

SECTION FOUR

Referral, Family Finding, Matching and Placement

Overview

This section outlines the processes to be followed for early notification referrals for adoption; family finding; matching and placement.

Related procedures regarding [Early Permanence Placements](#); [Consensual Adoption](#); [Foster Carer Adoption](#); and [Inter Country Adoption](#) are held in separate sections.

Relevant Statutory Requirements and Guidance

- Adoption Agencies Regulations (2005)
- Adoption and Children Act (2002)
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption (2013)
- Adoption: national minimum standards (2014)

Care Planning for Permanence

Those with responsibility for care planning for permanence for children are tasked with “twin tracking” assessments throughout pre-proceedings, and where the Local Authority is considering issuing proceedings in respect of a child, following PLO. While most children will not progress to a plan of permanence via adoption, thinking at the earliest time about what assessments are required, and considering early placement, through early permanence, will create the best outcome for children who may progress to have a plan of adoption. Partnership working between the Local Authority care planning team, and Adoption Tees Valley will identify when children need to be considered for Family Finding and seeking the best family for their needs.

Adoption Tees Valley recognises that every child has a unique identity shaped by their ethnicity, culture, religion, language, nationality, heritage, disability, neurodiversity, sexuality, gender identity, family relationships and life experiences. Family finding and matching processes must actively consider how these aspects of identity will be understood, promoted and supported throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Early Notification

The purpose of early notification by the Local Authority is to alert Adoption Tees Valley to start planning for the earliest possible permanence via adoption for children, so that there are no delays for children once the Local Authority and the Court go on to ratify that plan.

The child's social worker is required provide Adoption Tees Valley with early notification of all children under 8 years (exceptionally up to ten years) as soon as care planning by the Local Authority either in pre-proceedings or on the initiation of care proceedings indicates that an adoption plan or an early permanence placement is a possible option for the child. In these circumstances, the child's social worker must send an Early Notification form to Adoption Tees Valley via a secure mechanism (info@adoptionteesvalley.org.uk). Early Notification can take place as early as 8-10 weeks pre-birth but must be made by the child's social worker prior to the "best interests" Agency Decision for Adoption (ADM).

The Local Authority social worker should consult their LA Care planning and permanence procedures for agreeing an Early Notification to ATV which would normally be considered at the Legal Gateway Meeting for decision to issue care proceedings. The LA social worker should ensure the early Notification and date is recorded in the child's record.

Permanence Champion

Once the Early Notification is received by ATV, the ATV Permanence Champion, allocated to that Local Authority, will track the child's journey through care proceedings up to the point of the Placement Order.

The role of the Permanence Champion is:

- To receive Early Notifications for children where adoption is a possibility.
- To advise the child's social worker on aspects of permanence planning including the completion of Child Permanence Reports; provide case consultation in relation to adoption planning; consideration of early collation of material for the life story book; planning for post adoption contact arrangements and sibling assessment.
- Track all children in their allocated local authority and follow up with the social worker or managers if there appears to be delay or drift.
- Ensure timely allocation of a family finder when the Placement Order is granted and maintain a focus on early family finding for all children, pre Placement Order, taking account of legal proceedings and assessments.

Adoption Process Meeting

The Permanence Champion will facilitate an Adoption Process Meeting for each child with the child's social worker within two weeks of the Early Notification being received by Adoption Tees Valley.

The purpose of the meeting is to consider:

- Background and needs information about the child.
- The Local Authority's timetable for permanency planning, including assessments being undertaken.

- ADM date if known.
- When an adoption medical report by the Agency Medical Advisor is planned or will be planned. There is a requirement for the medical Advisor to complete a summary of the child's health for the purposes of ADM (S17, AAR (2005)) and this requires advance planning. While the responsibility lies with the Local Authority to book the medical, ATV permanence Champion should maintain an overview, to ensure that this is planned in the right timescale for ADM.
- Confirmation of when documents, and the Child Permanence Report will be available for family finding.
- The process and timescales for family finding.
- Consideration of an early permanence placement.
- Keeping in touch arrangements, including risk assessments for cases where there is proposed ongoing direct keeping in touch.

Responsibility for provision of the minutes of the Adoption process meeting lies with Adoption Tees Valley. The record will be held on the child's record within the Local Authority and in ATV.

Following the Adoption Process Meeting:

The Permanence Champion will:-

- Upload the minutes of the meeting on to the child's records on CHARMS under the section Adoption Process Meeting.
- Complete the child's needs and matching criteria on CHARMS.
- Maintain an overview of the child's care planning progress.

The child's social worker will:

- Regularly update the Permanence Champion regarding case activity for the child including progress with key family member assessments, any new information around health and development of the child, date of the planned health assessment (Adoption Medical), sibling assessments, any focussed specialist assessments, to inform on the future care needs of the child, the outcome of the four month looked after review, completion date of CPR, the scheduling of the Agency Decision and the timescales for the care proceedings.

Preliminary Family Finding

Adoption Tees Valley will initiate internal family finding, as soon as the case discussion with the Child's social worker indicates that the Local Authority will be making the plan for adoption, and the child's social worker has provided up to date documentation which will include information about the child's background, and needs. Ordinarily, internal family finding will commence as the Local Authority is approaching seeking ADM on the child's plan for adoption. Where the Local

Authority has a clear plan for adoption and there are no suitable internal families available, ATV will use regional and then national family finding processes to explore possible matches. Prior to the Placement Order, consideration must be given to what information is shared with prospective adopters, and any external Adoption Agency, in relation to the child and their family background. The child and family's details should be anonymised in any early family finding, until a potential family is being explored (as agreed by the Tees Valley information sharing protocol).

Cultural Identity and Diversity Considerations

Throughout family finding and matching, practitioners must consider how a child's identity will be promoted and sustained. This includes ethnicity, culture, race, language, faith, nationality, disability, neurodiversity, sexuality, gender identity and family heritage. Matching decisions should examine not only similarities between child and adopters, but also the adopters' willingness, understanding, skills and resources to actively support all aspects of the child's identity throughout their life. Where a perfect cultural match is not available, prospective adopters must demonstrate insight, commitment and practical capacity to promote and support the child's identity and experiences throughout their life. Consideration should be given to their capacity to challenge discrimination, support a child who has or may have experience racism, promote positive racial identity and provide diverse role models and networks.

For children with an identified disability matching should consider family finding and matching should consider disability identity, neurodiversity and accessibility needs, including how prospective adopters will promote positive self-identity and advocate for services and reasonable adjustments.

ATV Role in meeting the Child

Where it is clear that the Local Authority is planning for adoption, ATV will have a role in visiting the child, within the fostering placement, with the aim of a good understanding of the child's needs, and a well-informed approach to finding the right family. Where the Permanence Champion will be undertaking family finding, this responsibility will be with them. Where the case is to be allocated to a different adoption social worker, a "Family Finder" (who may be the social worker for a selected internal ATV family) will visit, at least once, to have a good understanding of the child's needs.

Arrangements will be made at an early stage to achieve high quality photographs and video of the child, to support family finding, and the creation of a high quality profile.

Consideration of Post Adoption Support Needs

ATV and the child's social worker will have early consideration of the complexity of the child's needs, and possible post adoption support needs. This will be necessary for determining the selection of families for the child, but also for determining whether more specialist assessments may be required, to help with an understanding of the impact of early trauma, sibling assessments, attachment needs, any neurodiverse indicators, learning or additional needs. The most successful family finding for the child will be based on a thorough, up to date understanding of the child's needs, provision of good quality information to prospective adopters, and identification of potential adoption support needs, and resources to meet these at an early stage.

ATV will work together with the Local Authority and advise on accessing more specialist assessments at an early stage where this is indicated.

Information Sharing

A regional Information Sharing Protocol has been agreed in Tees Valley, which should be considered when deciding what information to share, at any time, during family finding for children.

The child's profile will usually be anonymous before Final Hearing and can be used for any information sharing with external agencies, or with prospective/potential links.

Any more detailed information sharing prior to final hearing, and Placement Order, such as an anonymised and redacted CPR will require agreement of the Local Authority legal team, and potentially the Court.

Family Finding Meetings

The Family Finding Meeting is held internally by Adoption Tees Valley and will regularly track family finding activity for each child and will consider whether there are any potential matches suitable for the child from approved adopters or families in assessment. The meeting will be held monthly and will be attended by the Permanence Champion for the child, Family Finding social workers, social workers for adopters, and the Family Finding Team Manager. The Family Finding Team Manager will oversee all potential links to ensure the fair and thorough consideration of Adoption Tees Valley's waiting 'pool' of adopters.

Completion of Preliminary Family Finding

Once the Family Finding Meeting or other family finding activity identifies a suitable internal link, the adopter's social worker will be asked by the Permanence Champion to consider the suitability of the match. Where several suitable links are identified, the Permanence Champion will complete the matching and selection grid

with the relevant adopters' social workers to identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of the potential links, with a view to providing the child's local Authority social worker with a maximum of 3 Prospective Adopter Reports to consider. The adopter's social worker will record on the adopters' CHARMS record that they are being considered as a potential link for the child.

The Family Finding Team manager will maintain an overview of the process of selection of families to offer to the child's social worker, to ensure that the pool of available adopters is being considered appropriately for matching.

Once the Family Finding Manager has agreed potential links, the Permanence Champion will share the agreed adopters' Prospective Adopter Reports with the child's social worker and the Supervising Social Worker for the child's foster carer, with the request that they provide the Permanence Champion their view regarding the suitability of the link within five working days. The child's social worker is responsible for providing feedback and reasons for the preferred link selected, using the initial matching summary matrix. The Permanence Champion/Family Finder will record the response of the child's social worker and the Supervising Social Worker regarding the suitability of the match on CHARMS on the child and each of the adopter's records. Even where a prospective adopter is not selected, it is important to maintain a record that they were considered, and why they were not selected.

The aim is to identify one preferred family to visit and progress, wherever possible. This will be case dependent- there may only be one family who are a suitable link, or there may be 2. Unless the plan is early permanence, it is unlikely that the progression of selection of a family will take place prior to ADM (see below). However, the aim is to identify a preferred family, and a timetable for matching prior to the Final hearing, in order that the Court can be informed that there is a possible adoption placement for the child.

Agency Decision for Adoption (Best Interests Decision)

The Local Authority Agency Decision Maker is the designated person responsible for making the decision that adoption is in the best interests of the child. This is sometimes referred to as "Best Interest Decision" (BID), or "Should be Placed For Adoption" (SHOBPA).

Once the LA Agency Decision Maker (ADM) has ratified a plan of adoption, the child's social worker will notify ATV without delay the date and outcome of ADM and will arrange for the following to be sent to Adoption Tees Valley within one week of the decision.

- The minutes of Agency Decision Making meeting/ADM decision document
- The amended Child's Permanence Report and supporting documents (medical, foster carers report, photographs, genogram, birth certificate, Personal Education Plan/school report)
- The local authority's final care plan and expert assessments/reports

ADM date will be recorded on the child's record.

Consideration of additional supports to meet the child's needs in the future:

Where ATV and the Child's social worker identify that there is a likelihood that the child/siblings may require an allowance to support the placement of a child with adopters, or to support placement of siblings together, the ADM may be consulted on their view around adoption allowances to be paid by the Local Authority. Assessment and requests for allowances will be directed to the relevant LA Financial panel/decision maker prior to matching, however, the ADM can be consulted for a view at an earlier stage, to assist with family finding.

Prior to the allocation of the child to a Family Finder, the Family Finding Team Manager (or designated other) will complete a document audit to confirm that all the requested documents have been received from the child's social worker and that all of the required amendments to the Child's Permanence Report highlighted by the Agency Decision Maker have been completed.

If an internal link has been identified, the child will be allocated to the social worker responsible for the linked adopter to progress the internal match which will be once the Placement Order is made.

The Permanence Champion will continue to track the child's care planning until the Placement Order is granted. The scheduled Final hearing date and any amendments to this, and date of Placement Order, will be recorded by the Permanence Champion, in the Child's record.

If there are no appropriate families for the child currently or nearing approval, the child will be allocated to a Family Finder for external inter-agency family finding once the Placement Order is made.

The Family Finding Team Manager will record the allocation of either the adopter's social worker or the Family Finder on the child's record on CHARMS

Family Finding Activity Post Placement Order

Inter-Agency Family Finding

If no internal match has been identified, the Permanence Champion and allocated Family Finder will complete an 'agreement for external family finding' meeting and

send this to the Head of Service at Adoption Tees Valley within one working day of the child being made subject of a Placement Order. The Family Finder will complete the form to request external family finding authorisation, documenting all internal families who have been considered and why they have been ruled out, and will upload it to CHARMS on the child's record.

Once the Head of Service has considered and authorised agreement for external family finding, the Family Finder will arrange for the child to be profiled on Link Maker. The Family Finder will agree the child's profile with the child's social worker and upload it on to child's CHARMS record.

The Family Finding social worker will be responsible for placing the child on Linkmaker with the agreed level of permissions for the search, usually searching regionally initially.

The Family Finder will attempt to identify links within the wider region and, if required, nationally without delay using Link Maker and a range of local, regional and national profiling events and exchange days.

The Family Finder will be the proactive person in identifying possible links for the child's social worker to consider. Once an expression of interest in the child is received from an external adoption agency, the Family Finder will forward the child's profile to them and then agree an exchange of the Child Permanence Report and Prospective Adopters Report, approval panel minutes and record of the Agency Decision for the child.

The Family Finder will screen the Prospective Adopters Reports received from other adoption agencies against the child's agreed matching criteria. Through efficient screening and examination of the matching criteria, the Family Finder is required to select no more than 3 potential matches from external adoption agencies for consideration by the child's social worker. The Family Finder will share the selected Prospective Adopters Reports identified through screening, with the child's social worker and Team Manager to agree their preferred match.

The Child's Social worker and team manager should feedback their view on PAR's offered within 5 working days. The child's social worker should complete the matching grid, which will be provided to agencies to identify why a family was, or wasn't selected. In complex cases, a meeting may be required between the Family Finder and the child's social worker and their Team Manager to inform their decision regarding the suitability of a match.

If there are disagreements between the child's social worker and Adoption Tees Valley regarding which family to progress to a match, a meeting will be held

between the social workers and manager from both services to make a final decision.

Matching and Selection Meeting

When a potential match is identified, either in house or inter-agency, the Family Finder (for inter-agency adopters) or the adopter's social worker (for internal adopters) and the child's social worker will visit the prospective adopters together and for inter-agency prospective adopters, liaise with the adopter's agency social worker. The Family Finding social worker and the child's social worker will share information with the prospective adopter regarding the child's needs and review the evidence with the prospective adopters about how they can meet these needs. The Family Finder will record the outcome and recommendations of the visit on the child and the adopters' (if internal) CHARMS record. Where this is an external agency, feedback will be provided to the agency adoption social worker.

Following the visit, a Matching and Selection Meeting will be held at Adoption Tees Valley. This will be chaired by the Family Finding Team Manager, or the Senior Social Worker for Family Finding, and attended by the Family Finder, adopter's social worker, child's social worker and the supervising social worker for the child's foster carer.

The purpose of the meeting is to:-

- review the strengths and vulnerabilities of the proposed match, including the proposed adoptive parents' capacity and agreement to undertake all elements of the child's care plan, and to make a collaborative decision about whether it is appropriate to move forward with a proposed match.

If the meeting recommends progressing the proposed match, it will:-

- Identify any potential post adoption support needs including adoption allowances and additional services.
- Plan arrangements for the assessment for post adoption financial support if required.
- Plan the application for and authorisation of the post adoption support, through the relevant procedure for the local authority for the child well in advance of the matching panel.
- Confirm that all direct and indirect contact plans are understood, and that the prospective adopters will meet these, including Virtual Memory Box.
- Agree a provisional panel date to consider the match.
- Where needed, arrange for the Medical Advisor to be consulted on the child's CLA/Adoption medical (whether it remains up to date) and meet with the prospective adopters.

- Agree an update of the Child's Permanence Report by completion of the Adoption Tees Valley CPR Update Form, if it is dated more than six months before the proposed Panel date.
- Agree arrangements for a meet before match visit between the prospective adopters and the child prior to Panel with consideration as to how this is facilitated dependent on a child's age and level of understanding of their plan of adoption. Consider whether the ADM needs to agree to a longer period of visits. Consider how visits will be supported and reviewed.
- Plan a Child Appreciation Day for children older than two years old, sibling groups or children with complex need.
- Confirm arrangements are in place for the child's social worker to provide life story information.
- Agree the visits and meetings required before the match is presented to the Adoption Tees Valley Panel and the timescales for these. As part of the selection process, these meetings include the prospective adopter meeting:
 - the child's foster carer
 - the agency Medical Adviser
 - the child's school or nursery
- Where this is an interagency placement, confirm expectation that the adoptive parents and agency expect an adoption order application no later than 9 months into the placement, and ideally earlier, in accordance with the child's plan for adoption. Confirm that where any indication arises that the adoption order will not be applied for within 10 months of the placement, Service Manager at ATV to be notified.
- Consider whether there is a need to meet with any member of the MDT team for consultation prior to matching.
- Additionally, if the identified placement is trans-racial or cultural then matching should consider elements including the child's language and heritage and faith and religious needs. It should explore how prospective adopters can provide meaningful opportunities for the child to develop relationships with individuals, communities and organisations that reflect and celebrate their identity.

If the decision from the Matching and Selection meeting is not to progress the match, family finding activity will continue.

The Family Finder will upload the minutes of the Matching and Selection meeting on to the child's and the prospective adopter's record on CHARMS. The Family Finder will arrange for copies of the minutes to be provided to the child's social worker, through secure portal.

Preparation for Matching

Once the decision is made by the Matching and Selection meeting to present the match to the Adoption Tees Valley Panel the following activity will take place:-

- The Family Finder will agree and book a provisional panel date with Adoption Tees Valley Business Support and quality assurance dates with their Team Manager.
- The child's social worker will be asked to notify the IRO of the planned match, and update on progress with life story book.
- For inter-agency matches, the Family Finder will complete the Charms Record Creation Form and pass it to Business Support to create the external adopter's record on CHARMS.
- The Family Finder will always complete a 'trauma timeline' exercise with the prospective adopters. This will consider the child's background, early life experiences and current and potential support needs.
- Matching will consider the AfDIT tool and practitioners should consider the impact of racism, discrimination, stigma and exclusion on children and families and explore how prospective adopters will prepare children to navigate these experiences safely and confidently. This ensures that matching is based in cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias is identified.
- The child's social worker will request the Medical Adviser for the child to review the child's CLA/Adoption medical and determine whether any further updated information, or medical assessments should be sought. The child's social worker will provide the MA with an overview of whether any new health matters have arisen since the last health assessment.
- The Medical Adviser will meet with the prospective adopters to discuss the child's current and future health needs, and any implications for their care. This will be followed up with a written report.
- If the child's CPR is dated more than 6 months before the proposed panel date, the child's social worker will complete the Adoption Tees Valley CPR update Form.
- The prospective adopters are offered at least one meet before match visit prior to Panel.
- A Child Appreciation Day is held for children aged 2 years plus, or where a child has complex needs or has had a number of placements and professionals involved.
- The Family Finder will lead on completing the matching report, with supporting information provided from the adopter's and child's social workers.
- The request for any financial support should be made and a decision given by the relevant placing Local Authority prior to matching panel. Where the ADM was consulted on their view, this information will be included in the assessment and application to the relevant financial decision making panel in the Local Authority.

- Where it is assessed that a child's forename needs to be changed, a name change risk assessment to be completed and sent to the relevant Local Authority ADM. The decision document will then be included in the panel bundle.

Consideration of adopter circumstances, checks, and support network:

- Consider whether updated medicals are required on the adopters prior to matching - have any new matters arisen? Where necessary, consult with the MA. As a minimum adopters will need to complete a self declaration form and the adoption social worker will ensure a letter is sent to the adopter's GP to confirm there is no new health information since their last medical/adoption approval.
- Is DBS up to date within the previous 12 months? If it is over 18 months, apply for a new one, and if 12-18 months, plan for an update DBS.
- Adopter adoption leave preparations and arrangements.
- Planning how and when the adopter's support network will be given information about the child/ren's placement, and a support network meeting to involve them in support to the adopters and child/ren when placed.
- Planning how any existing children of adopter's school/nursery will be informed around the planned placement, to help provide support to existing children in the family.

Presentation of Match to Adoption Tees Valley Panel

The following completed paperwork must be provided to the Team Manager 4 weeks before Panel for a quality assurance check and the final paperwork must be sent to the Adoption Tees Valley Panel Manager/Adviser 2 weeks before the proposed panel date:

- Adoption Placement Report and Adoption Support Plan including prospective adopter's comments
- Child's Agency Decision and minutes;
- Child's adoption medical reports and any specialist reports
- Child Permanence Report and any updates, including foster carers report, and any school nursery reports/PEP
- Name change risk assessment, where applicable
- Child's birth certificate
- Where the child has previously been placed via an EP route, a signed copy of Regulation 24 or Regulation 25(a) report
- Adopter PAR and subsequent annual adopter reviews
- Signed copy of prospective adopters' panel minutes and Agency Decision

Adoption Tees Valley Business Support will arrange for these documents to be circulated to Panel members no less than 5 working days prior to the Panel date.

The child's social worker and the prospective adopters' social worker will attend the Panel with the Family Finder. The prospective adopters will be invited to attend.

The Panel will make a recommendation as to whether the child should be placed for adoption with the prospective adopters. This will be recorded in writing, together with reasons, in the Panel's minutes. The Panel will also consider and may give advice in relation to the proposed adoption support, the proposed arrangements for contact and any proposed restrictions on the exercise of Parental Responsibility by the prospective adopters and/or the birth parents. Business Support will place a copy of the relevant minutes on the child's and the prospective adopters' Case Records on CHARMS.

The prospective adopters' social worker will convey the Panel's recommendation verbally on the same day as Panel to the prospective adopters, unless they have attended Panel, in which case they will be informed by the Panel Chair at the time.

The final set of minutes and reports, considered by the Panel, will be sent to the Local Authority Agency Decision Maker who will make a written decision within seven working days of their receipt. The Agency Decision Maker may express a view in their written decision regarding Panel's advice to the Agency in relation to adoption support, proposed contact and/or the exercise of Parental Responsibility by the prospective adopters and/or the birth parents.

The Agency Decision Maker will arrange for the written decision to be returned to the Local Authority child's social worker and Adoption Tees Valley Business Support.

The date of the Agency Decision on the match will be recorded on the child's record and will be known as the match date.

Adoption Tees Valley Business Support will inform the prospective adopters of the Agency Decision verbally within two working days of receiving the Agency Decision and subsequently through a written notification within five working days.

The Family Finder will inform the external agency within two working days of the Agency Decision and confirm this in writing.

Where the Agency Decision Maker is minded to disagree with the Panel recommendation, they must first discuss the recommendation with the Service

Manager of Adoption Tees Valley. The Service Manager will record this discussion and place it on the child's and the prospective adopter's Adoption Case Record.

Adoption Placement Planning and Introductions

An Adoption Placement Planning (APP) Meeting will take place following the Agency Decision agreeing the proposed match. The Family Finder/adoption social worker is responsible for completing the draft documentation for the meeting, including an introduction plan and will be circulated these to all parties in advance, including the foster carers, so that their views can be considered.

The Family Finder/adopters' social worker and the child's social worker will draft the Adoption Placement Plan in advance of the Adoption Planning Meeting. The meeting may be chaired by a Team Manager from Adoption Tees Valley where the case is deemed complex and include the child's social worker and foster carer and their Supervising Social Worker, the Family Finder and the adopters' social worker. The meeting may be chaired by the ATV worker or a senior family finding social worker if it is not deemed necessary to have a Team Manager.

The meeting will agree:-

- Plan of introductions
- Timing of Midway Review
- Adoption Plan
- Arrangements for frequency of visits
- Financial arrangements

If a match is recommended with adopters who live a significant distance outside of the local area, this meeting may be held at Adoption Tees Valley following Panel. The Family Finder will make all parties aware that any future plan is dependent on receiving a positive agency decision.

The adoption social worker is responsible for ensuring that the final Adoption Placement Plan is completed and passed on to Adoption Tees Valley business support in order for the statutory notifications to be sent prior to placement.

Statutory Notifications

The following will be notified of the proposed placement with the prospective adopters:

- The Local Authority and Primary Care Trust in which the adopters live
- The prospective adopters' GP

- Where the child is of compulsory school age, the Education Authority for the area in which the adopters live

ATV are responsible for the notifications and will send these prior to placement.

Finance

For inter-agency placements the Adoption Tees Valley Team Head of Service will sign the CoramBAAF IA (financial arrangements form) to agree payment for the inter-agency fee. Payment will be from the date of the placement.

The adoption social worker will ensure that prospective adopters are aware of how to reclaim expenses in respect of adoption introductions. Completed expense forms should be returned to the adoption social worker as soon as possible for reimbursement.

The following finances will be paid by Adoption Tees Valley:

- Accommodation expenses during the introduction period, up to the agreed maximum rate (see annually updated information). If accommodation is required, Adoption Tees Valley can book this directly (adopters are required to identify the name of the accommodation) or financial reimbursement can be arranged.
- Mileage is reimbursed at the agreed rate per mile.
- Reimbursement of the Adoption Order Application Fee.

Where Adoption Tees Valley is providing an adoptive placement for a child who is not in the care of one of the 5 Local Authorities within ATV i.e. an external child, the adoption social worker will arrange for the IA form for the child's placement with ATV adopters to be presented to the ATV Business Manager, in order that the placement fee is invoiced.

Placement

The child's social worker and adoption social worker will only need to be present on the day of placement in exceptional circumstances. The child will be visited a minimum of weekly until the child's first adoption review. If requested and agreed by the placing local authority, the statutory visits can be shared between the child's social worker and the adopters' social worker (including the adopters' social worker in the case of an inter-agency placement). During visits, practitioners should seek to understand the child's identity, cultural experiences, heritage, important relationships, routines, celebrations, language and community connections to inform family finding.

The frequency of visits will be set at the child's first review and will be four weekly for the first year and then three monthly as a minimum subsequently.

For internal matches, the adopters' social worker will remain allocated to the adopters until the point of the Adoption Order being granted. For internal matches, where ATV is supporting the placement, the ATV social worker will visit at a minimum of twice prior to the first adoption review, and minimum monthly thereafter. Support will be provided by telephone, and also through the adoption support plan, including groups, and therapeutic parenting available through ATV.

For inter-agency matches, once the child is placed with their adoptive family, the Family Finder will withdraw but remain the point of contact in Adoption Tees Valley for information sharing and support until the Adoption Order is granted. The child's social worker is required to regularly update the Family Finder regarding the progress of the placement and the adopters' adoption application.

The child's social worker will provide Adoption Tees Valley with copies of the signed final documentation of key events including:

- Adoption reviews and outcomes
- Adoption Order application
- Annex A report
- Copies of the Adoption Order

Once the Adoption Order is granted by the court, the child's social worker will send notifications to all relevant statutory agencies.

Application for the Adoption Order

Adopters can legally lodge their application for an Adoption Order once the child has been placed in their care for 10 weeks. If a child was placed under an Early Permanence arrangement and at the point a Placement Order is granted, the prospective adopters have cared for the child for longer than 10 weeks then they are entitled to lodge their application immediately. The adopters will be supported to complete their application jointly by the adoption social worker and child's social worker. Adopters can lodge their application in person or by post to Teesside Court. In the case of an inter-agency placement out of area, the child's social worker can lodge the application on their behalf.

Prospective adopters are expected to pay the fee related to the Adoption Order application which will then be reimbursed by Adoption Tees Valley.

The court will notify Adoption Tees Valley and the Local Authority of a scheduled hearing date in writing and request the completion of an Annex A report. The Annex

A should be completed jointly by the child's social worker and adopter's social worker. It is expected that a child's social worker and the adopter's social worker will attend the required court hearings. Birth parents will be notified of the hearing and are also entitled to attend.