
Who is the father of:					
Address					
Postcode					
Telephone number					

BRIEF BACKGROUND / HISTORY AND REASON FOR REFERRAL TO ADOPTION

--

ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE CHILD

Any identified needs of the child	
Pre- birth experience, health, education.	
Current contact Plan for the child/ren	
Any identified support needs, child's understanding of their situation if old enough	

ISSUES IMPACTING ON BIRTH PARENTS

Factors that impact on birth parents e.g. Substance misuse, Domestic abuse, neglect, Mental health and physical health	
Birth parents views/understanding of current plan/twin-tracking.	
Risk issues associated with birth parents to professionals? i.e. are double staffed visits undertaken, any risks within the family home such as pets, where does the SW meet parents.	
Any other professionals involved with parents, ie Mental health team, advocates or substance misuse agencies.	

LEGAL INFORMATION

Is this a fast-track case i.e. no further assessments in proceedings	Yes/No
Legal status, if ICO in place date and name of court	
Name of LA Solicitor and E-mail address	
Name of LA Paralegal and email address	
Name of Children's Guardian	
Date of next Court hearing	
Date of IRH/ Final Hearing if made	

ASSESSMENTS AND ANTICIPATED TIME TABLING OF COURT PROCEEDINGS

(To include what assessments/reports are planned and when they will be concluded)

Confirm scheduled ADM date being requested to book	

Name of S.W. completing this referral:		Date	
--	--	------	--

REFERRAL TO ADOPTION AGREED BY

Name of Team Manager and E-mail address		Date	
---	--	------	--

Name of Social Worker who will be completing CAR /Annex B if known. Please send completed referral form to..... (insert regional collaborative email address for referrals)
--

Life Journey Work Quality Assurance Checklist at 2nd Adoption Review

No	Question	Details	Quality assured by	Date	Rating: Yes = 1 No = 0
1	Have all/any outstanding issues from the LJW planning checklist been addressed?				
2	Is there evidence of a comprehensive family history/information?				
3	Is there evidence that parents have been consulted in the creation of family history information?				
4	Does the child have a memory box?				
5	Have LJW materials been provided by the child's Foster Carer(s)?				
6	Does the LJ Book answer fundamental questions for the child?	Who am I? Where did I come from? Why did I not grow up with my parents? Who are my siblings and where are they now?			
7	Is there a good quality Later Life Letter?	Personal/individual to the child; appropriate language level; information consistent with LJ book; answers in more detail the questions in 6. above.			
8	Have the prospective adopters been consulted about the child's LJW materials and their views taken into consideration?				
9	Does the CAR/B sufficiently fill in any gaps in LJW information?				
10	Trauma Nurture Timeline completed?				

Total QA rating % (total rating x10 for %)

The use of Regulation 26 in Welsh Early Permanence

The framework itself does not mention the possibility of the use of [regulation 26 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#), that is the placement of a child, who is subject to an interim care order, with a temporarily approved foster carer who is 'connected' with the child.

Practitioners will be aware of the use of [reg 26](#) within care proceedings where children are placed with 'kinship' carers – that is where the connection is through family or close friend ties.

In England, within their early permanence frameworks, the English version of [reg 26](#) has been used, on occasion, to place a child with a sibling who is in an adoptive placement. The connection is created by the sibling relationship, the prospective carer being the adoptive parent of the sister or brother with whom the child is to be placed.

What Is a Reg 26 Placement and How Does It Come About?

In short, [reg 26](#) is a temporary fostering approval which may last for 16 weeks, with a further possible 8 weeks having sought the views of fostering panel. At the expiry of the 16 or 24 weeks the temporarily approved foster carer must be fully approved, or the placement must end. The decision to approve is made by the nominated officer in the child's authority, usually but not always the Head of Service. There are a number of factors to take into account before deciding to approve on a temporary basis, including those set out in Schedule 5 (see link below).

The Use of Reg 26 In Welsh Early Permanence

One of the most significant features of the WEP framework is to ensure that there is transparency, honesty, clarity and a clear understanding, on the part of WEP carers, of the inherent uncertainty in the placement becoming an adoptive placement.

In order to preserve the integrity of the framework, the use of [reg 26](#) to place with siblings must be limited to certain situations where:

- 1) The time [reg 26](#) will be needed is limited and the WEP framework is well underway. The prep training courses ('Is WEP right for you?' and 'the fostering role in WEP') will have been undertaken, both adoption and fostering assessments will be near completion and panel dates will either have been agreed or close to being agreed;
- 2) The family is well known to the adoption region as they have adopted the first sibling in the last few years and have kept in touch (through support groups and training events). Consequently, the outcome of the respective adoption and fostering panel recommendations and ADM /DM decisions can be fairly safely predicted;
- 3) There is a real understanding, on the part of the prospective carers, of the uncertainty involved in both the outcome of the care proceedings and the health trajectory of the child;
- 4) An assessment of the needs of the sibling(s) who are part of the family (both adopted and birth children) of their capacity to understand the nature of the placement and the uncertainty it entails has taken place. The type and extent of work to be undertaken will depend on the age of the siblings and their understanding of their family structure; and
- 5) The prospective carers understand the probability of the need to meet and develop a relationship with birth family members. Again, this work is likely to depend on the type and quality of contact / keeping in touch that has happened before.

Examples Where Reg 26 May Be Appropriate

Where there is no more than a number of weeks before an anticipated adoption and fostering decision on suitability e.g.

- Assessments have been taking place pre-birth but the baby is born earlier than expected.
- A parent and child residential placement has ended earlier than expected;
- A kinship placement has ended earlier than expected.
- Where a mainstream foster carer has given notice that the placement needs to end before the WEP assessments have been completed.

In these scenarios consideration must be given to whether satisfactory preparation work has been undertaken to prepare the older adopted sibling.

Examples Where Reg 26 Is Not Appropriate

- Where there has been a concealed pregnancy and the baby is born before any of the WEP framework has been commenced or carers are at the very start of the assessment process.
- Where carers have not attended the WEP preparation training.
- Where existing children in the placement have not been prepared.
- Where there are more than one adopted siblings in different household and there has not been an analysis of both placements views and ability to consider the possibility of providing care to a child under a WEP or adoption placement.
- Where the WEP matching document has not been completed and a clear plan agreed to achieve full dual approval under the WEP framework.
- Where the adoptive family is known to the adoption region and concerns are raised, by professionals who know them, that they are experiencing difficulties or that an additional child might unsettle the child already in the family.

The Way Forward

The use of [reg 26](#) should only be seen within the context of the WEP framework, not as an alternative or a way of expediting a placement. There are far too many risks inherent in anticipating that a sibling placement will be the right way forward for both the child, adoptive parents and children within the family. These are enormously complex placements and without the use of the WEP framework to engage the prospective carers and children of the family, the placement will inevitably prove challenging.

Child social workers should not be considering a [reg 26](#) placement as a way forward without the scaffolding of the WEP framework and the support of both adoption region and relevant fostering team. Reg 26 may be appropriate in limited circumstances, but only for a limited time as set out above.

The use of a Form C or other form of kinship / connected persons assessment for the purposes of completing a fostering assessment under [reg 26](#) is not appropriate. A [reg 26](#) placement should only take place where the PAR and WEP fostering addendum report are advanced in their drafting and ready for presenting to their respective panels and decision makers within a short period of time.

The text of [regulations 26 and 27 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(Wales Regulations 2015\)](#) can be found here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2015/1818>



All Wales Family Finding Plan and Record (FFPR)



INSERT REGIONAL LOGO

Child's Family Finding Plan & Record

This plan records the child's individual family finding plan as recommended by the National Adoption Service for Wales: Finding and Building Adoptive Families for Children in Wales Good Practice Guide

Brief Guidance Notes:

Children should be placed as soon as possible after the placement order is granted: current Welsh Government guidance is that, subject to individual needs, a child's match with adoptive parents should be approved within 6 months of the Agency Decision Maker's 'Should be placed' decision (3 months for a child under 6 months).

These guidance notes should be read in conjunction with the National Adoption Service for Wales: Finding and Building Adoptive Families for Children in Wales Good Practice Guide

Each child should have an individual Family Finding Plan and Record agreed with the child's social worker and family finding social worker.

The plan should be completed following an ADM decision that the child 'should be placed for adoption'.

(The plan should be updated if there is a delay between ADM and the making of a Placement Order).

The plan should be reviewed at each LAC Review and Adoption Planning Meeting and updated as needed

The plan will set out the steps to be taken to find an adoptive family for the child with timescales to review this and should include:

- Child's needs;
- Essential Matching criteria e.g. ethnicity, religion, geographical location, age gap between children, keeping in touch arrangements;
- Agreeing when to meet the foster carer to add detail to the child's profile;
- Plan when good quality or professional photo will be taken and consider DVDs to be made at this stage or later;
- The timescales for family finding - link to court plan;
- Who is responsible for the tasks e.g. preparation work, providing information to foster carers;

- Preparation for adoption work to be undertaken; by whom and timescales for this. The age and understanding of the child will determine the level of direct work and engagement.
- All children will require preparation and life journey material;
- Discussion around financial support, so that this does not become a delaying factor before or after panel
- Plans for contact;
- Timetable for 'final contact'. Where this is not clear, it needs to be regularly reviewed and planned to allow a child sufficient time to process any direct contact visits with their birth family before being placed for adoption;
- Arrangement for seeking agreement to pay inter-agency fee if needed.

PART 1: Key Information

Child's Full Name:	
Child's Date of Birth:	Click here to enter a date.
Child's Local Authority:	Click here to select a Local Authority

Child's Social Worker's Name:	
Contact Number:	
Address:	
Email Address:	

Child's Family Finder's Name:	
Contact Number:	
Address:	
Email Address:	

Date plan first prepared:	Click here to enter a date
Persons Consulted	Role

Child's Legal Status	
ADM Date of 'Should be Placed Decision:	Click here to enter a date
Scheduled date of final hearing:	Click here to enter a date
Placement Order Date:	Click here to enter a date
Parental Consent to Adoption Date:	Click here to enter a date

PART 2: Child's Placement Needs

Formal family-finding activity should begin as soon as authority to place for adoption has been obtained (Placement Order or Parental consent).

The preparation outlined below, e.g. photographs, profiles and placement needs should be completed prior to this and following the ADM decision.

Each child will have different family-finding requirements. Some family-finding methods identify adoptive placements in Wales and some placements across the UK. This may mean that adoptive placements may be found outside of Wales.

Is this a sibling placement?	Click to select option
<i>(If yes, please provide details):</i>	

Have the child's placement needs been updated on the original adoption referral or CAR/B provided? (Essential Matching criteria e.g. ethnicity, religion, geographical location, age gap between children; is needed.	Click to select option
<i>If NO, who will do this and when?:</i>	
Dates child's needs updated:	Click here to enter a date Click here to enter a date Click here to enter a date
Do any of the above require consideration of a wider search a) outside region b) outside Wales? If so, clear reasons must be stated)	
Does the CAR/B contain detail of the child's keeping in touch needs as identified in the Contact Planning Tool?	
<i>If NO, who will do this and when?:</i>	
Does the CAR/B contain detail of how the child's keeping in touch needs will be met?	
<i>If NO, who will do this and when?:</i>	

Profile of child	
Is there an up-to-date profile of the child with current photographs?:	Click to select option
<i>If no, who will do this and when?:</i>	
Plan when good quality or professional photo will be taken and consider DVDs to be made at this stage or later:	

Agree when family finder is to meet or contact the foster carer to add detail to the child's profile:	
---	--

Adopted siblings	
Does the child have siblings adopted elsewhere?:	Click to select option
Where information from a child's referral or CAR/B has identified the child has adopted siblings or siblings who are placed for adoption, it is important to: • explore this with the adopter's agency. • request that contact is made with the adopters to advise them of the birth of another sibling • discuss contact arrangements • explore with appropriate sensitivity the option of placing the child with this adoptive family	
Has this been completed?	
If not, who will do this and when?:	
Outcome:	Date completed: Click here to enter a date

Practical & Financial Arrangements			
Activity	Actions Needed, by Whom & When:	Outcome:	Date Completed:
Seek agreement to pay inter-agency fee (if needed)			

PART 3: Family Finding Activity

Searches within a regional collaborative 'in-house' should be done within one week of authority to place for adoption. If no known families are available or no likely matches are due to become available within a reasonable timeframe for that child, a wider search should begin. This should begin without delay as soon it becomes clear that an 'in house' placement is unlikely to be available. In any event, a referral to the Adoption Register Wales is required if no match is identified within 3 months of the authority to place being granted but should be made prior to this if no other placement is likely.

Details of any time limited search:

Is there time limit or specific plan for searching for sibling placements?

(Link to court plan if appropriate)

The following family finding options should be used by the family finding social worker. All potential placements will be subject to the same 'matching' process and scrutiny by the agency adoption panel and agency decision maker.

Activity	Outcome / details:	Date Completed:
Placements within region Undertake an initial search of adopters within region		Click here to enter a date
Is a potential placement within the region likely to available within the next 3 months? Click to select option		Click here to enter a date
Has a discussion taken place with the child's foster carers to establish whether they have any plans to seek permanency with the child? Any action needed, by whom, when and outcome.		

Placement options in Wales should be explored as a priority, but the guiding principle is to avoid unnecessary delay. The decision to widen the search to outside of the region or Wales should be discussed at the family-finding planning meeting and be based on the realistic likelihood of meeting the child's needs within a reasonable timeframe (not later than 3 months of the placement order being granted) if the search is not widened. Proactive and up to date information from the region will be critical in this decision.

Activity	Actions Needed, by Whom & When:	Date Completed:
Adoption Register for Wales ARW/Linkmaker All children with a placement order or consent to place for adoption must be registered with ARW; • If no family finding is required, a 'basic details' referral is required • If family finding is required a full profile for child is to be completed on ARW		Click here to enter a date
Adopting Together Referral		Click here to enter a date
Profiling at Link Worker Activity Meeting Pre-Placement Order: Anonymised profile of child (with ADM should be placed for adoption decision) and will likely require the wider family finding approach. Post placement Order: Profile of child with photo's.		Click here to enter a date
Distribute Flyer to other Agencies Profiles can also be sent to other trusted UK agencies once all possibilities within Wales have been exhausted.		Click here to enter a date
Exchange Days Organised by ARW at different locations in Wales periodically. Prospective adopters from Wales and agencies in England are invited to view profiles of children waiting to be adopted. DVD of child, profile, as well as the social worker who knows the child best, to be present for the Exchange Day.		Click here to enter a date

Activity Days Organised by ARW. Event where children and prospective adopters meet. Referral and preparation of child, social worker who knows the child best and the foster carer to be present with the child for the activity day.		Click here to enter a date
Monthly 'drop-ins' Organised by ARW and open to Family Finders, Team Managers and others involved in family finding for the child.		

PART 4: Preparation for Adoption

Preparing for adoption starts before a match is identified and is built upon and reviewed as the plan progresses.

All children will require preparation and life journey material. The age and understanding of the child will determine the level of direct work and engagement.

Preparing the Child – Work to be Undertaken. [Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide](#)

Activity	Actions Needed, by Whom & When:	Outcome:	Date Completed:
Preparing the child for adoption, ensuring understanding of reasons why looked after and why a new family is needed			
Preparing the child for the move			
Collecting and preparing life journey material for the child			
Providing information and updates to foster carers			

Preparing for keeping in touch. [Contact Good Practice Guide](#)

Activity	Actions Needed, by Whom & When:	Outcome:	Date Completed:
Are the potential matches being considered able to support the child's keeping in touch needs as identified in the Contact Planning tool?			



Where a match has been identified, are they able to support the keeping in touch arrangements identified for the child? Is the agreed plan realistic and achievable? Has required support been identified?			
When a match is identified: Planning for Farewell/ Transitional Contact			

Practical & Financial Arrangements

Discussion around financial support should be reviewed and reflect the progression of the plan to ensure that this does not become a delaying factor before or after panel

Activity	Actions Needed, by Whom & When:	Outcome:	Date Completed:
Seek agreement to pay inter-agency fee (if this not already done)			
Financial Support needs of child and proposed family (to be included in the matching paperwork)			

PART 5: Family Finding Activity Agreement

Family Finding for more complex children including children age 4 and over, children in sibling groups, children with complex health or developmental needs will require greater effort and this should be reflected in the individualised plans and timetable for review.

Each region will need to have in place effective tracking and monitoring system that allows scrutiny of individual family finding activity for each child.

Where there is delay or inactive family finding the family finding plan should be reviewed and amended accordingly

Name	Role	Signature	Date
	Child's Family Finder		Click here to enter a date.
	Child's Social Worker		Click here to enter a date.
	Family Finding Team Manager / ASSA		Click here to enter a date.
	Family Finding Team Senior Practitioner		Click here to enter a date.

PART 6: Family Finding Reviews

Dates Reviewed:	Reviewed by:
Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.	

Dates of updates:	Updated by:	Dates of updates:	Updated by:
Click here to enter a date.		Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.		Click here to enter a date.	
Click here to enter a date.		Click here to enter a date.	

Full legal references to the regulatory framework in respect of the proposed placement of the child

The Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005 as amended

PART 5: DUTIES OF ADOPTION AGENCY IN RESPECT OF PROPOSED PLACEMENT OF CHILD WITH PROSPECTIVE ADOPTER

Proposed placement

32. (1) Where the adoption agency is considering placing a child for adoption with a particular prospective adopter (in this regulation referred to as “the proposed placement”) the agency must

(a) provide the prospective adopter with a report about the child which must include the information set out in Schedule 5 and any other information which the agency considers relevant;

(b) meet with the prospective adopter to discuss the proposed placement;

(c) ascertain the views of the prospective adopter about —
 (i) the proposed placement;
 (ii) the child’s assessed needs for adoption support services and the adoption support plan;
 (iii) the arrangements the agency proposes to make for allowing any person contact with the child; and
 where applicable, any restriction in the exercise of their parental responsibility.

(d) provide a counselling service for, and any further information to, the prospective adopter as may be required.

(2) Where the procedures set out in paragraph (1) have been followed and the prospective adopter has confirmed to the agency in writing their agreement to the proposed placement, the agency must, in such cases as it considers appropriate and so far as is reasonably practicable in the light of the child’s age and understanding, counsel the child and tell the child about the prospective adopters, their family circumstances and home environment and ascertain the child’s views about the proposed placement, contact arrangements and any restriction of the prospective adopter’s parental responsibility.

(3) Where the adoption agency considers that the proposed placement should proceed the agency must —

(a) where the agency is a local authority, carry out an assessment of the needs of the child and the prospective adoptive family for adoption support services in accordance with regulations made under section 4(6) of the Act;

(b) consider the arrangements for allowing any person contact with the child;

(c) consider whether the parental responsibility of any parent or guardian, or of prospective adopters, is to be restricted to any extent;

(d) prepare a written report which must include —
 (i) the agency’s reasons for proposing the placement;
 (ii) the information obtained by virtue of paragraphs (1) and (2);
 (iii) where the agency is a local authority, its proposals for the provision of adoption support services, if any, in accordance with regulations made under section 4(6) of the Act;
 (iv) the arrangements the agency propose to make for allowing any person contact with the child;
 (v) the agency’s proposals for restricting the parental responsibility of any parent or guardian, or prospective adopter; and
 (vi) any other information relevant to the proposed placement.

(4) The adoption agency must notify the prospective adopter that the proposed placement is to be referred to the adoption panel and send the prospective adopter a copy of the agency's report referred to in paragraph (3) and invite any observations on the report to be sent in writing to the agency within 10 working days, beginning with the date on which the notification was sent.

(5) At the end of the period of 10 working days referred to in paragraph (4) (or earlier if observations are received before the 10 working days have expired) the adoption agency must send —

- (a) the report referred to in paragraph (3);
- (b) the report referred to in regulation 17;
- (c) the report referred to in regulation 26 and any observations made by the prospective adopter on that report;
- (d) any other relevant information obtained by the agency under this regulation to the adoption panel.

(6) The adoption agency may only refer to the adoption panel its proposal to place a child for adoption with a particular prospective adopter if any other adoption agency which has made a decision in accordance with these Regulations that the child should be placed for adoption, or that the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child, has been consulted about the proposed placement.

(7) Where the adoption agency proposes to place a child for adoption with a particular prospective adopter the agency must set up case records in any case where it has not already set up such records and place on the appropriate record any information, report, recommendation or decision referred to it by another adoption agency together with any other information to be sent to the adoption panel by virtue of this regulation in respect of them.

(8) The adoption agency must obtain so far as is reasonably practicable any other relevant information which may be requested by the adoption panel in connection with the proposed placement and send that information to the panel.

Function of the adoption panel in relation to the proposed placement

33. (1) The adoption panel must consider the proposed placement referred to it by the adoption agency and make a recommendation to the agency as to whether the child should be placed for adoption with that particular prospective adopter.

(2) In considering what recommendation to make the adoption panel must have regard to the duties imposed on the adoption agency under section 1(2), (4) and (5) of the Act (considerations applying to the exercise of powers in relation to the adoption of a child) and —

(a) must consider and take into account all information and the reports passed to it in accordance with regulation 32;

(b) may request the adoption agency to obtain any other relevant information which the panel considers necessary; and

(c) must obtain legal advice as it considers necessary in relation to the case.

(3) The adoption panel must also consider and, where the panel makes a recommendation to the agency that the child should be placed for adoption with that particular prospective adopter, the panel may consider and at the same time give advice to the adoption agency about —

- (i) where the adoption agency is a local authority, the authority's proposals for the provision of adoption support services;
- (ii) the arrangements the adoption agency proposes to make for allowing any person contact with the child;
- (iii) whether an application should be made for a placement order; and
- (iv) where the agency is authorised to place the child for adoption whether it considers any person's parental responsibility should be restricted and, if so, the extent of any such restriction.

(4) The adoption panel may only make the recommendation in paragraph (1) if —

(a) that recommendation is to be made at the same meeting of the adoption panel at which a recommendation has been made that the child should be placed for adoption; or

(b) the adoption agency or another adoption agency has made a decision in accordance with regulation 19 that the child should be placed for adoption;

and in either case that recommendation is to be made at the same meeting of the panel at which a recommendation has been made that the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child or the adoption agency, or another adoption agency, has made a decision in accordance with regulation 28 that the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child.

Adoption Agency's Decision in Relation to the Proposed Placement

34. (1) The adoption agency must —

- (a) take into account the recommendation of the adoption panel;
 - (b) take into account any advice given by the adoption panel in accordance with regulation 33(3); and
 - (c) have regard to the consideration set out in section 1(2) of the Act,
- in coming to a decision about whether the child should be placed for adoption with the particular prospective adopter.

(2) No member of the adoption panel is to take part in any decision made by the adoption agency under paragraph (1).

(3) As soon as possible after making its decision the adoption agency must notify the prospective adopter in writing of its decision about the proposed placement, contact arrangements and the restriction of any person's parental responsibility.

(4) As soon as possible after making its decision, the agency must notify in writing —

- (a) the parent or guardian, if their whereabouts are known to the agency; and
- (b) where regulation 14(2) applies, the father of the child, of its decision.

(5) Where the adoption agency decides the proposed placement should proceed the agency must, in an appropriate manner and in the light of the child's age and understanding, explain its decision to the child.

PART 6: PLACEMENTS AND REVIEWS

Requirements imposed on the adoption agency before the child is placed for adoption with prospective adopter

36.(1) This paragraph applies where the adoption agency —

- (a) has decided in accordance with regulation 34 to place a child for adoption with a particular prospective adopter; and
- (b) has met with the prospective adopter to consider the arrangements it proposes to make for placing the child with him.

(2) Where paragraph (1) applies, the adoption agency must, at least 7 days before the child is placed with the prospective adopter, provide the prospective adopter with a placement plan in respect of the child which covers the matters specified in Schedule 6 ("the placement plan").

(3) Where paragraph (1) applies and the child already lives with the prospective adopter, the adoption agency must provide the prospective adopter with the placement plan in respect of the child within 7 days of its decision to place the child for adoption with the prospective adopter.

(4) Where paragraph (1) applies, the adoption agency must, before the child is placed for adoption with the prospective adopter—

- (a) notify the prospective adopter's general practitioner in writing of the proposed placement and send with that notification a written report of the child's health history and current state of health;
- (b) notify the local authority (if that authority is not the adoption agency) and Local Health Board or Primary Care Trust (England) in whose area the prospective adopter resides in writing of the proposed placement;
- (c) notify the local education authority in whose area the prospective adopter resides in writing of the proposed placement and information about the child's educational history and whether the child has been or is likely to be assessed for special educational needs under the Education Act 1996.

(5) The adoption agency must notify the prospective adopter in writing of any change to the placement plan.

(6) Where paragraph (1) applies the adoption agency must, before the child is placed for adoption with the prospective adopter, arrange for the prospective adopter to meet the child and following that meeting counsel the prospective adopter and, so far as is reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child about the prospective placement.

(7) Where, following the procedures referred to in paragraph (6) the prospective adopter confirms in writing their wish to proceed with the placement and the agency is authorised to place the child for adoption or the child is less than 6 weeks old, the adoption agency may place the child for adoption with the prospective adopter.

(8) Where the child already lives with the prospective adopter, the adoption agency must notify the prospective adopter in writing of the date on which the child is placed there for adoption by the agency.



Reviews (the parts in bold refer specifically to the period from placement order to placement)

37.(1) This paragraph applies where the adoption agency is authorised to place a child for adoption but the child has not been placed for adoption. (i.e. from placement order to placement)

(2) This paragraph applies where a child is placed for adoption. (i.e. from placement to adoption order)

(3) Where paragraph (1) applies, the adoption agency must carry out a review of the child's case —

(a) not more than three months after the date on which the agency first has authority to place; and

(b) thereafter not more than six months after the date of the previous review ("six months review"), until the child is placed for adoption.

(4) Where paragraph (2) applies, the adoption agency must carry out a review of the child's case —

(a) not more than four weeks after the date on which the child is placed for adoption ("the first review");

(b) no more than three months after the first review; and

(c) thereafter not more than six months after the date of the previous review, unless the child is returned to the agency by the prospective adopter or an adoption order is made.

(5) Where paragraph (2) applies, the adoption agency must —

(a) ensure the child and the prospective adopter are visited within one week of the placement and thereafter at least once a week until the first review and thereafter at such frequency as the agency decide at each review;

(b) ensure that written reports are made of such visits; and

(c) provide such advice and assistance to the prospective adopter as the agency considers necessary.

(6) When carrying out a review the adoption agency must visit the child and so far as reasonably practicable ascertain the views of —

(a) the child in the light of the child's age and understanding;

(b) if the child is placed for adoption, the prospective adopter; and

(c) any other person the agency considers relevant, in relation to each of the matters set out in paragraph (7)(a) to (f).

(7) As part of each review the adoption agency must consider—

(a) whether placed or not, whether the adoption agency remain satisfied that the child should still be placed for adoption;

(b) the child's needs, welfare, progress and development, and whether any changes need to be made to meet the child's needs or assist the child's development;

(c) the existing arrangements for contact, and whether they should continue or be modified;

(d) where the child is placed for adoption the arrangements in relation to the exercise of parental responsibility for the child, and whether they should continue or be modified;

(e) the existing arrangements for the provision of adoption support services and whether there should be any re-assessment of the need for those services;

(f) in consultation with the appropriate agencies, the arrangements for assessing and meeting the child's health care needs and educational needs;

(g) subject to paragraphs (3) and (4) the frequency of the reviews.

(8) Where the child is subject to a placement order and has not been placed for adoption at the time of the first six months review, the local authority must at that review —

(a) establish why the child has not been placed for adoption and consider what further steps the authority should take in relation to the placement of the child for adoption; and

(b) in light of that, consider whether it remains satisfied that the child should be placed for adoption.

(9) The adoption agency must —

(a) set out in writing the arrangements governing the manner in which the case of each child is to be reviewed and must draw the written arrangements to the attention of —

(i) the child where reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding;

(ii) the prospective adopter; and

(iii) any other person the agency considers relevant.

(b) ensure that —

(i) the information obtained in respect of a child's case including the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child;

(ii) details of the proceedings at any meeting arranged by the agency to consider any aspect of the review of the case; and

(iii) details of any decision made in the course of or as a result of the review (including as to frequency of visits),

are recorded in writing and placed on the child's case record.

(10) The adoption agency must, so far as is reasonably practicable, notify —

(a) the child where it considers the child is of sufficient age and understanding;

(b) the prospective adopter; and

(c) any other person whom it considers ought to be notified

of the outcome of the review and of any decision taken by it in consequence of the review.

(11) Where the child is returned to the adoption agency in accordance with section 35(1) or (2) of the Act, the agency must conduct a review of the child's case as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event no later than 28 days after the date on which the child is returned to the agency.



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