



Recruitment of Prospective Adopters

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 address the recruitment of potential adoptive households across the Together4Children regional footprint. It covers the process from Initial Enquiry through to Information Events and allocation to Locality Permanency Hubs for Initial Visit.
- 1.2 Together4Children need to recruit, assess and approve a wide range of prospective adopters to meet the varying needs of the children needing families from different ethnic backgrounds, children with disabilities, complex emotional and behavioural needs and children with special needs and whom are part of sibling's groups.

2.0 Underpinning Legislation and Guidance:

2.1

- Adoption and Children's Act 2002 Guidance Chapter 3 and Annexes A & D (2002)
- Preparing and assessing potential Adopters Practice Guidance
- Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (2013)
- Statutory Adoption Guidance amended (2013)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (miscellaneous amendments) regulations (2013)
- Statutory Adoption Guidance amended (2011)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations (2010)
- Equality Act 2010
- Practice Guidance and the assessment and preparation of adopters (2006)
- Adoption Agency regulations (2005)
- Restriction on the preparation of Adoption Reports regulations (2005)
- Suitability of Adopters Regulations (2005)
- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2003)
- Adoption and Children Act (2002)

3.0 Central Permanency Hub Function:

- 3.1 The Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager within the Central Permanency Hub will take the lead on the following to ensure a robust presence is held within the adoption recruitment market:
- 3.2 The Together4Children brand needs to be actively promoted and reflect that this is a collaboration of four local Authorities.
- 3.3 The Adoption Recruitment Strategy to be reviewed and updated annually.
- 3.4 Marketing materials to be purchased to have maximum effect for minimum expenditure.
- 3.5 The Together4Children website and social media presence to be strong and reflect the ethos of the partnership.
- 3.6 To ensure regular attendance at recruitment events across the regional footprint to promote the partnership.
- 3.7 To ensure a prompt, sensitive and positive response is given to enquiries that takes account of communication needs.
- 3.8 To ensure forward planning of Information Events to enable timely attendance and engagement for potential adopters.

4.0 Enquiry Routes:

- 4.1 Potential adopter(s) will have two routes to make an enquiry with Together4Children via the Internet; Website or Facebook and a telephone enquiry. There will be one number for Together4children enquiries which will be promoted via the marketing activity and online presence.
- 4.2 For enquiries via the website, potential adopter(s) will be able to complete a very basic online enquiry form. For enquiries via the Facebook Page there will be an enquiry button that potential adopter(s) can click onto which will directly link into the website.
- 4.3 This website enquiry form will be sent to the Central Permanency Hub's inbox email address. Once potential adopter(s) submit an enquiry there will be an automated response stating that the enquiry is received, and they will be contacted within one working day. In addition, this automated email will have an electronic Adoption Information Booklet attached for them to have some information to read in the interim.



4.4 Where a written or website enquiry has been received, the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager should contact the potential adopter(s) within one working day.

5.0 Initial Enquiry:

5.1 During the Initial Enquiry call, the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager will complete the Enquiry Form with potential adopter(s).

5.2 The Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager will offer support and advice and the following information will be supplied to the potential adopter(s):

- General information about adoption
- Initial information on the assessment and approval process and timescale
- Information about the Together4Children's expectations of adopters
- Information on the support available to adoptive families who adopt
- Information about early permanence
- A case record must be set up in respect of the potential adopter and security will be applied to restrict access to this file.

5.3 Once the enquiry form has been completed, the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager will send a welcome letter, information booklet and a list of Information Event dates to potential adopter(s). This should be sent out within one working day. Potential Adopter(s) will be informed during the telephone conversation to book onto the Information Event via the website or telephone (if they have not booked on during the conversation). There is the offer on the website that potential adopter(s) can turn up without registering to an Information Event. The rationale behind this is to reduce as many barriers as possible for people to attend.

5.4 The next step would be for the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager to undertake a Local Authority Check via the four Local Authorities Case Management Systems and to update this action on the potential adopter(s) enquiry form.

5.5 A Local Authority check will need to be completed to ascertain if potential adopter(s) are known at this stage to their Local Authority.

5.6 If potential adopter(s) have enquired via the website and the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager cannot successfully contact the potential



adopter(s) a follow up email and letter and information pack will be posted out to them.

- 5.7 If the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager has received no response again after a month another letter will be sent out via email and post and then again at 3 months asking them to confirm their interest. There would be an opt out option process highlighted in all letter's sent out to potential adopter(s) which is compliant with GDPR.

6.0 Second Time Adopters:

- 6.1 For second time adopters the enquiry process differs slightly. They would follow the above process from making an enquiry via telephone or website and enquiry form and Local Authority check would be completed. However, it is at this point that they would be allocated to the appropriate Locality Permanency Hub for an Initial Visit as they would not need to follow the process of attending an Information Event.

7.0 Regional Guidelines:

- 7.1 In response to an enquiry about adopting a child, Together4Children have produced the following guidance as to whether potential adopter(s) would be suitable to progress at this stage in the adoption journey.

7.2 Key Red Lines:

- 7.3 Key Red Lines' are factors that would preclude potential adopter(s) from progressing any further with the adoption process.

7.4 Age:

Legally potential adopter(s) must be over 21 years old to adopt. There is no upper age limit.

7.5 UK Resident:

Potential adopter(s) must legally be a UK resident living in the UK and have been so for at least 12 months.

7.6 Smoking:

Potential adopter(s) will be informed that they cannot consider an assessment for people who smoke tobacco-based products if they are considering adopting a child under 5 years old. Previous smokers need to have given up for 6 months. Those who state they are going to give up smoking will be advised that they need to go to their GP so its recorded on their medical records. Potential adopter(s) who use e-cigarettes will not be precluded to adopt a child under the age of 5 years old and/or



with respiratory health issues. It would be explored in the assessment stage, what steps they would need to take to minimise any risk to the child. This should include details about where and how often e-cigarettes are used and how e-cigarettes and their components are stored.

7.7 Convictions of a serious Nature:

Potential adopter(s) and members of their household must not have a criminal conviction or caution for offences against children or for serious sexual or violent offences.

7.8 Loss of a child/bereavement:

This would not preclude potential adopter(s) from adopting. However, a minimum of 12 months from losing their birth child would be needed before beginning the adoption process. If at the point of the enquiry it was less than 12 months they would be asked for their consent if Together4Children could contact them back at the appropriate month. This information and consent would be recorded on potential adopter(s) enquiry form. It should also be explained to the potential adopter(s) that this 12-month timescale would be explored further at the Initial Visit as a longer period may be needed in light of the trauma, loss and grief they would have experienced.

7.9 General Guidance:

7.10 Below are factors that would not preclude potential adopter(s), but further exploration would be needed during the Initial process.

7.11 Fertility Treatment – including IVF/Donor Sperm/Surrogacy:

In general, a minimum of 6 months from the last failed cycle of IVF/Sperm Donation/Surrogacy. However, the specific context of potential adopter(s) experience should be explored.

7.12 Potential Adopter(s) with birth/adopted children:

Where potential adopter(s) have birth or adopted children living in their household consideration should be given to the potential impact of placing an adopted child within the family.

7.13 Serious and general medical conditions/operations:

If the potential adopter(s) are receiving treatment or are about to have an operation for a serious medical condition they will be asked to come back to the partnership when this has been concluded.

If a potential adopter has previously received cancer treatment, there needs to be a 6-month period before an assessment can be started. Further information would

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need to be sought from medical professionals and management within the Central Permanency Hub.

Information will be gathered and noted in the potential adopter(s) enquiry form and potential adopter(s) will be informed that this needs to be explored in the Initial Visit and a decision is made on an individual basis. After the medical consent has been received this may need to be explored further with an appropriate medical team.

7.14 Mental Health:

Potential Adopter(s) will be asked if they are accessing services and or treatment and whether they are taking any medication. This will be recorded on the enquiry form and explored further within the Initial Visit.

7.15 Bedrooms:

Current requirement is that potential adopter(s) need an appropriate spare room to be able to adopt a child and this room to be available at the time of approval at panel. Where potential adopter(s) do not have a spare room at the start of their assessment journey then each application is to be looked at with regards to the individual circumstances and reasons. Adoptive siblings can share a bedroom based on gender and age requirements.

7.16 Relationship:

Potential adopter(s) should have been living with each other for a minimum of 2 years without a period of separation. However, where there has been a long-standing relationship but there are reasons which has prevented them to live together full time then this could be explored on an individual basis, but there does need to be a recommended period of 12 months living together.

7.17 Criminal Convictions:

Any convictions (other than the serious offences noted above) either spent or otherwise will be noted and discussed further during the Initial Visit. In some situations, more information may be needed with regards to how recent the offence/s were, any mitigating circumstances and the proportionality. Any queries at the enquiry stage to be escalated to management within the Central Permanency Hub.

7.18 Financial Management:

If potential adopter(s) indicate they have significant amounts of debt they would need to be able to evidence that they can responsibly manage this, and this will be further explored during the assessment process.

7.19 Previous Social Care Involvement:



If potential adopter(s) had previous involvement with Children's social care, and/or had a previous child removed then this will need to be explored in detail prior to being invited to an Information Event. The enquiry taker would have access to the 4 Local Authorities Case Management systems to undertake Local Authority checks. Any information gathered would be analysed and shared with an appropriate Assessment and Support Team Manager for a critical friend discussion for a decision to be made on whether they are able to proceed. Clear information and reasons to be shared with potential adopter(s) if we are unable to proceed. If we are able to proceed at this stage inform potential adopter(s) that further checks will be made during the Stage 1 process.

7.20 Bereavement:

If potential adopter(s) have experienced a significant loss/bereavement of an adult, in general a 6-month period is advised before the assessment process begins. However, the specific context of potential adopter(s) experience should be explored.

7.21 If potential adopter(s) at the point of enquiry are not able to progress further at this time in light of any of the factors above, the Central Permanency Hub worker will ask their consent for them be contacted again in the future within an agreed timescale and for this to be recorded on the potential adopter(s) enquiry form.

8.0 Information Events:

8.1 Once the potential adopter(s) have booked onto an Information Event via telephone, website or email the details will be added to the potential adopter(s) Enquiry Form. If they have made contact via website or email, this information will then be sent to the Central Hub's inbox and there will be an automated reply acknowledging receipt of their request.

8.2 The Information Event dates for the region will be organised and facilitated by the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager. Events will be delivered on a four- week rolling program across the four geographical areas. This will result in one information event being held each week.

8.3 The Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager, five working days prior to the next Information Event will generate a list of attendees. The Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager will then email the appropriate Locality Permanency Hub Adoption administrator to inform the Adoption Team of the attendance list for information purposes.

8.4 The Marketing & Recruitment Manager will then coordinate the Information Event and will aim to facilitate up to 50% of the Information Events with support from a social worker from the Assessment & Support Team where the event is



geographically located. On the other occasions two workers (including one Social Worker) will facilitate the Information Event from the Assessment & Support Team again where the event is geographically located. An adopter guest speaker will also attend Information Events and share their experience or if no one is available a film of adopters sharing their experiences will be shown at the event instead.

- 8.5 At the end of the Information Event potential adopter(s) will be informed that if they wish to proceed to an Initial Visit, they can contact the Central Permanency Hub via email/telephone call or if they were happy to do so they can inform the workers that same evening.
- 8.6 The following working day the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager would update the Enquiry Form for each potential adopter(s) that attended the Information Event.
- 8.7 If a potential adopter(s) turned up to the Information Event without registering the workers will inform he/she that before they can proceed to an Initial Visit, they would have to make contact with the Central Permanency Hub and complete an Enquiry Form.

9.0 Allocation to Locality Permanency Hub for Initial Visit:

- 9.1 Once potential adopter(s) have informed the Central Permanency Hub that they wish to proceed to an Initial Visit, the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager will seek the approval of the Adoption Assessment & Support Team Manager from the Locality that the information event was hosted before approving the allocation of prospective Adopters for assessment. The Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager will then email the enquiry form to the Adoption Assessment & Support Team Manager for allocation.
- 9.2 Potential adopter(s) will be informed that they should expect to receive a call within 7 working days from the relevant Locality Permanency Hub.
- 9.3 There will be managerial oversight within the Central Permanency Hub to monitor each Locality Permanency Hub's assessment capacity. Where required assessments will be allocated to an alternative Locality Permanency Hub to ensure that regional capacity is used to best effect.

10.0 Roles and Responsibilities:

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



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10.2 Family Finding Practitioners and Training & Development Officers within the Central Permanency Hub will also have a role and responsibility in supporting the Regional Adopter Marketing & Recruitment Manager regarding the above tasks and activities relating to enquires and coordinating information events.

