

SECTION SIX

Adoption Support – Assessment, Services, and Support

Adoption Support Procedures for Children in our Care, and Children placed for Adoption or Adopted.

These procedures are shared between Adoption Tees Valley and each of the partner Local Authorities which operate under the Regional Adoption Agency partnership. This includes Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; Stockton

Adoption Support includes any support which may be required for an adoption placement to endure through to adulthood. This means a child placed for adoption or adopted.

Adoption support may include:

- The provision of counselling, information or advice.
- Support for indirect keeping in touch contact arrangements with birth family members Including accessing virtual memory box
- Provision of more specialist services, such as therapeutic support; specialist social worker assessment and intervention; or provision of specialist commissioned services.
- Provision of education support in the form of information and advice.
- Training for adoptive parents for the purpose of meeting additional needs of their child
- Support groups for adopted children and adoptive parents to discuss matters relating to adoption
- Support to access and maintain arrangements for keeping in touch direct contact between an adopted child and birth parents or siblings
- In some cases, adoptive families will be able to access financial allowances, to enable them to care for the child.

Support in the form of respite care can be requested and would be assessed and provided via the local authority if deemed appropriate. Adoption Support is most often provided on the basis of an assessment of support needs, although some universal adoption support services are available as part of the overall provision through Adoption Tees Valley.

The entitlement to seek an assessment for adoption support services extends to a number of different people who have a relationship to the child to be adopted, or who is adopted, and their adoptive family.

Relevant legislation, regulations, and statutory guidance:

- Adoption and Children Act (2002)
- Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005).
- Adoption Agencies Regulations (2005)
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption (2015)
- AFDiT Framework

- Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children. Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2018)

This procedure is largely concerned with the adoption support services provided to adopted children, and their adoptive families, which includes adoptive parents and any birth children of the adoptive parents.

Other procedures are in place for adoption support services to adopted adults, and their relatives, in the Adoption Tees Valley Adoption Procedures.

PROCEDURE

1. How the Local Authority arranges for adoption support to children in our care with an adoption plan, and children placed for adoption or adopted.

Each of the 5 Local Authorities in the Tees Valley works in partnership with Adoption Tees Valley to provide an adoption service to children in the care of the Local Authority, and those adopted. Adoption Tees Valley is part of the Local Authority provision for adoption, and is a Regional Adoption Agency, under the Education and Adoption of Children Act (2016).

The Local Authority continues to hold the designated role of Adoption Agency, and Adoption Tees Valley is the Regional Adoption Agency with specified adoption responsibilities designated to it. Some support responsibilities are shared between ATV and the Council.

A full list of these can be found on www.adoptionteesvalley.org.uk in the Statement of Purpose.

Adoption Tees Valley recognises that:

- Transracial adoption may present additional challenges relating to identity development, cultural connection, belonging and experiences of racism. Adoption support should actively promote positive racial and cultural identity, whilst recognising and responding to any experiences of loss, discrimination or trauma.
- Children's identity needs are lifelong and evolve across developmental stages.
- Children's identities are multifaceted and may include race, ethnicity, culture, language, faith, nationality, disability, sexuality, gender identity, family history and community connections. Adoption support should recognise and respond to the whole child and their lived experience
- Race, ethnicity and difference must be explicitly recognised and addressed, not minimised or avoided
- Adoption support must be proactive, preventative and relational, rather than crisis-led

2. Adoption Support Plan prior to matching for adoption

The Adoption Support Plan is created as part of the Adoption Placement Report (APR), which is required for matching the child with the prospective adoptive family AAR (2005) 31 (2) (a)

An adoption support plan will be created in all cases for children who have a plan of adoption, and for whom the Local Authority is seeking to find the right family for the child's permanence via adoption. Children will have an assessment of needs, undertaken by the Local Authority Child's Social Worker, which is reflected in the Child Permanence Report (CPR). Social workers must identify, challenge and address racism, bias and structural inequality in children's lives and within systems supporting them. Children's racial, ethnic, cultural and religious identities must be recognised, preserved and actively supported. Assessments and interventions must consider racialised trauma alongside early developmental trauma and attachment needs. Children should have opportunities to see themselves reflected positively in their families, communities, education, media, role models and support networks, alongside maintaining meaningful cultural and community connections.

Adoption Tees Valley will work with the Local Authority and will have responsibility for finding a family who are or will be approved as adoptive parents, and who can meet the needs of the child as set out in the CPR, and in the care plan.

ATV will have responsibility for understanding the assessed support needs of the adoptive family, in relation to caring for the child, and for assessing any needs of birth children of the proposed adoptive family in relation to the proposed placement.

The Local Authority is responsible for assessing access for any support services as detailed above, under Regulation 31 (2) (a) of the Adoption Agencies Regulations (2005).

The Local Authority and ATV will work together to create an Adoption Support Plan for the placement of the child with the proposed family, in all cases, taking account of the assessed needs of the child, and of the family needs in order to support the child.

The family will be consulted on this plan and will have the opportunity to be assessed for support, including financial support. The family have a right to ask for a financial allowance, however, there are specific circumstances in which the Local Authority may make provision for an adoption allowance, which are set out below.

3. Financial Support: Adoption Allowances – prior to matching

Where an Adoption Allowance is requested by the family, the assessment of financial circumstances will be undertaken by ATV (or the Adoption Agency for the selected family). The assessment for financial support will be completed by the ATV social worker who will be responsible for the placement of the child and shared with the Local Authority Child's social worker.

The request will include a recommendation to the Local Authority, who is responsible for the decision making on financial allowances.

Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) 8 (2) (a-e) sets out the circumstances in which an adoption allowance is payable.

[The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

See ATV Procedures CHAPTER SEVEN Adoption Allowances

The ATV social worker will complete the assessment of financial circumstances and requests for an adoption allowance, taking account of the original assessment of the adoptive family as set out in the Prospective Adopter Report (PAR), and the needs of the child, as set out in the CPR, and taking account of the ASS (2005) Regulation 8.

The request will be agreed with the relevant Team manager in ATV, and provided to the ATV Service Manager, for agreement to request, prior to be sent to the Local Authority delegated decision maker for financial allowances.

The local Authority will apply the means test to the financial assessment of the prospective adopter(s) in accordance with the Local Authority procedure for means testing.

The Local Authority designated decision maker will take account of the recommendation made by the ATV social worker, and ASS (2005) in coming to a decision on:

- The allowance to be paid
- Frequency
- Duration of the allowance
- Review mechanism
- Whether a single payment is to be made, to meet a specified need, or circumstance (AAR (2005) 10 (b))

All adoption allowances must be reviewed annually, under AAR (2005) 12 (b).

Additionally, the following periods of time will form the basis of a review of allowance, and circumstances of the child and family.

Except in exceptional cases, allowances will not be committed for the duration of the child's childhood, until age 18. The Local Authority will set out timescales for the duration of allowance agreed, as below. This does not mean that the Local Authority will not agree to continue beyond this time, but unless in exceptional circumstances, it will not make any firm offers beyond the specified point in time. The decision to set out the timescale for allowance is permitted under Regulation 12 (2) of ASS (2005)

Review points:

- At the point of commencing nursery education
- At the point of commencing full time primary education
- At the end of key Stage 1
- At the end of Key Stage 2, and commencement of secondary education
- At the end of key Stage 3
- At the end of Key Stage 4

Before making a decision on the allowance to be paid, and conditions, including timescale, the Local Authority will notify the prospective adoptive parents of their proposed decision. The Local Authority will allow 10 days from the date of the letter outlining the proposed plan, for any representations by the prospective adopter.

The prospective adopter must be provided with contact details through which she/he confirms acceptance of the proposed allowance, or representation that she/he does not. If no representations are received, this will be taken to mean the prospective adopter has accepted the proposal, and the decision on support services (adoption allowance) will be made.

The Local Authority is responsible for annual review of the allowance, and confirmation to the adoptive parent of the outcome of the review, with reference to the original agreement made.

See ATV Adoption Allowances Procedure for responsibilities for notifying the Local Authority of any changes.

4. Financial Support: Adoption Allowances, post placement

Where the timescale of the original agreement is due to expire, the adoptive parent will consider whether they wish to seek a continuation or change to the allowance.

The adoptive parent must contact Adoption Tees Valley to request a further assessment or change to the allowance.

See ATV procedures for adoption allowances, which includes details of who is eligible, and review mechanisms.

5. Adoption Support Services Advisor

Adoption Tees Valley has nominated each social worker with key responsibilities for delivery of an adoption support service as Adoption Support Services Administrators. This team of social workers are experienced and qualified to provide advice and information on adoption support, and also to make application to the Adoption Support Fund. The Adoption Support Team Manager, and senior practitioners within the team are designated Adoption Support Services Advisors (ASSA).

6. Adoption Support – Request for Assessment

An adopted child; an adoptive parent; a child of the adoptive parent; a sibling of an adopted child; or a natural relative of the adopted child are eligible to ask for an assessment of support needs. (ASS Regulations (2005) 13 (1))

This procedure is concerned with the access to an adoption support assessment for the adopted child, adoptive parents, and any children of the adoptive parents.

The request for an assessment should be made to Adoption Tees Valley by a parent or carer, through a telephone request to 01642 526400, Once an adoption support enquiry is

received, a call-back time is arranged for an Enquiry Hub social worker to speak with the family member. The social worker then records the details as part of an initial adoption support assessment (Part A), which includes recommendations for appropriate support.

Alternatively, the contact can be made through e mail to info@adoptionteesvalley.org.uk

The Enquiry Hub duty system at Adoption Tees Valley provides a clear, structured route for adoptive families to make an enquiry and access support. The duty system acts as the first point of contact, handling incoming enquiries, coordinating information gathering, and ensuring enquiries are recorded and progressed promptly. This referral pathway ensures that all enquiries are tracked, allocated quickly and actioned consistently, supporting timely decision-making, appropriate allocation, and clear communication across the Adoption Tees Valley service.

The ATV expected timescales for the initial support assessment (Part A) are within 5 working days.

The social worker will complete an initial assessment to determine the identified needs of the child, and/or family, for the purposes of determining:

- Eligibility for adoption support
- Whether support should be provided by adoption Tees Valley or another support service
- What the support needs are, to meet the needs of the child and family
- Make a recommendation for appropriate Tier 1 and 2 services that can support the family based on the initial assessment of need.
- For families whose needs are more complex, further assessment will be completed by a social worker from the adoption support team, this will outline the child and family's needs and make recommendation for a multi-agency therapeutic support plan.
- If the therapeutic support plan is recommending support via an external provider, the family will be advised about the most appropriate type of intervention to meet their family's needs. For families where this is not clear the social worker will consider making a referral to in house MDT team.

Adoption Tees Valley provides a Three Tier Support offer, which includes a range of universal adoption support services, including events, groups, and access to commissioned information services, which are aimed at providing information and help to adopters.

<https://adoptionteesvalley.org.uk/support/3-tier-support-system/>

All adoptive parents and adopted children, and birth children of adoptive parents who are resident in the Tees Valley area are eligible to access these services. The initial assessing social worker will provide more detailed information on support services to the person receiving the assessment.

7. Adoption Support Fund- Therapeutic Services

ATV operates with responsibility for making application to the Adoption Support Fund (ASGSF), on behalf of the 5 Local Authorities operating within the Regional Adoption Agency. An application for therapeutic support will be considered following the completion of an in depth assessment of support needs (Part B).

ASGSF funding is available for specified therapeutic services as set out by that agency.

ATV operates a Preferred Provider list of Therapeutic providers who are selected and commissioned to provide specific therapies. They are required to meet the standards set out in the ATV specification, which is supported by Stockton Borough Council Procurement Team.

The Part B assessment will gather the relevant information to make a recommendation about the appropriateness of application to the ASGSF, as set out in section 6 above. Regional Adoption Agencies have a statutory duty to ensure that therapy funded via ASGSF is appropriate; represents value for money, and is evidence based.

ASGSF funding can be applied for, upto the maximum fair access limit, which is currently £3000 per annum per child,

8. Education Support

If therapeutic input is recommended and provided, funded via ASGSF, the named ATV social worker will remain involved as the, If the social worker is not actively supporting the family and involved for review purposes only, they will 'step down' the case which means they will not be in regular contact with the family until a review is required.

Adopted children and young people are eligible for provision of advice and information to promote their educational achievement, through the Virtual School in each local Authority. As part of our multi agency team we have a dedicated and experienced Education Advisor who is responsible for supporting children and their families.

Each adopted child is eligible for pupil premium plus, to help promote and support their needs within a school setting. Schools need to be made aware of the adopted status of the child, in order to be able to make application for this additional funding. Parents and schools will want to consider how the confidentiality regarding the background of the child can be maintained and respected, while also accessing the right support to help the child in a school setting.

Education support can be provided by the Education Advisor either as part of an overall Adoption Support plan, or as a single service, to help and support the child within the school setting. The education support service is to designed offer specialist trauma informed support to schools, families and children to the right supports, including provision of advice to schools and designated teachers on the needs of adopted children. This is not a support service offering direct classroom assistance or teaching support within the class. However, The Education Advisor will be able to offer information, support and guidance on access to

the right assessments, to help the child get the help and support they need, taking account of the additional needs of adopted children.

9. Groups for children and young people

ATV runs regular support groups for adopted children and their siblings; these are open to all families as part of our Tier 1 offer.

These are closed groups and are held out of school hours, they are facilitated by the ATV Adoption Support Team.

The groups are not therapeutic groups but are focussed on helping adopted children and young people come together with other children and promote an opportunity for a shared and positive identity around being adopted.

For information on helping a child to access a monthly support group, please contact the allocated adoption support social worker, or make an enquiry via

info@adoptionteesvalley.org.uk

10. Adoption Support Plan – post placement

Assessment Approach

All adoption support assessments must:

- Explicitly record the child's racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and heritage background
- Analyse how identity has been supported, disrupted or lost over time
- Avoid colour-blind or minimising language
- Be written with awareness that the child or young person may read their records in the future

Understanding the Child's Needs

Social workers must consider:

- Racialised trauma and experiences of difference
- Identity-related anxiety, shame or confusion
- Impact of racism, micro-aggressions or isolation
- The child's current and future identity development

The Child's Voice

Social workers must:

- Use age- and developmentally-appropriate methods to gather the child's views
- Record both expressed views and observed or unspoken identity needs
- Evidence how the child's lived experience has informed assessment and planning

Adoption support services should be informed by the voices and experiences of adopted people, birth relatives and adoptive families, recognising the value of lived experience in shaping effective support. Where a child is not seen, clear and justifiable reasons must be recorded.

Where a new multi-agency plan recommended, following an assessment, or where the original Adoption Support plan requires an amendment or update, ATV will set out a new therapeutic support plan, following assessment of support needs. A plan is required where the provision of supports or services extends beyond advice and information, which is largely met by the ATV Tier 1 support offer.

The assessment framework is set out in the ATV “assessment of adoption support needs” document, which includes the plan.

There may be a need for information, advice or services from wider organisations, in accordance with the ASS Regulations (2005). The following organisations are designated to provide adoption support:

- i) Another Local Authority
- ii) A Registered Adoption Support Agency
- iii) A Local Health Board- Integrated Children’s Board
- iv) A Local Education Authority

ATV will consult with the relevant other organisation and make a referral to the appropriate service, where the Adoption Support Assessment indicates that other services are required to support the adopted child, their parents, or a child of the adoptive parents. Specifically, where other services are needed to provide support to a child or family, the plan should set these out. ATV will consult with the relevant other service before preparing and finalising the plan.

Each Local Authority will have a named individual, who will be a Service Manager, who will monitor the provision of services, in accordance with the plan.

Where the support services to be provided exceed the provision of information and advice, and a plan is prepared, and has been consulted on with other agencies, ATV will set out the Plan with details:

- A statement of the persons needs for support services – based on the assessment
- What services are required
- Whether ATV, or another organisation propose to provide the support services as detailed and how this will be reviewed.

The Plan will be provided to the adoptive parents, the child where applicable, and to any organisation named with responsibility.

Where involved the Local Authority or other organisations will be consulted on the plan, and their proposal to provide services as set out.

The adoptive parents must be given an opportunity to make representations on the plan, or confirm they are satisfied with the proposed provision, prior to the relevant Local Authority, ATV, or other organisation making the decision on the plan.

The period for representations will be 10 days for all support services, once the proposed plan is provided.

11. Notification of decision as to provide adoption support services

ATV will notify the adoptive parents, or child where applicable of their decision on the plan, in writing, following the period of representations.

Where another service is named as part of the Plan, they will be asked to notify the adoptive parent, or child where applicable, of their decision, following a period of representations.

12. Review of the Adoption Support Plan

ATV will be responsible for review of any aspects of the Adoption Support plan which are provided by the RAA.

Support plans and therapeutic interventions should be reviewed annually to assess their ongoing appropriateness, effectiveness, and alignment with the child's and family's needs. Each review must gather updated information about the child's circumstances and the wider family context, recognising that support needs can change over time and may be influenced by a range of factors.

Regional Adoption Agencies hold a statutory responsibility to ensure that any therapy funded through the Adoption Support Fund (ASGSF) is appropriate, evidence-based, and offers value for money. For families who have received long-term therapeutic intervention, social workers may seek consultation via the MDT team to ensure that any future recommendations are proportionate, well-informed, and developed from a multi-agency perspective.

Any Local Authority or other organisation which is providing services as part of the Adoption Support Plan, including financial allowances, and support, will be responsible for the review of the support, and for notifying the adoptive parent, or child where appropriate, if the service or support is to end.

Adoption support must:

- Be reviewed at key developmental stages
- Where therapeutic support is being provided social workers must hold regular reviews with the family and therapeutic provider
- Encourage reflective and anti-racist parenting
- Promote early access to support
- Where possible remain proactive rather than reactive

13. Eligibility for Adoption Support from Adoption Tees Valley or partner Local Authorities

Pre-Placement – a Tees Valley Local Authority Child in Our Care with an Adoption Plan
- Local Authority responsible for assessing the child's current and future support needs. Assessment is as per the above procedure. - Local Authority responsible for the Adoption Support plan. The Plan will be co-developed with ATV and where an external placement, the relevant Adoption Service who is responsible for the Adoptive family (RAA/VAA adoption service). - Local Authority is responsible for determining the plan, and any financial support or allowances to be provided, and for notifying the prospective adopter in writing.
Up to 3 years Post Adoption Order – a Tees Valley Child placed within the Tees Valley region, or elsewhere.
- Local Authority responsible for placing the child is responsible for assessment for adoption support needs, and for provision of services. - Where the child lives within the Tees Valley region, ATV will be responsible for the provision of adoption support services, or, ensuring g that the relevant VAA is aware of the adoption support plan, and can meet support needs. - Where the child lives outside of the Tees Valley region, the LA may make arrangements for more local services to the child, to meet the needs as set out.
Up to 3 years post Adoption order- a none Tees Valley Child placed within Tees Valley region
Local Authority responsible for placing the child is responsible for assessment for adoption support needs, and for provision of services.
Over 3 years Post Adoption Order – Tees Valley Adopted child in the Tees Valley area, or elsewhere
- Local Authority where child lives is responsible for adoption support assessment, and adoption support plan, unless the decision on financial support was provided by the Local Authority prior to the granting of an Adoption Order. Where the child remains living in the Tees Valley (ATV area) ATV will remain responsible for the support, and any financial support will be paid by the Local Authority who agreed that support plan, prior to the Adoption. - Where no allowance or financial support was agreed by the placing Local Authority, within a three year period, the Local Authority where the child lives is responsible for any new financial or other supports. - Where the child lives in the Tees Valley region, ATV will be responsible for the provision of adoption support services.
Over 3 years Post Adoption Order – None Tees Valley Adopted child in the Tees Valley area
Local Authority where child lives is responsible for adoption support assessment, and adoption support plan, unless the decision on financial support was provided by the Local Authority prior to the granting of an Adoption Order. Where the child is living in the Tees Valley (ATV area) ATV will be responsible for the support, and any financial support will be paid by the Local Authority who agreed that support plan, prior to the Adoption.

The regulations permit a Local Authority to pay for adoption support where they consider it necessary to do so to support the child, regardless of where the child is living.

Children who are placed through a non-agency route are not eligible for support under these regulations and procedures. Such children may be eligible for support through Child in need arrangements, and the appropriate assessments for support.

14. Supervision and Workforce Development

The Adoption Tees Valley will ensure that:

- Supervision provides space for reflection on race, identity and bias
- Social workers are supported to develop racial and cultural consciousness
- Continuous professional development includes anti-racist adoption practice
- Challenge and learning are embedded within management oversight