



Independent Birth Parent Support Service

Policy and Procedure



‘Communication is important, so information should be accessible to everyone. People with sensory communication disabilities may need documents in easy read, large print, audio or Braille formats for example. Others may need face to face communication support through a British Sign Language Interpreter, deafblind interpreter, lip speaker or note taker (as recommended by the NHS Accessible Information Standard). If someone speaks (or reads) a language that is not English, they will need to have the appropriate language-spoken language interpreter and / or text translator’.



1.0 Purpose:

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on how Together4Children will work with and support birth parent(s) whose child(ren) are the subject of an adoption plan.
- 1.2 This support will be offered from the point at which the child's care plan becomes one of adoption and will continue to be offered until an Adoption Order is granted.
- 1.3 Once an Adoption Order has been granted birth parent(s) and family will receive support via the Locality Permanency Hub's Post-Box Service. Please refer to the Post-Box policy for more details regarding the support provided post the Adoption Order.

2.0 Underpinning Legislation and Guidance:

- 2.1
 - Section 14, 15, 16; Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005
 - Adoption and Children Act 2002 Guidance, Chapter 2
 - Adoption and Children Act Guidance (2011)- Chapters 2 and 9
 - Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011)-Standard 12 and 15
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 (Regulations 4 and 13)
- 2.2 The principle of independent support for birth parents is a requirement of the Adoption Minimum Standards and is reflected in statutory guidance:
 - 'Birth Parents are given access to, and are actively encouraged to use, a support worker from the time adoption is identified as the plan for the child. The support worker is independent of the child's social worker' Standard 12.3.
 - 'The agency should offer the parents the services of an independent support worker: someone who can provide advice and support and is either from another agency or adoption support agency or, at least, not a member of the team of social workers who are responsible for the child's case'. Guidance Chapter 2.26.

3.0 Locality Permanency Hub Process:

- 3.1 At the child's looked after statutory care plan review where the Local Authority is recommending Adoption as the best plan to achieve permanency, it is proposed that it will be the responsibility of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) chairing the meeting to physically provide birth parent(s) with the 'Independent Birth Parent Support Service' leaflet.

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- 3.2 The leaflet provides information on how the Independent Birth Parent Support Service can offer support at this difficult time to birth parent(s) and their family, as well as directing them to a website for further information.
- 3.3 The IRO will discuss with birth parent(s) that he/she will complete a referral to the Independent Birth Parent Support Service on their behalf.
- 3.4 With Birth Parent's consent, the IRO will complete the referral form and email to the appropriate Permanency Support Team closest to the parent(s) geographical location.

Staffordshire Service Email: adoptionsupport@staffordshire.gov.uk

Joint Adoption Service Email: SS-Adoption@shropshire.gov.uk

Stoke-on-Trent Service Email: Postbox@stoke.gov.uk

- 3.5 The referral form contains basic information and contact details for the birth parent(s). This action will be recorded within the review minutes by the IRO.
- 3.6 If birth parent(s) are not present at the statutory review the information leaflet will be posted to them along with the looked after statutory care plan review minutes and the referral to the Birth Parent Independent Support Service will be recorded within the minutes by the IRO.
- 3.7 The reason for recommending IROs to undertake the above tasks rather than the Child's Social Worker is due to their independent position. It is this 'independence', highlighted within the National Minimum Standards, which is required during this support process.
- 3.8 If birth parent(s) do not consent to a referral being made to the Independent Birth Parent Support Service, then this decision is to be respected. The decision should be clearly recorded in the review minutes. The IRO should inform birth parent(s) that they can make contact with the Independent Birth Parent Support Service at any time for advice and support from the details provided in the information leaflet (or via the Together4Children website).

4.0 Independent Birth Parent Support Service Process:

- 4.1 Within the Locality Permanency Hub, on receipt of the referral the Permanency Support Team Manager will allocate to a Permanency Support Practitioner within two working days. The allocated worker will work with the birth family from this point up until the granting of an Adoption Order.
- 4.2 The Permanency Support Practitioner will contact the birth parent(s) within **7 working days** from allocation to discuss what support is on offer. If there is no response the Permanency Support Practitioner will try to make contact again at **4**



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weeks and again at **8 weeks**. The Permanency Support Practitioner will record all contact on the adult's record within the Locality Permanency Hub.

- 4.3 If there has been no response after **12 weeks** the Permanency Support Practitioner will send a closure letter to birth parent(s) and will include the 'Adoption Process Guide leaflet' and links to the Together4Children website so that they are made aware of how to access support in the future.
- 4.4 The Permanency Support Practitioner will confirm with the Child's Social Worker, the birth parent(s) most recent address before sending the letter out.
- 4.5 If birth parent(s) have no fixed address the Permanency Support Practitioner will provide the documents to the Child's Social Worker via secure email in order for the documents to be given in person by the Child's Social Worker at the next contact session and/or meeting.
- 4.6 The Permanency Support Practitioner will then close the referral within the Independent Birth Parent Support Service. This can be reopened at any point at the request of the birth parent(s).
- 4.7 All contact with the parent(s) will be recorded on the adult's files within the Locality Permanency Hub to evidence that support has been offered.

5.0 Support Offer:

- 5.1 The Permanency Support Practitioners will offer birth parent(s) and/or family the following service:
- 5.2
 - To offer support with a referral to a counselling service
 - To aid support in understanding the court process
 - To offer support and signpost to external agencies such as housing, benefits, drugs & alcohol services, mental health services, domestic violence services, sexual health services and advocacy services
 - To support parent(s) with meeting prospective adopter(s) where this is appropriate
 - Accessing birth parent support groups
 - Providing the 'Guide to Adoption Process' leaflet
- 5.4 Where birth parent(s) and/or family members have accessed and received support from the service, the Permanency Support Practitioner will undertake a verbal handover via telephone or in person if appropriate with the birth parent and/or family and the Post-Box Service.



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6.0 Roles and Responsibilities:

- 6.1
- All staff are responsible for following the guidance within this policy
 - Managers are responsible for enforcing this policy

