



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Adoption Support

4



Contact

1

Transitions and Early Support

2

Working with Birth Parents

3

Contents

| | | | |
|--|----|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 | Acknowledgements | 26 |
| The status and purpose of this guide | 4 | References | 27 |
| How this guide works and how users can make the most of it | 5 | Appendix 1: Sibling Alliance Call and Pledge | 29 |
| 4.1 Care proceedings | 10 | Appendix 2: Who this guide is intended for, abbreviations | 29 |
| 4.2 Placement proceedings | 11 | and terminology | |
| 4.3 Family finding | 12 | Appendix 3: Key Performance Measures relating | 30 |
| 4.4 Linking | 13 | to Life Journey Work | |
| 4.5 Matching planning | 14 | Appendix 4: Adoption support assessment | 31 |
| 4.6 Matching panel / ADM | 15 | Appendix 5: Adoption support plan | 33 |
| 4.7 Introductions planning | 15 | | |
| 4.8 Introductions | 16 | | |
| 4.9 Placement | 16 | | |
| 4.10 Early weeks and months | 17 | | |
| 4.11 Decision to apply for an Adoption Order | 19 | | |
| 4.12 Adoption Order proceedings | 20 | | |
| 4.13 Post Adoption Order | 21 | | |

This good practice guide has been produced by AFA Cymru.
It has been commissioned and funded by the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS).

All rights reserved. This document may not be reproduced without the permission of the
National Adoption Service for Wales.

Cover illustration: Jess Coldrick

Introduction

The concept and practice of adoption support has developed alongside our growing understanding of the experiences of those involved: the child, the adoptive parent and the birth parent.

Adoption support was placed on a legal footing with the introduction of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and its accompanying regulations. Since that time research has highlighted the need for adoption support to meet the needs of families over the course of the child's childhood.

The major evolution in adoption support in the last fifteen years has been the acknowledgement that adoption support is an expected part of being an adoptive family. Asking for support is no longer a reflection that 'this family can't cope' but rather that 'this family is undertaking a very complex parenting task and is likely to require support' (Ottaway et al. 2014; Rushton and Dance, 2002; Pennington, 2012). Adoption support needs to be seen and prompted as the norm, to be accessible and available when required for as long as it is needed (Thomas, 2013, AUK, 2019, Stock et al., 2016, Bonin et al. 2014).

The National Adoption Service, in its Baseline Assessment Report on adoption support services in Wales states that it seeks to improve

'early access to support services to maximise the well-being of adoptive families by making them more resilient and by transforming support services in line with a national framework that consists of a range of universal, targeted and specialist support services.'

The guide forms part of the 'core offer' of the National Framework for Adoption Support. The National Framework, which sets out the specification for adoption services in Wales, originated in 2017 from an exercise in mapping and business planning and from commissioned research which evidenced the levels and type of adoption support services offered to adoptive families during the early formation of the regional collaboratives. The model is based on a three tier provision of support service.



Universal Support

- Access to specialist adoption advice, information, support and services
- New framework to support children placed
- Access to TESSA
- AUK Membership
- Preparation and post approval training
- New information and support services for children and young people
- New Life journey materials arrangements
- New framework for contact
- Ongoing contact by services
- Pre placement meeting with medical advisor
- Services in health, education & family support are 'Adoption aware'
- Support groups/family events
- Improved Birth Parent support
- Improved access to Records

Targeted Support

- Active oversight of ongoing support plans
- Assessment for new post placement support
- Financial allowances
- Access to therapeutic services
- Adopting Together service
- Menu of more specialist post approval training
- Pathways to 'adoption aware' additional needs support in schools, CAMHS and other secondary/tertiary health services
- Therapeutic life journey work

Specialist Support

- Specialist CAMHS assessment and services
- Other specialist / therapeutic assessment and services

Universal support services provide the opportunity for adoptive families to access timely advice and support and for the adoption support service to identify the need for further, targeted or specialist, help at an early stage following a full assessment.

'We need to have an 'invest to save' attitude towards adoption support services – the earlier the intervention, the better for the child and family and so better for the region or local authority having to provide and pay for the service' Adoption social worker

Access to adoption support provision needs to be simple, timely and responsive to need.

'Investment is needed in adoption support services nationally in order to ensure high quality provision that meets needs rather than fits in with existing resources and promotes equity of access across Wales' (Ottaway et al, 2014, p.95).

Professionals need to be trauma informed and understand the specific needs of adoptive families (Pennington, 2012; Ottaway et al, 2014, King et al. 2017) This "adoption lens", that is being able to see the needs of adoptive families, even years down the line, in the context of the trauma the child experienced within the birth family and subsequent transitions, is crucial to fully understanding the complex support needs that may arise.

The status and purpose of this guide

This guide is constructed to build upon the existing legal framework for adoption and adoption support in Wales. It is designed to build upon good practice and develop a pan Wales approach. It is the expectation of the National Adoption Service that the guide will ensure that all those in receipt of adoption or adoption support services in Wales will have access to the same quality of service.

The guide is being drafted at a time where the regional collaboratives and voluntary adoption agencies in Wales are making significant progress in developing adoption support services in line with the NAS objectives. The guide aims to reflect and enhance that progress.

The guiding principles for this guide are as follows:

- 1) Adoptive families, both before and after the Adoption Order is made, have easy access to advice and information on adoption support services. This advice is provided by practitioners who have knowledge and experience of adoption and work from a 'trauma informed' base;
- 2) A child's needs for adoption support are identified at a very early stage, beginning with a full and robust CAR/B and followed by an 'Understanding the Child' meeting as part of the matching process (Refer to the **Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide**);
- 3) A new and dynamic Adoption Support Plan is used, which is not tethered to the adoption placement plan but moves on with the family, from matching, through to and beyond the Adoption Order;
- 4) A system for reviewing the Adoption Support Plan and 'keeping in touch' that takes into account the growing child's needs and the possibility of the need for support at times of transition and challenge. This system does not preclude the regulatory right of the adoptive family to request an assessment for adoption support needs at any time
- 5) Effective collaborative working between professionals is essential. There needs to be a common goal and understanding of the work being done and emotionally intelligent skills to build and maintain relationships, and understand the perspective of others.



At the heart of all that we do should be the voice of the child:

- I have a right to understand that it is not my fault my birth parents could not look after me
- I have a right to expect any decision making and outcomes to take account of my particular experiences as a black or minority ethnic child and to respect my ethnicity and cultural heritage.
- I have a right to understand why I cannot live with my birth family
- I have a right to understand why I could or could not live with my brothers and sisters
- I have a right to understand why adoption was chosen for me
- I have a right to understand why this particular family was chosen for me
- I have a right to understand why the current 'keeping in touch' (contact) arrangements were made
- I have a right to keep in touch with my birth family if it is helpful and safe for me to do so
- My birth parents will receive support to help them keep in touch (contact) with me where that has been agreed
- I have a right to keep in touch with other people who are important to me for example foster carers where it is helpful and safe for me to do so
- When thinking about what I need professionals will think about the whole of my childhood not just the here and now.

All guides have taken into account the Sibling Alliance call and pledge, the principles of which are embedded in the guides.

See Appendix 1



How this guide works and how users can make the most of it

This guide stands alone. However, it can also be used in conjunction with three other guides. They cover:

- Working with Birth Parents
- Transitions and Early Support
- Contact

Each of these guides is set out separately and discretely. However, in order for the practitioner and, in particular, the child's social worker to gain maximum benefit from each guide, they are ordered chronologically and numbered, so that there will be ease of reference for a practitioner to consider. For example, they can look at what needs to be considered at the family finding stage for each of the four guides (1.3, 2.3, 3.3, and 4.3). The following diagram should help to navigate the guide.

See Appendix 2 for full details of professionals this guide is intended for, abbreviations and terminology.

| STAGE | 1 CONTACT | 2 TRANSITIONS AND EARLY SUPPORT | 3 WORKING WITH PARENTS | 4 ADOPTION SUPPORT |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| CARE PROCEEDINGS 1 | CSW – family meeting. CSW – ensure CAR/B has sufficient information to inform contact plan. CSW – LJW. ASW advice and support to CSW. | CSW to invite ASW to 2nd LAC review. AA will allocate ASW to work with birth family. CSW ensures that there is a detailed chronology, pre birth and up to the present. CSW undertakes LJW. IRO to monitor progress of LJW. | CSW – family meeting should take place if not happened in PLO. CSW ensures birth family understand adoption is one option in planning. CSW makes referral to region for support in adoption planning. ASW provides 'birth parent counselling'. CSW & ASW -referral to Reflect. CSW – LJW. | CSW – identifying child's long term needs in care plan and in CAR/B. ASW attends 2nd LAC review to advise on possible AS needs. ASW – PA's support plan in the PAR. |
| PLACEMENT ORDER PROCEEDINGS 2 | CSW- care plan /CAR/B / plan for S26 and post adoption contact. CSW – plan for sibling contact | CSW- CAR/B forms the basis of the trauma/ nurture timeline. CSW & ASW plan for 'moving on' narrative. | CSW and ASW agree on effective communication with BP's. CSW plans for s26 contact | ASW to provide support to inexperienced CSW in writing the CAR/B. CSW – identifying child's long term support needs in the CAR/B. |
| FAMILY FINDING 3 | CSW – reducing / goodbye contacts under s26 ACA.. CSW – work with child and foster carer to ensure child understands why contact pattern is changing. ASW – to assist with the above. | CSW – updating CAR/B on child's progress. CSW & ASW identify how PA's will meet needs of child during transition and early support needs when looking at range of PAR's. CSW and ASW agree roles and responsibilities for direct work plan. | CSW – keeping parents informed of progress. CSW works with BP's and other BF members of s26 contact plan. CSW – updates CAR/B on basis of any further information from birth family. | CSW – updating CAR/B on child's progress. ASW prepares trauma/ nurture timeline from CAR/B information and identifies possible support needs. AA provides support to the PA's by way of universal adoption support services. |

| STAGE | 1 CONTACT | 2 TRANSITIONS AND EARLY SUPPORT | 3 WORKING WITH PARENTS | 4 ADOPTION SUPPORT |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| LINKING 4 | CSW – updates CAR/B. CSW & ASW – liaising with PA's and testing their commitment to child's identified contact plan. CSW – LJW. | ASW shares CAR'B and trauma timeline with PA's. CSW & ASW visit PA's home. CSW and ASW help PA's to understand needs of this child. PA's and FC's meet to develop relationship before the Understanding the Child Meeting. | CSW – keeps parents informed of progress, supported by ASW. CSW and ASW to plan for meeting between BP's and PA's. | CSW provides PA's with all the information on the child. ASW and CSW hold the 'understanding the child' meeting from which support needs may become apparent. CSW & ASW supporting PA's if application for leave to revoke PO is made. |
| MATCHING PLANNING 5 | CSW & ASW putting together contact component of adoption support plan . CSW – plan for farewell contact. CSW and ASW – plan for meeting between BP's and PA's. | Understanding the Child Meeting takes place. PA's have period of reflection. Further informal contact between PA's and FC's. Direct work with child. CSW, with help from ASW completes APR and ASP. Possible child viewing. Planning for meeting with BP's and PA's. | CSW – keeps parents informed of progress (see AFA advice for NAS on revocation of PO applications). CSW & ASW to liaise on farewell contact arrangements and support to be offered to BP's. | CSW & ASW look at both child's specific support needs and PA's strengths and vulnerabilities to inform adoption support plan. CSW, with help from ASW, completes APR and ASP which are shared with PA's |
| MATCHING PANEL / ADM 6 | Panel and ADM to consider the proposed contact plan | Panel and ADM to consider matching paperwork and report from the UtCM. | CSW – keeping parents informed (see AFA advice for NAS on revocation of PO applications). CSW & ASW to consider arrangements for BP and PA meeting. | Panel and ADM to consider whether support plan is fit for purpose and recommend/ approve match |
| INTRODUCTIONS PLANNING 7 | CSW and ASW – Plan for connections with foster carers to be maintained following transitions. Meeting with BP & PA's. | ASW & CSW– allocation of PR agreement. ASW plans introductions planning meeting. Direct work with child. | CSW – keeps parents informed. Meeting with PA's and BP's takes place. Meeting with PA's and other members of BF (eg older siblings) takes place | CSW and ASW involve health and / or education in planning where appropriate |
| INTRODUCTIONS 8 | ASW and FSW to assist FC's and PA's in forging a relationship that will sustain a level of contact. | ASW to lead on three step approach to introductions. Direct work with child. ASW leads review. | CSW – keeping BP's informed of date of introductions (see AFA advice for NAS on revocation of PO applications). | CSW and ASW to amend support plan if additional needs come to light during introductions |

| STAGE | 1 CONTACT | 2 TRANSITIONS AND EARLY SUPPORT | 3 WORKING WITH PARENTS | 4 ADOPTION SUPPORT |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| PLACEMENT 9 | CSW, ASW and FSW to ensure contact with foster carer takes place. | ASW provides continued support. Direct work with child. Contact with FC. | CSW and ASW – PR agreement with PA's. | ASW & CSW will review the support plan if additional needs of the new family emerge |
| EARLY WEEKS / MONTHS 10 | ASW ensures that settling in letter is sent to birth parents and others (within 6 weeks). ASW, CSW and IRO support PA's and BP's in establishing a contact pattern. | CSW – statutory visits and reviews. IRO – reviews. ASW – continued support. Contact with FC's. | ASW & CSW – support PA's to send settling in letter to BP's. IRO to ensure letter has been sent. | CSW – statutory visits. IRO – reviews. ASW – continuing support. All involved providing reassurance that early weeks and months can often be difficult. |
| DECISION TO APPLY FOR AO 11 | ASW & CSW – contact plan and contact support plan in Annex A. | Decision made following review and in consultation with PA's and ASW. | CSW – notice of hearing to parents (regs). ASW and CSW consider support to be given to BP's re hearing. | CSW & ASW support PA's in any application for leave to contest the making of the Adoption Order |
| AO PROCEEDINGS 12 | CSW & ASW to ensure that post adoption contact agreements are understood, committed to and signed | CSW – statutory visits. ASW – continued support. | CSW & ASW complete Annex A. CSW to update CAR/B following final hearing to incorporate judgment. | CSW & ASW to ensure that support plan has been reviewed in anticipation of the Adoption Order being made |
| POST AO 13 | ASW / support team / VAASW support where appropriate and assess and review for adoption support needs relating to contact . | N/A | ASW/ region – commencement of, or continued support with, contact ASW / region – general support to BP's. ASW – continued communication and exchange of information | ASW / regional support where relevant. Post adoption support plan to set out what to be provided to the child and to the family and an agreement for review or 'keeping in touch' |

Throughout the guide there is reference to the different types of support that can be available to an adopted child and their family.

- 1) **Universal services** that are available to any child in Wales.
These services include access to health, education and nursery provision. They are available to an adopted child as any other; they may need to access these services more frequently as a result of their early experiences.
- 2) **Adoption support services** that are provided through the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005. These regulations provide for an assessment for adoption support needs and set out a prescribed list for what constitutes adoption support.

THE TYPES OF ADOPTION SUPPORT AVAILABLE

This is by no means an exhaustive list and a needs led adoption support assessment (see Appendix 3) should establish a need and seek to meet it rather than look to the list. However, it may be useful for those less familiar with adoption support to know of some of the most used services

Universal adoption support services

“Provide support in as many ways as possible – not just what is easiest / most obvious. Buddies, online training etc. Not everyone wants to, or can, go to a support group or training.”

Adoptive parent



- The provision of an adoption support assessment
- Oversight and review of an Adoption Support Plan
- Access to specialist adoption advice and information
- Access to ‘adoption aware’ mainstream health services
- Access to the support with education and, in particular, ensuring that schools have the AUK ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’ schools’ guide
- Assistance with contact (writing letters / remote contact / direct contact, particularly with siblings)
- Access to the ‘Connected’ groups for adopted children and young people over the age of 7 years
- Mail outs via email / newsletters as a means of keeping in touch
- An agreement to ‘keep in touch’ at key developmental stages, for example at times of transitions
- Provision of training / workshops to include different stages of development, including access to online / remote training
- Provision of training on matters that may affect some adoptive families (eg FASD, child to parent violence)
- Access to support groups (support groups that offer an element of training with speakers on particular topics but also provide time for socialising and catching up), specific groups for single adopters, fathers, same sex couples, grandparents
- Family fun days
- Peer support (informal and formal)
- Peer mentoring / buddying (informal and formal)
- Post adoption training which targets particular stages of the child’s development, reinforcing the concept of ‘open communicativeness’
- Membership of AUK
- Social media support and training, for the child’s particular developmental stages
- AUK ‘first thousand days’ providing independent training and peer support, both direct and online

Targeted support services

Some families need additional support that should be needs led following an assessment. This can include, but is not restricted to:

- Access to health (in particular specialist services such as paediatric occupational therapy, audiology, ophthalmology. Adding the weight of the child’s social worker or adoption support social worker behind referrals through the GP can help)
- Education – visiting the school / talking to staff to help provide a trauma informed approach to the child’s time at school. Assisting in accessing the right kind of help
- Access to psychology services (via the region’s own arrangements / agreement)
- More specialist training, for example in telling difficult information, the effects of FASD
- Specific training for the parents of older children, for example on non violent resistance (NVR)
- Financial support (not allowances) for particular families (eg domestic help with large sibling groups)
- Respite / short break care (something that has not historically been accepted as an adoption support service but should be considered as part of a package of support in particular circumstances). Short break care does not necessarily entail overnight stays but may provide some space during the day for adoptive parents and a fun time for the child
- TESSA (following an assessment – see below)

Specialist support services

A multi-disciplinary assessment of need involving CSW, if allocated, the ASW, health, education and psychology services (from within the region’s own resources or as the result of a referral to CAMHS through the child’s GP)

Services identified from this assessment could include

- Therapeutic life story work
- Wrap around therapeutic support, eg The Family Place
- Theraplay
- Music/art/drama / equine therapy
- Specialist support for adoptive parents (see AUK)

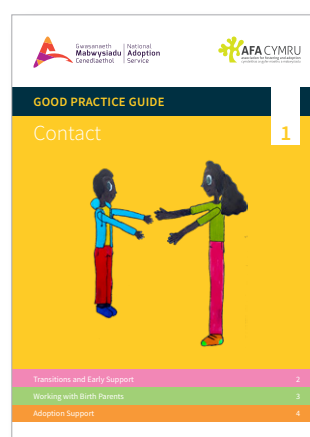
Details of the adoption support assessment and Adoption Support Plan are to be found under 4.13 and in Appendix 4 & 5.

- 3) Services that are available through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. These services are provided, brokered, or direct payments made, by the child's local authority following a Part 3 assessment of need. In these circumstances, for example where a child has an existing plan for short break care because of their level of disability, then they will have their own Part 4 care and support plan, as well as an Adoption Support Plan.

The guide does not consider financial allowances. These are covered by the NAS Adoption Support Services Financial Allowances Policy and Procedure, 2017.

Each section in the guide sets out:

- 1) **The legal framework**, where appropriate, with any **relevant statute set out in red**, **regulations in blue** and **case law and general legal principles in green**.
- 2) **What needs to happen** to achieve good practice and what must be done by the child's social worker and / or the adoption social worker.



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The CAR/B (Child's Adoption Report / Annex B Report) will identify the child's individual long-term needs for support. This will inform the agency decision maker as to whether a 'should be made for adoption' decision should be made and, in turn, inform the court's decision as to whether a Care Order, with a plan for adoption, should be made.

It is highly likely that before the child became looked after they will have had a Part 4 care and support plan, which set out the support provided to the child and family alongside the child protection plan. Once the child becomes looked after this will transform into a Part 6 care and support plan, which will stay in place until the Adoption Order is made. Elements of the Part 6 care and support plan may inform the embryonic Adoption Support Plan.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Service responsibility

- The CSW will receive training on the impact of developmental trauma and the effect that it can have upon the child's attachment patterns. This is crucial for the identification of the need for support services
- The CSW will receive training on writing Adoption Support Plans which includes Life Journey Work and the support for contact that will be needed if siblings are to be placed separately.

Case work

- The CSW will ensure that all reports written in respect of the child are evidence based, clear, concise and analytical
- The CSW will work in collaboration with birth family members and other professionals to ensure Life Journey Work (LJW) information and materials are obtained for the child.

Refer to the NAS LJW and **Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guides**.

See **Appendix 3** for Key Performance Measures relating to Life Journey Work

Work with birth parents

- Birth parents of the child need to be supported throughout the process, including their contribution to life journey work.

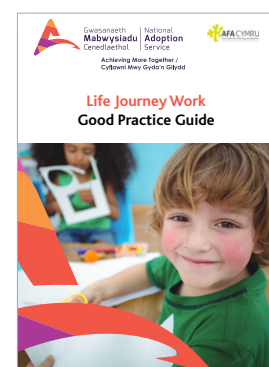
Refer to NAS **Working with Birth Parents Good Practice Guide**

Information sharing and support

- Regional adoption teams are available for advice and support on adoption planning including prior to, or at an early stage of, care proceedings. Whilst it is acknowledged that each region has its own protocol for accepting referrals this general principle stands.
- When multi track planning includes the plan for adoption, there needs to be proactive contact between the CSW and the regional adoption service at the earliest opportunity

'In adoption support we have a longer perspective on a child's needs'

Senior practitioner in an adoption support team



Placement Order Proceedings

4.2

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Annex B component of the CAR/B form will address the child's long-term support needs, so far as they can be identified at this stage, and inform the court's decision as to the Placement Order application.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

"A CAR/B has much more value when, in addition to providing detailed information, it considers 'what this means for the child': This brings the child to life and helps adopters and professionals to make sense of the child's lived experience and the likely impact of this upon development."

An adoption social worker



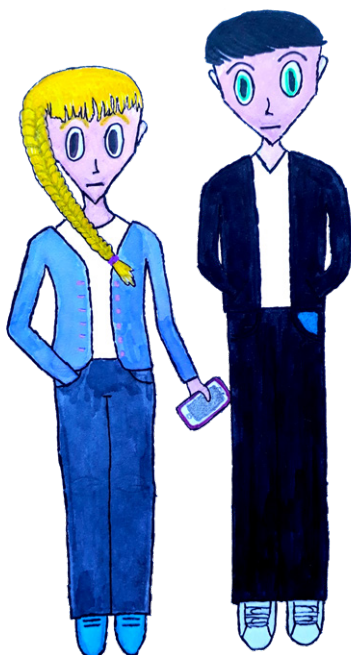
Poor quality CAR/B's have been cited as a key factor in adoption placement breakdown, known as disruptions. Missing information leads to poor matching, ill prepared families and inadequately supported children (Dance and Farmer (2015) and Selwyn (2014).

Case work

- The team manager for the CSW will refer to the adoption team for a buddy to provide support and guidance in respect to the CAR/B and adoption process where a CSW has not had experience of planning for and moving a child onto an adoption placement before. The buddy will provide guidance, but will not write the CAR/B.
- Within the CAR/B the CSW will identify the qualities needed from prospective adoptive parent/s to meet this child's needs. This will be detailed and will be informed by professional observations, liaison with the child's foster carers and other adults who know the child well.

"The information you get from that early period – included in the CAR/B, is so important for you as an adoptive parent, as you can begin to see what life might be like and what support you might need. It's about putting yourself into that child's shoes. I have found going back to that early information really helpful to refer to over the years, just to get back to that position of understanding ... It also helped with identifying the support that we needed very early on."

Adoptive parent



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The CAR/B should be updated on a regular basis in order to provide an accurate matching tool and predictor of support needs.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Case work

- The CSW will frequently make updates to the CAR/B, so that it reflects the child's current needs and contains all significant information.
- The ASW undertaking transitions work will prepare a trauma/nurture timeline, using the information from the child's CAR/B, carers' reports, available court reports and any other relevant information available.

Refer to the NAS **Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide** for details on the nurture trauma timeline and the model of transitions needed to support the child moving to an adoptive placement. This piece of work is invaluable in helping all those involved in the matching process, including the prospective adopters, to understand what the child has experienced and the possible support needs arising from those experiences.



Support for prospective adopters

Getting prospective adopters involved in the adoption support community and universal adoption support services before a match helps with the wait for a link (if there is one) and sets up a pattern that is easier to continue once the child is placed. It also provides early opportunities for peer support.

'Make sure you explain exactly what is available'

Adoptive parent



- The ASW will ensure that prospective adopters are linked into early universal adoption support services, such as:
- Newsletter (from the region / VAA / AUK)
- Adoption buddies (experienced adopters chosen to reflect the profile of the prospective adopters). This is particularly important for single prospective adopters
- Support groups, provided by the regions and VAA's (for example peer support groups such as toddler groups, adult groups, fathers groups, single adopters groups)
- The importance of the provision / facilitation of peer support, even at this early stage, should not be minimised.
- AUK membership and other support.

'We are part of a local support group – it is invaluable to bounce ideas around.'

Adoptive parent



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR) will have identified any particular support needs the prospective adopter may have (highlighted by any 'challenges' that the agency panel may have set out in their general advice to the ADM)

Proposed placement

Reg32(1) AA(W)R 2005: Where the adoption agency is considering placing a child for adoption with a particular prospective adopter the agency must-

- (c) ascertain the views of the prospective adopters about -
 - (ii) the child's assessed needs for adoption support services and the adoption support plan.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Work with prospective adopters and foster carers

- The CSW provides the prospective adopters with all the information on the child and places that information in a context of likely future needs

Service responsibility

- The regional service or VAA will ensure, through training and preparation of prospective adopters, that they are aware of the possible impact that post adoption 'depression', secondary trauma and blocked care can have upon them. Adoptive parents need to hear the message that their own well-being is important for the child and know that the professionals involved understand the impact of parenting a child who has suffered developmental trauma can have.

Regional collaborative work

- The 'Understanding the Child' meeting is a fundamental part of the transitions process (Refer to NAS **Transitions and Early Support** good practice guide). This meeting provides an opportunity for all involved (including an input from the adoption support team / worker) for a realistic analysis of the needs of the child and the combined needs of this child with these prospective adopters. It provides prospective adopters with all the information on the child, placed in a context of future need
- The Understanding the Child meeting can temper over optimism, on the part of professionals and prospective adopters alike, in relation to the prospective match. It will challenge the CSW and ASW in identifying the necessary support and equally challenge the prospective adopters in understanding that support is likely to be needed
- A good written record from the Understanding the Child meeting is invaluable, both in the present for matching purposes but also for future use for both adoptive families and support services who may be involved in the future (for example TESSA). It acknowledges the effects, sometimes long term, of developmental trauma upon the child
- The ASW will ensure that the prospective adopters have training and / or discussions to make up for any deficit in their knowledge base in respect of the particular child/ren for whom they are being considered. This should include information on child development for that age and may include sign posting and the practising of basic parenting tasks (such as nappy changing)

A multi-agency approach

- Fostering service providers will ensure that foster carers involved in adoption transitions are aware of the importance of providing accurate information about the child to inform an adoption support plan, and of their role before, during and after a child's move.

Refer to NAS **Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide**

- Medical advisors meeting with adopters should be followed by a letter / report outlining current and likely future support needs of child in line with any diagnosed physical or emotional health needs.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Proposed placement

Reg 32(3) AA(W)R 2995: Where the adoption agency considers that the proposed placement should proceed the agency must -

(d) prepare a written report which must include -

(iii) where the agency is a local authority, its proposals for the provision of adoption support services in accordance with the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005). See below for details

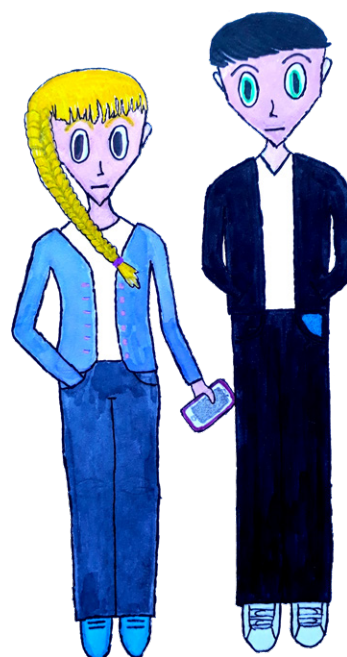
WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Work with prospective adopters

- The ASW and (if a different person) transitions worker will meet with the prospective adopters to further discuss the child's support needs. This will include a further exploration of the specific needs of the child following on from the 'Understanding the Child' meeting, providing concrete examples, sharing online videos and other material to really help prospective adopters consider the child future support needs.
- The specific support needs, in respect of the make-up of the prospective adopter's household composition, will be explored. For example, where prospective adopters live alone it will usually be appropriate for them to involve a close friend or family member in the introductions plan.
- Where prospective adopters have children already, they will be supported by the ASW undertaking transitions work to begin preparing them for their new sibling and reflecting on the long-term support needs for the child.

Case work

- The Adoption Placement Report (APR) and proposed Adoption Support Plan (ASP), now entirely separate documents, will be shared with the prospective adopter/s, allowing 10 working days for them to consider and make comment.
- This Adoption Support Plan will identify:
 - 1) The needs for the first leg of the journey into placement
 - 2) A robust structure for setting out when the next review will take place (at introductions stage or shortly into placement) and at stages thereafter (see below)
 - 3) What the possible long term needs may be. It is not the intention here to pin down a particular support service for the future, but highlight the possible, or even probable, need for some assistance in the future. Times of challenge often come at transition periods (for example from nursery to primary school and from primary to secondary school, and the start of Year 10). These may be set out in the Adoption Support Plan as possible times when help may be needed, reinforcing the clear message to the prospective adopters that support is available in the longer term, as and when they may need it. **See Appendix 5**



4.6

Matching Panel/ADM

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Service responsibility

- The Adoption Panel will receive training on adoption support needs and the importance of a robust support plan that takes account of the child's current and likely future needs
- The Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker will scrutinise the ASP alongside the matching considerations
- The ADM will ensure that the child's local authority is fully aware of the panel recommendation and ADM's ratification of that support plan

Case work

- The adoption support plan (reviewed and updated if necessary) needs to be ratified by the child's local authority. It is the CSW's role to ensure that funding is agreed for a targeted or specialist provision if it is identified at this stage

The role of the Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA)

- Once the ADM has approved a match with prospective adopters living outside of the adoption region, written notification of the placement is sent to the ASSA of the adoption service in which the prospective adopters reside, informing them of the anticipated date for placement. The support plan for the child will also be sent. This is where it will be especially useful to have an anticipation of this family's particular needs over the span of the child's childhood set out in the plan
- Where children are placed some distance from the placing authority, so making the provision of services difficult for the placing authority, support services will need to be brokered with the two relevant ASSA's. This will require negotiation as to the services that may be offered and costs that will be incurred. The placing authority is responsible for post adoption support for the first three years following the making of an Adoption Order, thereafter, transferring to receiving / resident authority.
- See 4.13 for more details on who has responsibility for the provision of adoption supports services.

4.7

Introductions Planning

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Case work

- The CSW and ASW will complete the Adoption Placement Plan (APP). Refer to the NAS Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide.

A multi-disciplinary approach

- The CSW and ASW undertaking family finding should involve health and education in the planning where appropriate



4.8

Introductions

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

- All the professionals working with the adoptive family at this stage need to be mindful of their approach to introductions and ensure that they all have a similar understanding of the child's needs. The ASW, who knows the prospective adopters well, will need to take the lead with a trauma informed approach, with the CSW providing the detailed knowledge of and information on the child's background and needs
- It is possible that additional support needs might come to light during transitions. These may well be short term, but if long term they need to be recognised and addressed in a revised adoption support plan. The CSW and ASW are responsible for assessing and responding to any identified support need. The CSW at this stage will seek agreements for additional support as appropriate.

"In the early days, getting to know this child can be overwhelming for adoptive parents. Little things can become big things very quickly. Providing support and reassurance is a big part of the ASW role (and CSW where they are involved)."

Adoption social worker

"Moving from a task centred approach to one which is more based on PACE and DDP really helps adopters. You are helping them to understand the child, rather than imposing particular strategies: 'I wonder why he's doing this' rather than 'have you tried x?'"

Adoption social worker

4.9

Placement

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Support and advice for the adoptive family

"Make sure that adoptive parents know that support does not stop immediately after the child is living with you – to me, it's good to know that I can pick up the 'phone – any time"

Adoptive parent

Adoption is life changing for prospective adopters and can bring about its own stresses in the early days, weeks and months. Challenges such as difficulties in bonding and unrealistic expectations of family life can be a test to mental health

Moyer and Goldberg, 2017

- Emerging support needs will be identified by the prospective adopters, ASW, transitions worker, if different and CSW. The CSW and ASW will review and amend the support plan if necessary. The ASW will provide reassurance that it will take time for the child to develop an attachment to the new parent(s). Help and assistance from the ASW undertaking transitions work, who is skilled in developing strategies to start creating those early moves towards attachments, will be available at this early stage. Refer to the NAS Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide.
- In reviews, the ASW, CSW, and IRO will give prospective adopters the opportunity to speak about the impact of their child's distress on family life. This will be done in a way that is accepting of the fact that they are undertaking a complex parenting task and that it is anticipated by all the professionals involved that this will be a difficult phase

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Reviews

Reg 37(7) As part of each review the adoption agency must consider -

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

Independent reviewing officers

Reg 38(7) The adoption agency must inform the IRO of –

- (a) any significant failure to make or carry out arrangements in accordance with the review (this will include support services).

- The ASW will support the prospective adopters, when they are ready, to access the NAS ost adoption training modules, in order to increase their knowledge and understanding
- Ensure the family is aware of Connect, the service for adopted children and young people which is led by Adoption UK in collaboration with the regional adoption support service. Groups are available across the regions for children aged 7 and over. Referrals can be made directly from the family or via the ASW / child and young person support worker

The Wales Adoption Study, which looked specifically at the experiences of newly formed adoptive families in 2017, found:

“... the urgent need for better consideration of the early support needed by, and provided to, newly formed adoptive families, to help ensure that they start out own a firm footing, and to give them every chance to flourish.”

Meakings et al. (2017)

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

“The most well thought out support plan can never really account for how adopters respond to the reality of early days. It is critical that the plan is responsive, dynamic and flexible”

Adoption social worker



Support and advice for the adoptive family

- The ASW will ensure that all the universal adoption support services will be available in the early weeks and months, although with some adopters it will be too early to engage with some activities

‘We had a really big take up of online training and support from families during Covid, including those who hadn’t been in touch for some time. The provision of an online service has really helped people to get in touch.’

Regional adoption support social worker



- In particular, the ability to access support from peers and groups remotely will enable newly created families to participate without the need to leave the home

The study identified areas where support was needed for newly formed families, such as children’s health and development, with older children addressing emotional and behavioural well-being concerns, with younger children reassurance about children’s physical well-being and developmental progress, particularly in understanding what behaviours are characteristic of early adversity and what are ‘typical’ childhood behaviours

The wider support network

- It is acknowledged that single adopters need to have their close support network around much earlier; it may be that that is also the case for some couple adopters (for example with large sibling groups or a child with additional needs). The ASW and CSW must also take into account the needs of the prospective adopters, in the best interests of the child/ren when advising on the ‘keeping everyone at bay’ custom and practice during the first few weeks of placement
- The ASW will discuss in detail with the prospective adopter how children will be introduced to the wider family, with maybe an introduction being ‘grandma popping in with a cake she has made for us and then going home after saying hello’ rather than formal, lengthy visits. The use of remote/ digital contact and letters/ cards is also helpful, particularly for those who live a distance away

Understanding the child

- In the early weeks and months the ASW will ensure that prospective adopters have an understanding of the appropriate level of child development for their child and an understanding of how trauma may have affected that development. This can be done by referring back to adoption preparation materials and discussions and pointing parents to relevant websites etc. but mainly through discussion and reassurance.
- The ASW will ensure that prospective adopters will have access to advice on protecting and promoting the existing sibling relationship where siblings are placed together and where children are placed in families with children.

“I remember going into a birth family home where there were so many adults I didn’t know who was Mum or who was Gran. Everybody seemed to be shouting at the child to do something. All the rooms were bedrooms. This really affected the child’s ability to cope with lots of people in the adoptive home”

Child’s social worker



- The ASW and CSW will be able to provide the prospective adopter with the information to help them put themselves into the child’s shoes at this stage – if the child came from a chaotic birth family with lots of people in the house all the time, how are they going to feel having a large number of excited strangers in the house? The CSW, with direct knowledge of the birth family, will be able to help the prospective adopter to make decisions with the child in mind; this will also help the early developing of attachments on both sides.
- Adoptive parents will be given support to access the right help to facilitate the child’s general health and development. Visits and reviews will include a check on any concerns the prospective adopter has in this regard and a plan for any necessary intervention to be made. The IRO will respond in a timely manner to requests for assistance in ensuring support is agreed and the support plan is satisfactory.



The well-being of prospective adopters themselves

60% of adopters in Wales experienced the symptoms of stress, anxiety or post adoption depression and 48% wondered if they had done the right thing and if they’d be able to cope

Adoption Barometer, Wales, 2019

- There should be an acknowledgement, through the training and preparation of prospective adopters, of the possible impact of post adoption ‘depression’, secondary trauma and blocked care arising from the effects a traumatised child can have upon adopters. ASW’s will be able to refer prospective adopters back to those discussions and help provide a context for what can be very worrying feelings. Both CSW’s and ASW’s should also always bear in mind the possibility that support will be needed in the short term to help overcome these overwhelming feelings of ***‘what have we done with our lives?’*** (Adoptive parent)
- The value of peer support to prospective adopters should not be underestimated. The ASW will ensure that there is access to peer support, formally through the regional collaborative or via membership of AUK, or more informally through the encouragement of fellow attendees at preparation and other training courses making connections and support groups. The provision of peer support remotely provides newly placed families with support that they would ordinarily not be able to access

‘You can talk to other adopters more easily – they understand what you’re going through.’

Adoptive parent



IRO and reviews

- The IRO should monitor and review the services being offered in the support plan and ensure that they are up to date and meet current needs
- The CSW will respond in a timely manner to any recommendations made at the review

A multi-disciplinary approach

- The CSW will be responsible for inviting professionals from health and education to attend the adoption review, as appropriate.
- The CSW and ASW will liaise with professionals from health and education to ensure that the family’s support needs are met.

Where children are exhibiting aggressive and controlling behaviours early in placement, Selwyn and Meakings (2016, p.18) assert that these

“are unlikely to go away and social workers need to recognise the patterns and ensure there is early intervention”

- Where a child is exhibiting such behaviours, the Adoption Support Plan will be reviewed and targeted support provided.

Decision to apply for an Adoption Order

4.11

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

An application for an Adoption Order may be made after the child has been placed with the prospective adopters for the preceding ten weeks (s42(2) ACA 2002)

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

“It would ... be appropriate for all adoption agencies to ensure that adoption support plans are not only reviewed prior to the Adoption Order being granted, but that they (prospective adopters) are actively involved in this process. However, the quality of the adoption support plan is crucial here and relies on the skills and expertise of the children’s social worker and adoption social workers to be able to recognise the short and long-term developmental impact and needs of adopted children resulting from experiencing trauma and abuse / neglect.”

Ottaway et al. 2014, p.55

- The CSW will continue statutory visits in line with regulatory requirements and according to the needs of the child. Refer to the NAS Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide
- The ASW will maintain support visits / phone calls. Refer to NAS Transitions and Early Support Good Practice Guide.

“We felt well supported by our social worker and our child’s social worker. They helped in learning how to re-parent (our child)”

Adoptive parent

- The decision as to when the application for an Adoption Order may be considered at the second review ([reg 37\(4\)\(b\) AA\(W\)R](#)) which should take place before 16 weeks of placement. As one of the discussion topics at the review is the provision of support services, these should be considered afresh at this review and the IRO satisfied that any necessary review of the current Adoption Support Plan takes place and will see the family through the Adoption Order and into the post Adoption Order stage.
- ‘The IRO will ensure that the prospective adopters are in agreement with the support plan. Where further support is required for prospective adopters to feel ready to make their application, the IRO should consider convening the third adoption review meeting sooner than the regulatory maximum period of 6 months
- The CSW and ASW will keep prospective adopters updated with legal proceedings in a timely manner, and complete court related paperwork in a timely manner
- The Annex A provides current information regarding the welfare, needs and wishes of the child, thus informing the support plan. This is co-authored by the CSW and ASW. The support plan will be updated by the CSW; in line with any amendments proposed at the last review. The prospective adopters and ASW will acknowledge their agreement with the plan
- The need for support that goes beyond the remit of adoption support should be contained in a Part 4 care and support plan, building on the child’s existing Part 6 care and support plan. This will require liaison with the child’s new resident authority via the ASSA if different from placing authority / region
- Agreements and fees for anticipated and ongoing services will be agreed by the providers of the service and the placing authority
- The Adoption Support Plan and Annex A will be agreed, and quality assured by the adoption team manager and childcare team manager

Adoption Order Proceedings

4.12

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

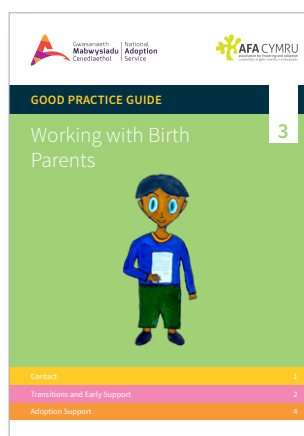
The Annex A Report (Practice Direction 14C, The Family Procedure Rules 2010) is the report made to the court where there has been an application for an Adoption Order. It will contain information that has been learned from the transitions period about the support needs of the child and family.

Section D: The Placement: (c) Where the placement is being provided with adoption support, this should be summarised and should include the plan and timescales for continuing the support beyond the making of the Adoption Order.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

- The CSW and ASW will ensure the support plan for the child has been reviewed and any support needs addressed before the Adoption Order is made
- Consideration must be given to the support (including legal support) afforded to prospective adopters if parents successfully apply for leave to contest the making of the Adoption Order
- A review date will be set for a year following the cessation of adoption support or the making of the Adoption Order, whichever is earlier

See **Appendix 5** for details of the support plan itself.



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Once an Adoption Order is made a new regulatory framework is introduced:

The Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005, for local authorities

The Adoption Support Services (Wales) Regulations 2019, for VAA's and ASA's

These regulations are not replicated here. However, the local authority regulations set out, amongst others, the following:

- The list of prescribed adoption support services (reg 3(6) ASS(W)R 2005)
- The people for whom adoption support services should be in place (reg 4)
- Who may provide adoption support services (reg 5)
- The role of the ASSA (see below) (reg 6)
- The procedure for assessment (an assessment **MUST** be carried out if asked by a 'prescribed person') (reg 8)
- Procedure, notification and plan (regs 8,9,10)
- Decision to provide support (regs 13,14)
- Responsibilities of local authorities for out of area placements
- Review of the provision of adoption support services (reg 16)

'Adopters will hold off asking for support until things are in crisis, for fear of being judged – we are seeing this all the time and it needs to change.'

AUK Cymru

'Adopters should never hear that the case or file is 'closed'. That gives entirely the wrong message about the nature of adoption support.'

Adoptive parent



WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Support in the first year

- There needs to be a clear protocol in place for the transfer of responsibility from the ASW in the family finding team to the adoption support team or the ASW responsible for adoption support. The adoption support team will have had contact with the family at earlier stages and will therefore be familiar with them and their needs. However, this point will be a formal acknowledgment of the change of role.
- Adoptive parents will have access to this named worker within the agency of their adoption approval, in the first year, post Adoption Order.
- In relation to placements within the voluntary sector, although statutory responsibility rests with the placing agency, support is made available through the VAA. This includes early placement and ongoing social work support and provision of universal adoption support services.

"What you find is that people tend to step back once an order is made, but there can still be big changes ahead for the family, such as going back to work following adoption leave, arranging childcare and managing the child's changing needs. Those transitions can be hard. Making a referral for support can be a barrier for adopters. By offering adoptive families the opportunity to review their child's support plan 12 months after the Adoption Order has been granted, this gives the message that support will continue to be available to meet their child's evolving needs."

An adoption social worker



- There will be an offer of a first-year review of all Adoption Support Plans including contact. This is an opportunity, now that the ‘dust has settled’ and adoptive families tend to feel less vulnerable than at the time of the Adoption Order being made, to reflect upon the support that has been given. What may be useful in terms of universal services and are there emerging needs that call for an assessment for a targeted or specialist service? How has contact progressed in this last year?
- The review needs to be holistic and look at all the family’s needs, as well as be individual to each person. The Adoption Support Plan needs to be updated accordingly and a written copy given to the family
- If the needs of the family have changed a new assessment may need to be undertaken. See Appendix 4 for the Adoption Support Assessment template
- Families need to be reminded of services that can be offered at various points when they are able to process these messages at various stages, viewing them as positive offers of working in partnership rather than an indication of failure and them struggling without support. It is useful to talk about how help can be offered, for example at times of transitions
- Access to TESSA is available to families after the first year of placement, where need is low to moderate. Referrals are made by the TESSA coordinator based in the regional adoption service, with the adoptive parent’s consent

“Even after the Adoption Order, touch base/check in and see how they’re doing. Assure adopters that it’s okay to ask for help. Don’t downplay or dismiss concerns.”

An Adoptive parent



After the first year: principles of keeping in touch

66% of Welsh adopters from established adoptive families agreed that it feels like a continual struggle to get the help and support their child needs

AUK adoption Barometer, 2019



“There needs to be “an understanding that most adopted children have additional problems at some time in their childhood and that support is available without parents being made to feel to blame for any problems within the family....”

Ottaway et al, 2014, p.85

- The offer of keeping in touch following the first year review will be made to all families on the joint understanding that this is done in partnership, with the decision resting with the adoptive family. Some families will not feel the need, at this stage, to take up the offer. However, the message must be given that they can access support at any time.

- The take up of universal adoption support services and the light “keeping in touch” through newsletters, support groups, family days and training will help families to access support at an early stage before problems become overwhelming. This approach empowers families and lets them know that they are part of a wider community of support.
- The first year review may have identified key stages or transitions where some additional support might be needed, and a keeping in touch phone call planned (see the Adoption Support Plan).

Regulation 16 ASS(LA)(W)R 2005 provides an obligation on the local authority to review the provision of an adoption support services if any change in the person’s circumstances comes to light.

- If there is a plan containing targeted and specialist services, this plan will be reviewed, as a minimum, by the allocated ASW and adoptive family after either the cessation of the provision of service or the lapse of a year, whichever is the earliest
- Often the provision of a targeted or specialist service will have its own built in reviewing structure. However, the ASW should ensure there is opportunity for discussion outside of the formal reviewing structure
- If there is no targeted or specialist service in the plan carrying forward into the second year, adopters need to be clear about who to approach within the region should they wish to access advice and support.
- There need to be clear protocols in place within each region and serious consideration should be given to ensuring that initial contact involves a practitioner with adoption experience. There have been many distressing examples of adopters receiving a front line service where practitioners have not used a trauma informed response, and where families have been left bruised and traumatised themselves by the experience of being blamed, essentially for their adopted child’s early life experiences.
- Adopters will have access to up to date information as to the best way to contact the service.
- Newsletters from the adoption region and Voluntary Adoption Agencies will provide up to date information, as to who to contact.

“It really helped, when we needed some help with our son, to have kept in touch with the adoption team, through support groups and toddler groups. We knew who everyone was and they knew in a general sense how things were going. We didn’t feel judged. It would have been far more difficult to make that phone call if we hadn’t known anyone...”

Adoptive parent



Adoptive families accessing support following the first year

In accessing post adoption support parents said they wanted:

- A quick response and services delivered in a timely manner
- Professionals who understand the adoption context, are 'adoption aware' and have specialist knowledge and skills
- Who strengthen the family's relationships and boost parental competence
- Who do not blame the parents or the child for the difficulties
- Who are compassionate in their response

(Selwyn, 2017, p.16)

"The first time I approached social services I spoke to a duty worker. They were very nice but couldn't understand what it was we were asking for and couldn't help. Fortunately they referred me to the adoption team. What a difference!"

Adoptive parent



Access to help for an adoptive family will take place through the adoption support service. This will ensure that adoptive families receive support and advice from a worker with an understanding of adoption and with specialist knowledge and skill. It is not acceptable for adoptive parents to have to go through the local authority intake and assessment team.

Following a request for support the allocated ASW will:

- Undertake a preliminary discussion with the adoptive parents of the need, taking into consideration the existing adoption support plan and provide initial support. This should be done in a timely way. If appropriate, undertake an assessment of need if the current support plan requires amendment / updating. See **Appendix 4**.
- Decide if there is a need for universal services and if so, assist with a referral if appropriate.
- Decide if a referral for targeted or specialist support is needed, including consideration of TESSA in discussion with the regional TESSA coordinator (see below)
- Decide if a referral needs to be undertaken by children's services under Part 3 SSWB(W)A where they will work on a joint basis with the child's social worker (e.g. where a child has a recent diagnosis of ASD and needs specialist education and additional assistance)
- The possibility of the child experiencing FASD should be considered
- When undertaking assessments for support needs social workers will ask families if they are experiencing Child to Parent Violence as a matter of course.

Selwyn and Meakings (2015, 2016, p.19-20) argue that social workers undertaking assessments with adoptive families need to specifically ask families if they are experiencing Child to Parent Violence. They assert *"parents are unlikely to volunteer the information unless asked directly. CPV.. carries multiple stigmas – parenting a badly behaved child and experiencing violence by a child in the home. For adoptive parents there is further shame, as they feel they have been assessed and approved as adoptive parents and entrusted with a child. They felt failures and this view was often reinforced by the response from professionals who told parents they had let the child and them down, blaming parents for the child's behaviour and using terms such as 'failed placement.'"*

The adoption support assessment (Appendix 4)

This is a stand alone assessment pro forma to be used in Wales.

The adoption support plan (Appendix 5)

The new format for the adoption support plan:

- Provides a stand alone plan that is separate from the other pre-adoption forms provided by CoramBAAF
- Provides an all Wales document that will assist with the provision of support across the regions
- Encourages a strengths led assessment of adoption support needs
- Enables reviews and amendments at particular stages, both pre- and post Adoption Order
- Ensures that targeted and specialist support is properly 'signed off'

The plan is:

- Created with the match bringing together child and PA's needs
- Reviewed and developed during introductions
- Reviewed and developed upon placement
- Reviewed at statutory reviews
- Reviewed and developed in anticipation of Adoption Order
- Reviewed and developed post Adoption Order
- Reviewed after the first year post Adoption Order
- Thereafter maybe reviewed annually, subject to the needs of the family, except where targeted / specialist services provided and reviewed

Reviews (in the form of an offer to 'keep in touch') will be offered:

- 1) At any time at the request of the adoptive family; and
- 2) With adoptive parents' advance consent, at the following stages:
 - In anticipation of starting nursery / pre school day care
 - In anticipation of starting primary school
 - In transition from infant to junior school
 - At the transition stage from primary to secondary school
 - At the start of Year 10
 - Any time where contact with birth family members has become problematic or there is a plan to extend contact

It may be helpful to send out a questionnaire in anticipation of the 'keeping in touch meeting / call to prompt adoptive families, for example in relation to education.

Who is responsible for the provision of adoption support services

The first three years

Regulation 15 ASS(LA)(W)R 2005

For the first three years following the making of the Adoption Order the placing authority is responsible for undertaking an assessment of need, and where appropriate providing adoption support services. Where the child and family live some distance from the placing adoption region, the placing authority should liaise with the adoption region where the child and family reside. The ASSA's in the respective regions / agencies will liaise in respect of arrangements. The resident authority may recover expenses from the placing authority for adoption support services (but not if it is just the provision of advice and information) for the first three years ([reg 15\(3\)](#)).

The ASSA has a particular role in liaising where there are cross border arrangements to be made.

Nothing prevents a local authority / regional collaborative from providing adoption support services to a person outside their area where they consider it appropriate to do so ([reg 15\(5\)](#)).

The protocol for a smooth transition

- If the child is placed from the start in a different resident region, the placing region will, with the consent of the adoptive parents, inform the resident region the Adoption Order has been made, effectively giving a three years' notice
- When the three year period is six months from expiry the placing region will, with the consent of the adoptive parents, notify the relevant region in Wales or regional authority / local authority if outside Wales of any continuing need for services
- The respective ASSA's will liaise to provide a seamless transition of responsibility

After three years

The resident authority takes on responsibility for adoption support, except for financial support and support relating to contact which remain the responsibility of the placing authority.

The role of the ASSA (adoption service support adviser)

Regulation 6 Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005

Each LA must appoint at least one ASSA (VAA's are under no duty but both operational VAA's in Wales have one)

Functions are to:

- Give advice and information to persons who may be affected by adoption about services and how those services may be accessed
- Give advice and information to the LA about assessment, availability of services and the formulation of ASP's
- Give advice and information to other LA's where child is placed or moves to

The role of the ASSA is pivotal when it comes to negotiating with outside agencies, whether that is education or health authorities or other regions or countries where the resident authority is not the placing authority.

The role of Adoption UK Cymru in adoption support

Adoption UK Cymru

The support on offer by AUK Cymru is available throughout Wales and includes a helpline, advice, information and training. AUK Cymru facilitates an adoption support community across the country, providing peer support for parents, children and young people.

TESSA (Therapeutic Education Support Services in Adoption)

The aim of TESSA, a nationwide support service run by Adoption UK Cymru and the regional collaboratives and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, aims to support and promote therapeutic parenting that is based on an understanding of the impact of trauma upon a child's development. It provides psychological consultations, training and coaching, peer support, advice on school issues and access to services that focus on family well-being.

In order to be considered for referral the child must have been placed with the adoptive family for at least a year and be experiencing difficulties that require a low to medium level of support. Each region has a TESSA coordinator to assist with these referrals and link with the service.

The children and young person's service

The national framework for children and young people who are adopted is called Connected. This is a collaborative service led by Adoption UK and involves the delivery of four elements:

- 1) Connected groups for children aged 7 – 11 years and young people up to age of 25;
- 2) Information and advice for young people;
- 3) Adoption awareness training;
- 4) Adoption ambassadors.

Each region has a service for adopted children and young people that includes direct work and coordination with Adoption UK on the above elements.

Referrals for additional learning needs

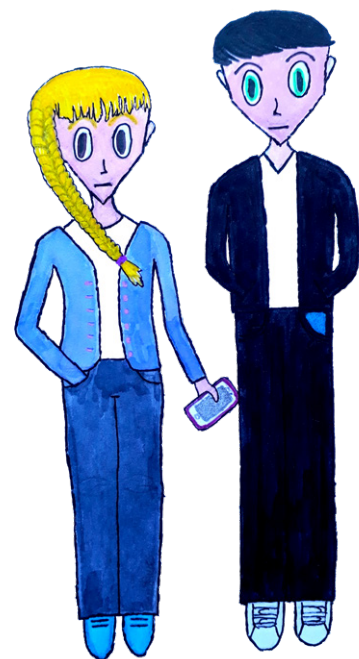
If there is the need for a school referral for a child in respect of an additional learning need there needs to be a close link between the regional adoption support worker and the local authority looked after children's education coordinator / virtual head. This link ensures that any additional learning need is identified within the context of a trauma informed understanding of the child's needs.

Referrals to children's services about adopted children

There is a life long impact for children who have suffered early developmental trauma in all areas of their development and functioning. Sensitive and empathic parenting helps their recovery but this is a process that is complex and sometimes lengthy.

Triggers of early trauma and the child's subsequent behaviour are not always well understood by professionals, peers and the wider family, and there is often misunderstanding of the child's presentation. The consequence of this can have wide and devastating effects on the adoptive family and the child.

- Local authorities and regional collaboratives will arrange joint training with child care and adoption practitioners to explore the support needs of adoptive families coming through the front door of the local authority, particularly where safeguarding concerns have been raised. The training will be underpinned by a trauma informed approach to responding to adoptive families in crisis
- If the child becomes the subject of a care and support or child protection referral, the allocated child's social worker (CSW) will refer the family (with their consent) to the relevant adoption service, for advice and support to the family or, if that is not appropriate, advice to the child's social worker on adoption related matters, such as the impact of developmental trauma, secondary trauma, attachment and the origins of significant harm
- If a child becomes the subject of a child protection investigation, the ASW has a role in ensuring that the CSW involved has a trauma informed approach to the investigation and assessment and that the adoptive family is treated with legal and professional respect for their family life that recognises the unique nature of adoption, while at the same time recognising adoptive parents as being as important as birth family members.



Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks go to the following people and organisations who have been instrumental in drafting these guides.

- Our reference group, which comprised of representatives from all the adoption regions and the voluntary adoption agencies and CAFCASS Cymru.
- The members of the NAS policy and practice group
- The regional adoption team managers and childcare team managers that were also giving of their time and expertise
- AUK Cymru, in providing detailed feedback and suggestions
- The responders to the questionnaires: birth families, adoptive families, foster carers and young people with experience of adoption

This guide would not have been possible without the generosity and enthusiasm of the practitioners in the regions and VAA's for sharing such inspiring examples of good practice across Wales.

REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES



North Wales

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



Mid & West Wales

Ceredigion, Powys, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire



South East Wales

Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Caerphilly, Newport



Western Bay

Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend



Vale, Valleys & Cardiff

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

ALL WALES VOLUNTARY ADOPTION AGENCIES SERVICES



References

- The Adoption Barometer July 2019, Adoption UK [Accessed online] <https://www.adoptionuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fd3d3969-8138-4ede-befd-1018fe629c29>
- Anthony, R, Meakings, S, Doughty, J (2016) Factors affecting adoption in Wales: predictors of variation in time between entry to care and adoptive placement. *Children and Youth Services Review* 60: 184–190.
- Argent, H. and Coleman. J (2006) *Dealing with Disruption*, London: BAAF in McNeish, D. and Scott, S. (2013) *What Works in Achieving Adoption for Looked After Children: An Overview of Evidence for the Coram/Barnardo's Partnership*, London, Coram and Barnardo's.
- Adoption UK (2019) The Adoption Barometer, Banbury, Adoption UK [Accessed online] <https://www.adoptionuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fd3d3969-8138-4ede-befd-1018fe629c29>
- Bonin, E, Beecham, J, Dance, C, Farmer, E (2014) Support for adoption placements: the first six months. *British Journal of Social Work* 44(6): 1508–1525.
- Boswell, S. and Cudmore, L. (2014) *The Children were Fine*, in Adoption and Fostering, 2014 [Accessed online] <http://www.thechildrenwerefine.co.uk/the-full-paper.html>
- Corrigan, M. and Moore, J. (2011) *Listening to Children's Wishes and Feelings*, London, BAAF.
- Farmer E, Dance C. Family Finding and Matching in Adoption: What Helps to Make a Good Match? (2016) *Br J Soc Work*. Jun;46(4):974-992. *British Journal of Social Work*.
- Holmes L, McDermid S and Lushey C (2013) Post-adoption Support: A rapid response survey of Local Authorities in England. Working Paper No: 19. Loughborough: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre.
- Kempenaar, M.A.W. (2015), Briefing Paper 1: Support for New Adoptions and Adoption Support Plan Document
- King, S., Gieve, M., Lacopini, G., Hahne, A, Stradling, H., (2017) The Evaluation of the Adoption Support Fund, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, Department for Education.
- Moyer, A.M. and Goldberg, A.E. (2017) 'We were not planning on this, but...': Adoptive parents' reactions and adaptations to unmet expectations. *Child and family social work*. 22, pp. 12-21.
- Meakings, S. Ottaway, H. and Coffey, A. (2018) The support needs and experiences of newly formed adoptive families: findings from the Wales Adoption Study, Sage [Accessed online] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0308575917750824>
- Meakings, S, Coffey, A, Shelton, K (2016) A study examining the concerns, support needs and experiences of newly formed adoptive families. *Journal of Health Visiting* 4(11): 562–570.
- Meakings, S, Coffey, A, Shelton, K (2017) The influence of adoption on sibling relationships: experiences and support needs of newly formed adoptive families. *British Journal of Social Work* 47(6): 1781–1799.
- National Adoption Service Post Approval training and Development Framework: Post Approval Adoption Training Modules [Accessed online] <https://adoptcymru.com/adopter-training-modules>
- Ottaway, H., Holland, S. and Maxwell, N. (2014), *The Provision and experience of adoption support services in Wales: Perspectives from adoption agencies and adoptive parents*, Cardiff University, CASCADE Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre.
- Pennington, E. (2012) It takes a village to raise a child, Adoption UK survey on adoption support, [Accessed online] <https://www.adoptionuk.org/it-takes-a-village-to-raise-a-child>
- Rees, A, Hodgson, P (2017) Regionalisation: improving the adoption experience in Wales. *Adoption & Fostering* 41(3): 215–227.
- Selwyn, J, Wijedasa, D. and Meakings, S. (2014) *Beyond the Adoption Order, challenges, interventions and adoption disruption*: Research report. London: Department for Education.
- Selwyn, J. and Meakings, S. (2015b) *Beyond the Adoption Order (Wales): discord and disruption*, Report to the Welsh government.
- Selwyn, J. & Meakings, S. (2016) 'Adolescent to parent violence in adoptive families', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 46, no. 5, pp. 1224-1240. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcv072>
- Selwyn, J (2017) *Post-adoption Support and Interventions for Adoptive Families: Best practice approaches*, Munich: Deutsches Jugendinstitut.
- Stock, L., Spielhofer, T., and Gieve, M. (2016) *Independent evidence review of post-adoption support interventions*: Research report, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, Depart for Education.
- Thomas, C. (2013) *Adoption for looked after children: messages from research: An overview of the Adoption Research Initiative*, London, CoramBAAF.

Appendix 1

Sibling Alliance Call and Pledge

OUR CALL

“All care experienced children and young people have a right to have a relationship with their siblings.”

WHO ARE WE?

We are an alliance of organisations who are passionate about the rights of care experienced and adopted children and young people.

- Voices From Care Cymru
- Children in Wales
- National Adoption Service
- Adoption UK
- Fostering Network
- AfA Cymru
- Cardiff University

Care experienced young people have repeatedly told us of their frustrations with the lack of contact with their siblings in fostering and adoption when they have been separated. When consulting with children and young people about their health and well-being, what we found was that fundamentally relationships matter and play a significant role in the everyday well-being of children and young people in care. Spending time with brothers and sisters featured heavily in conversations we were having about well-being, happiness, healthy relationships, rights and transition to independence. Equally, many young people tell us the nature of contact with their siblings is not conducive to modern life, especially with the benefits of technology and social media. We have therefore developed the pledge below and are asking all professionals working within Children's Services and/or with children across Wales to sign up.

OUR PLEDGE

The pledge to children in care and their brothers and sisters

We call on all public sector and voluntary sector organisations who work with care experienced children and young people to agree the following.

To commit to using all available resources and optimise the use of technology to:

- 1. Provide information to children about their siblings**
Clear, current information about the existence of siblings will be given to all children and young people at every stage of their journey.
- 2. Record all sibling relationships**
All children's sibling relationships will be clearly recorded in all social care records and plans.
- 3. Implement lifelong sibling relationship assessments**
“Together and Apart” assessments will be improved by ensuring assessments are written and reviewed as lifelong sibling relationships assessments.
- 4. Record children's views**
Children's views on sibling contact will be transparently recorded as part of any early intervention or public law Children Act 1989 or Adoption and Children Act 2002 proceedings and statutory reviews.
- 5. Plan for continuing and meaningful sibling relationships**
Whatever the legal framework, individual, flexible and resourced plans for continuing relationships into adulthood will be followed, when this is safe to do so.
- 6. Review the language of 'contact'**
Words matter. Young people frequently tell us how the language of care is professionalised, cold and stigmatising. Meeting with siblings should therefore be referred to as 'keeping in touch' opportunities.

Defn: Sibling includes full sibling, half sibling, step sibling by virtue of marriage or civil partnership, sibling by virtue of adoption, and any other person the child regards as their sibling and with whom they have an established family life [c. Article 8, ECHR].

Appendix 2

Who this guide is intended for, abbreviations and terminology

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

The guide is intended for use by all professionals involved with adoption and adoption support. These include:

- 1) The child's social worker (CSW). The child's social worker is the practitioner who, as an agent of the local authority, holds overriding parental responsibility for the child, through an interim Care Order under s38 and Care Order under s31 Children Act 1989 and, if a Placement Order is granted, under s 21 ACA 2002, until such time as an Adoption Order is made. The child's social worker is responsible for care planning for adoption and for the decisions in relation to family finding and matching with prospective adoptive parents. Their role cannot be underestimated and the guide is designed to assist the child's social worker, regardless of their experience in adoption work, to ensure that they meet their statutory, regulatory and good practice duties in relation to the child for whom they have responsibility.
- 2) The regional adoption social worker (ASW). Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements (Wales) Directions 2015 each local authority in Wales places the responsibility for assessing and approving prospective adopters, family finding, matching, introductions and placement, and adoption support to adoptive families and birth families, to one of the five regional collaboratives: SEWAS, VVC, Western Bay, Mid and West Wales and NWAS. The guides are constructed to help the regional collaboratives and voluntary adoption agencies in the sharing and development of good practice across the country. It also aims to help the adoption social worker and child's social worker be clear on their areas of responsibility and where they need to work together. The 'ASW' refers to the relevant social worker undertaking a particular piece of work (assessment / family finding / adoption support)
- 3) The voluntary adoption agency social worker. Where the prospective adopter has been assessed and approved by one of the two voluntary adoption agencies operating in Wales, St David's Children's Society and Barnardo's Cymru, then there is an additional component, in that the VAA social worker works with both regional adoption social worker and the child's social worker.
- 4) The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO has a critical role to play in the care planning and reviewing for a child whose care plan is for adoption. The guides refer to the functions of the reviewing process throughout, in order that all those involved with a child's progress to permanency can utilise the reviewing framework for maximum efficacy.
- 5) The Children's Guardian. The role of the Guardian in care, placement and, sometimes, adoption proceedings, provides an important independent element to the process of planning for a child's permanency through adoption. The guides will provide useful clarity and detail to Guardians on the practice expected and developing across Wales.
- 6) Members of adoption panels. Quality assurance of the contact plan as part of the matching process
- 7) Adoption Support Agencies

TERMINOLOGY

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

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

Appendix 3

Key Performance Measures relating to Life Journey Work

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are two key measures within National guidelines in relation to Life Journey materials. The first measures the number of children where life journey material has been provided by Matching Panel. Life Journey material at Matching Panel is defined as

- a draft later life letter and draft life story book.

The second measures the number of children placed for adoption for who life journey material has been provided to adopters by the second review. Life journey material at 2nd review is defined as

- Preparation work with the child, (direct work using family trees, timelines, story books, ecomaps that would go with the child at time of placement
- Later life letter

plus either

- Life story material – a book or folder or digital record of information about child's birth family, reasons for being looked after and why adopted, or
- Life story work – product of direct work, often thought of as “therapeutic” as a means of telling the story of a child's life history to enable the child to understand their past. This may include memory box, and build on a life story book.

Materials like a memory box or photo book will not be considered life journey material unless they are set in a context of direct work.

(NAS Performance Management Framework)

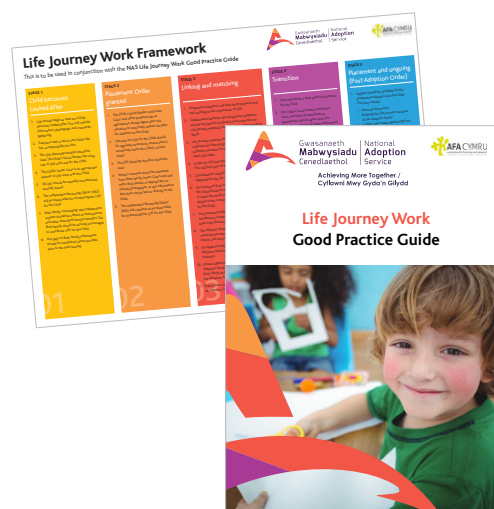
LIFE JOURNEY BOOKS

“I feel happy knowing that the photos, milestones, firsts and other anecdotes we have recorded have a place and will be shared with her as she gets older. We want her to know how precious she is!”
(Foster carer)

Photos taken during their time in foster care and then during transitions can be used as part of a number of Life Journey books created and supported by the team supporting the child and adopters. Most significantly, it is hoped that the idea of a 'Looking After' family will give the child a sense that the foster carers give permission for them to move on, to their 'Growing up' family. These books document the child's transition to their 'growing up' family and will help the child remember and make sense of the transition.

These books include:

- **About birth family book** – an explanation of some of the child's history
- **Looking after family book** – the child's time with their foster carers (and what foster carers do: look after)
- **Welcome to my family book** – created by the potential adopters
- **Moving to my new family information/book** – how the adopters met and got to know the child, with the help of the foster carers, and the activities that the child completed on their journey



Appendix 4

ALL WALES ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol | National
Adoption
Service

ALL WALES ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

| | |
|---------|--|
| Region: | |
|---------|--|

This document should be used when completing adoption support assessments at all stages apart from the 1st adoption support plan. The 1st adoption support plan will be informed by the child's CAR/B, the prospective adoptive parent's PAR and the matching documents.

Information gathered in this document, for all subsequent assessments will be used to inform, develop, and update the All Wales Adoption Support Plan.

The plan may be used in conjunction with a Part 4 Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 care and support plan.

| | |
|---|--|
| Name of child (birth or adopted name as appropriate): | |
| Date of birth: | |
| Name of adoptive family: | |
| Placing authority: | |
| Resident authority (if different): | |
| VAA (if involved): | |
| Date of placement: | |
| Date of adoption order: | |

| | Referral Information |
|--|----------------------|
| Date of current Referral: | |
| Name of person requesting an assessment: | |
| Date of last adoption support plan or review: | |
| Name of adoption support social worker undertaking assessment: | |

All rights reserved. This document may not be reproduced without the permission of the National Adoption Service for Wales.

You can download a copy of the All Wales Assessment of Need for Adoption Support Services proforma from:

<https://www.adoptcymru.com/good-practice-guides>

Appendix 5

Adoption Support Plan



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

ALL WALES ADOPTION SUPPORT PLAN

Region:

How to use this template

This template will be used for the first and all subsequent adoption support plans:

- where a full assessment has been completed, or
- where, as a result of a review, a plan is amended.

The template for the first Adoption Support Plan is found on pp 2 – 4. This plan will be completed using the child's CAR/B, the prospective adopter's PAR, information obtained from the 'Understanding the Child Meeting / Day and all matching documents.

The template for a review of the plan following the first adoption support plan is found on pp 6 – 9. The review will either:

- a) confirm that the current plan remains fit for purpose, and a further review date is agreed and noted on the plan;
- b) amend the current plan, but without the need for a full assessment, and a further review date is agreed and noted on the plan; or
- c) decide that a full assessment is required, in which case the plan will be amended following that assessment, using the All Wales Assessment of Need for Adoption Support Services template, and a further review date is agreed and noted on the plan.

All rights reserved. This document may not be reproduced without the permission of the National Adoption Service for Wales.

NAS All Wales Adoption Support Plan

1

You can download a copy of the All Wales Adoption Support Plan proforma from
<https://www.adoptcymru.com/good-practice-guides>



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu | National
Cenedlaethol Adoption
Service

National Adoption Service Central Team
c/o City of Cardiff Council
Room 409 County Hall , Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff CF10 4UW

T: 029 2087 3927

www.adoptcymru.com



AFA CYMRU
association for fostering and adoption
cymdeithas ar gyfer maethu a mabwysiadu

AFA Cymru
Unit G14, Ty Antur
Navigation Park,
Abercynon CF45 4SN

T: 02920 761155

www.afacymru.org

AFA Cymru
W2 Morfa Clwyd Business Centre,
84 Marsh Road, Rhyl,
Denbighshire LL18 2AF

T: 01745 336336