This material has been produced at the request of social workers who have asked for an accessible and portable guide to help them undertake permanence planning work with children.

It is intended to be an “aide-mémoire” and not a definitive or comprehensive guide. It should be read in conjunction with existing legislation, regulations and guidance issued by the Government and alongside local policies and procedures.

It should be noted that where the word “must” is used, this refers to action required under primary legislation, regulations and other guidance issued by the Government, for example National Minimum Standards. Where the word “should” is used, this denotes ideas based upon experience and positive action.

It has been produced in a ring-binder format for practitioners to add their own notes and up-dated material as available.

A web-enabled version of this document is available at www.elsc.org.uk. This electronic version gives access to key texts and legislation, in full where available, and to relevant web sites.

Many members of the Adoption and Permanence Taskforce have contributed to this document, to whom we are indebted.

Permanence is a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

A key Government objective for children’s social services is to ensure that all children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of their childhood. The objective of planning for permanence is therefore to ensure children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. A range of options exists, all of which can deliver high-quality outcomes for individual children. The planning process will identify which option is most likely to meet the needs of the individual child and takes account of their views and feelings.

Permanence planning needs to set out the journey that the child will take and the intended destination. Services may be provided and placements used as part of the plan to achieve the desired outcome (e.g. a short-term residential placement to help prepare a child for family life).

Care Planning and Routes to Legal Permanence

The diagram below sets out the range of placement options for looked after children, and legal orders that can be used to reinforce the permanence of placements. Clearly there will be movement between the different placement options, reflecting the child’s individual needs which may change over time.

![Diagram of placement options and legal orders for looked after children]

Securing the most appropriate outcome for a child is underpinned by care planning and review. Every placement move should be preceded by a review and an amendment to the care plan.
Decisions on Permanence

Care planning and reviews
An effective care plan will include a plan for permanence for the child, while setting objectives for work with the child, birth family and carers in relation to the child's assessed needs. Care planning and reviewing are not static, but rather a process of continuous monitoring and reassessment. Review meetings provide a forum in which to review care plans and to agree and record decisions in consultation with all those who have a key interest in the child's life, in particular the child.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have been introduced to quality assure the care planning and review process. They will chair all review meetings of looked after children, ensure the child is involved in the review and challenge poor practice and any drift in implementing the care plan. As a last resort the IRO will have the power to refer a case to the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), which will be able to take the case to court if a child's human rights appear to be in breach.

A clearly articulated plan to achieve permanence for the child must be prepared at the second statutory looked after review and each subsequent review.

Under the Children Act 1989 local authorities are required to make all reasonable efforts to rehabilitate looked after children with their families whenever possible unless it is clear that the child can no longer live with his/her family and the authority has evidence that further attempts at rehabilitation are unlikely to succeed. LAC(98)20 stressed the need to achieve the right balance between efforts to rehabilitate the child with his/her family and the importance of "child time" in achieving permanence for the child.

Where it is clear that a child can no longer live with his/her birth family, and reunification is not possible, decisions about placing children with alternative permanent families need to be made as a matter of priority.

The Permanence Plan should be set out clearly in writing so that social workers, other professionals, the birth parents and the child or young person can understand. The Permanence Plan will set out:

- the objectives of the plan
- the timescales for achieving these objectives
- the key tasks and those responsible for implementing them
- the criteria that will be used to evaluate the success of the plan

Recording of planning decisions
These should include:
- who was present at permanence planning or review meeting
- whose views were taken in to account
- what options were considered
- the reasons for reaching a particular conclusion
- any disagreements

The Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, regulation 3, sets out the requirement that every looked after child must have his/her case reviewed within four weeks of being looked after and again within three months of the previous review. Therefore reviews must take place no more than six months from the previous review. In some cases, particularly where the plan needs amendment, a review may need to be brought forward.

Contingency planning
Where the assessment identifies that parents may be unlikely to make and sustain the necessary changes in their parenting, contingency plans should be made to avoid delay in securing a permanent family for a child.

Parallel/twin-track planning
The child remains with the birth parent/s or is placed with foster carers. A rehabilitation plan with timescales is in place. At the same time, the agency formulates an alternative permanence plan in the event that the rehabilitation plan proves unsuccessful.

Birth parent/s need to be informed that the two plans (rehabilitation and alternative permanence) are being made to meet the child’s needs and avoid unnecessary delay. The primacy of the rehabilitation plan should be stressed. Retaining the co-operation, understanding and involvement of the birth parent/s is essential to successful contingency planning.
Concurrent planning

The child is placed with foster carers who are approved as a support to the birth parents in meeting the objectives of the rehabilitation plan, and are also approved to be the child’s adoptive parents if the rehabilitation plan proves unsuccessful.

National Adoption Standards

Where the agency has agreed that adoption is in the child’s best interests, the National Adoption Standards for England set out timescales to be followed, taking account of the individual child’s needs. These include the expectation that a match with suitable adoptive parents will be identified and approved by the agency within six months of the court decision in care proceedings, or six months of “best interest” decision by the adoption agency, or within three months for voluntarily relinquished children under six months of age.

Impact on carers of court orders and support arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Support arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No legal order and child not looked after by local authority</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Services for children in need, their families and others under section 17 of the Children Act 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement with approved foster carers (including family and friends)</td>
<td>Requirement to comply with fostering regulations</td>
<td>Fostering allowances and support provided under section 23 of the Children Act 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Order</td>
<td>Gives the holder parental responsibility and allows the child to live with them. Order can be varied or discharged by the Court. Adoption and Children Act 2002 allows the routine extension of orders to the age of 18</td>
<td>Under paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 to Children Act 1989, a local authority may make contributions to the child’s maintenance. Support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 if child in need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Guardianship Order</td>
<td>Gives the holder parental responsibility without severing legal ties to the child’s parents. Order can be varied or discharged by the Court and will cease to apply at 18</td>
<td>Special Guardianship support services, including financial support, will be available in accordance with regulations to be made under section 14F of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by Adoption and Children Act 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption Order</td>
<td>Severs all legal ties between a child and his/her birth family. Adopted person is treated in law as if born to the adoptive parent(s)</td>
<td>Adoption support services, including financial support, will be available in accordance with regulations that came into effect on 31 October 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adoption Process – Children

**Process**
- Referral made/Initial Assessment
- Core Assessment Record
- Core Assessment Report
- Final care hearing
- Adoption Panel
- Final care order
- Court hearing
- Adoption order

**Information Needed**
- Initial Assessment
- Core Assessment Report
- Final care hearing
- Adoption Panel
- Final care order
- Court hearing
- Adoption order

**Adoption Matching and Placement Process**

**Final agency decision**
- Adoption order
- Court hearing
- Adoption panel
- Final care order
- Court hearing
- Adoption order

**Information Needed**
- Adoption panel
- Final care order
- Court hearing
- Adoption order

**Flow Charts: The Adoption Process**

1. **Adoption Process – Children**
   - **Child may be accommodated at request of parents**
   - **Information Needed**
     - Initial Assessment Record
     - Core Assessment Report
     - Final Care Hearing
     - Adoption Panel
     - Final Care Order
     - Court Hearing
     - Adoption Order

2. **Adoption Matching and Placement Process**
   - **Final Agency Decision**
     - Adoption order
     - Court hearing
     - Adoption panel
     - Final care order
     - Court hearing
     - Adoption order
   - **Information Needed**
     - Adoption panel
     - Final care order
     - Court hearing
     - Adoption order

**Flow Charts**
- Adoption process flowchart
- Adoption matching and placement process flowchart

**Key Points**
- Child may be accommodated at request of parents
- Information needed for adoption process
- Final agency decision
- Information needed for adoption matching and placement process

**Adoption Panel**
- The adoption panel is responsible for making final decisions on adoptions.

**Adoption Process**
- From referral to final adoption order
- Key stages include initial assessment, core assessment, final care hearing, adoption panel, and court hearing.

**Adoption Matching and Placement**
- Final agency decision
- Information needed

**Flow Diagram**
- Diagrams showing the adoption process
- Flow chart for adoption process
- Flow chart for adoption matching and placement process

**Notes**
- Inter-agency Agreement Form if appropriate
- Introduction calendar showing duration of each proposed visit and planning arrangements
- Send out in advance consultation
- Send out in advance consultation
- Adoption panel
- Final care order
- Court hearing
- Adoption order

**Integration**
- Adoption process
- Adoption matching and placement process
- Flow charts for both processes

**Conclusion**
- Adoption process
- Adoption matching and placement process
- Flow charts for both processes

**References**
- Adoption panel
- Final care order
- Court hearing
- Adoption order

**Appendix**
- Flow charts for adoption process
- Flow charts for adoption matching and placement process
### Stage in Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timescales Set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A PERMANENCE PLAN for all looked after children must be made</td>
<td>At four month review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children’s wishes and feelings must be listened to, recorded and</td>
<td>Throughout the adoption process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• taken into account: where not acted upon the reasons will be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• explained to the child and will be properly recorded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children will be well prepared before joining a new family and life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• story information will be kept safe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children are entitled to support services to meet their assessed needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adoption plans will set out clearly arrangements for maintaining links</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including contact) with birth families and significant others, and how</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and when arrangements will be reviewed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIRTH PARENTS</td>
<td>From the time the adoption plan is proposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To have access to a separate support worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To give their account of events and comment on what is said about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them in the reports to the Adoption Panel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENCY’S ‘BEST INTEREST’ RECOMMENDATION</td>
<td>Within two months of LAC review at which the adoption is identified as the plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with Applicants</td>
<td>• Within six months of best interest decision, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Response to initial enquiries</td>
<td>• Within six months of court decision in care proceedings, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Follow up interview or Information Meeting</td>
<td>• within three months of ‘best interest’ decision re relinquished infant under six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To receive a copy of the Home Study Report</td>
<td>• months of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADOPTION PANEL</td>
<td>Must receive reports within six weeks of completion of assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consideration of application to adopt</td>
<td>Must be made within seven working days of panel meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENCY DECISION</td>
<td>• Within six months of formal application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Timing of all decisions</td>
<td>• All decisions to be conveyed in writing within 7 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Re applicant’s suitability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Re foster carers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At ‘best interest’ or matching stage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS</td>
<td>To be given full information re child’s needs and background and have an opportunity to discuss the implications before a match is agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Matching process</td>
<td>To be available before, during and after adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASSESSING CHILDREN’S NEEDS

Erik Erikson’s Stages in Children’s Emotional Development

Age 1 – 1.5 years
Development of a sense of basic trust: This grows out of consistent, reliable physical care by at least one nurturing caretaker who meets the child’s basic needs. This can be permanently undermined by poor, inconsistent care or by multiple placement. Without this sense of trust, children will have difficulty moving into the next development stage.

Age 1.5 – 3 years
Development of healthy sense of autonomy: This grows out of the child’s opportunity to make choices appropriate to his/her age, and to move away from the caretaker for brief periods with confidence that the relationship will endure. Overly harsh treatment, prevents the sense of autonomy from developing. Loss of the caretaker, or sequential caretakers, can stunt this development. Without a sense of autonomy, children learn not to trust themselves.

Age 3 – 6 years
Development of a sense of initiative: Through taking risks, observing, imitating, and fantasising, a sense of personal initiative develops. As the child experiments with behaviours, a sense of right and wrong grows. A consistent, encouraging caretaker makes these developments possible. Inconsistency of caretakers inhibits this process, and overly punitive treatment leads to excessive guilt and feelings of worthlessness.

Age 6 – 10 years
Development of a sense of industry: Through taking risks, observing, imitating, and fantasising, a sense of personal initiative develops. As the child experiments with behaviours, a sense of right and wrong grows. A consistent, encouraging caretaker makes these developments possible. Inconsistency of caretakers inhibits this process, and overly punitive treatment leads to excessive guilt and feelings of worthlessness.

Age 10 – 18 years
Development of a sense of identity: Building on all prior developmental stages, the child learns to see their abilities realistically and to develop their talents and interests in preparation for adult life. When prior stages have been inhibited or stunted, identity remains confused and full maturity cannot be achieved.
Assessing Attachment

The bonding/attachment process

**BONDING**
The feeling and capacity of the parent or carer to:
- nurture
- be responsive
- be protective

**ATTACHMENT**
An affectionate bond that endures through space and time and joins the individuals emotionally.
A psychological bond to a person who provides protection. An attempt to maintain physical proximity with another who is seen as stronger

**MESSAGES GIVEN**
- I love you
- I'll take care of you
- You are important to me
- I'll keep my eye on you
- I'll keep you safe
- I'll keep you warm
- I'll keep you fed
- I'll keep you clean

**MESSAGES RECEIVED**
- You’ll take care of me
- I need to stay close to you
- You’ll teach me about myself and the world
- I’m OK
- I’m loveable
Assessing Attachment
Normal attachment processes lead to the establishment of bonds which are the basis of lasting relationships between the child and parent/parent figure, and are the foundation of future positive relationships with others.
Secure attachment helps the child to:
● develop self esteem
● attain full intellectual potential
● sort out what she/he perceives and think logically
● develop a conscience
● become self-reliant
● cope with stress and frustration
● cope with worries and fears
● experience the world as relatively predictable and safe
● feel secure
● reduce jealousy
Assessment of attachment needs to be based on an understanding of child and parent behaviours when there is appropriate attachment and bonding. All three domains of the assessment framework need to be considered together and information from them taken into account, in particular:

1. The child
   - developmental functioning
   - behaviour
   - interaction with siblings
   - child’s interaction with parents and others

2. Parenting capacity
   - how parents react to child’s overtures
   - interactions with child that parents initiate
   - boundary setting and disciplinary techniques
   - awareness of child’s individual needs
   - how parents manage stress

3. Environment
   - child’s interaction with wider family
   - child’s interaction with other adults
   - child’s interaction with peers
   - availability of appropriate stimulation
   - safety.

Assessment of attachment requires detailed knowledge of the child’s history and placement moves, careful observation of the child’s development and behaviour and observation of the interaction between the child and carers.
In order to make any judgement a comprehensive knowledge of child development is essential. The following checklists and references may be helpful:

Child’s attachment
Attachment is assessed by observing the child’s behaviour in the presence and in the absence of the primary caretaker.

Attachment behaviour
● An attempt to maintain proximity (closeness) with another person
● Body contact
● Cries/becomes anxious when caretaker leaves
● Displays stranger anxiety

Children have secondary attachments to:
● other parental figures
● siblings
● relatives
● day care providers

Parent’s attachment
Attachment is assessed by observing the primary parent’s behaviour in the presence of the child. Culture influences parent’s attachment behaviours.

Attachment Behaviour
● Recognises the child’s distress
● Responds to child’s distress
● Ensures protection
● Obtains help
● Provides soothing/comfort

Assessing Children’s Needs
### Signs of Problem and Distorted Attachments

It is important to remember that the responses listed below represent a spectrum, and that children without distorted attachments may display some of these more extreme responses at times. Also, children display a range of attachment patterns along the continuum. However, should any of the extreme responses become habitual responses, this is a cause for concern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTREME OVER RESPONSE</th>
<th>NORMAL RESPONSE</th>
<th>EXTREME UNDER RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOUCH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-clingy and demanding</td>
<td>Usually enjoys and responds to cuddling, stroking, tickling and cuddling</td>
<td>Under-responsive/tolereant in content. Only when it suits them – usually to get something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYE CONTACT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks right through you and stares</td>
<td>Holds your gaze – seeks to look</td>
<td>Avoids looking at you directly or does so only when he/ she wants something from you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOICE VOCALISATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-sensitive to everyday sounds and dislikes music and everyday noise</td>
<td>Ignores music or singing. Has little or no sense of rhythm. Does not sing to self or dance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSCLE TONE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENSITIVITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritable, easily disturbed even by small changes. Difficult to console. Can be inconsolable</td>
<td>Sensitive to others, particularly parent and parent figure is available. Responds to emotion of the parent and is consolable by them or significant persons when distressed</td>
<td>Appears indifferent to much that goes on – short attention span</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSCIENCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive truth telling – earning up. Excessive shame/shame guilt for minor issues. Unthinking of self/other self</td>
<td>Feels a realistic amount of shame/guilt accompanied by a desire to repair – “I hurt when I hurt you”</td>
<td>Feels a realistic amount of shame/guilt accompanied by a desire to repair – “I hurt when I hurt you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPRESSIONS OF ANGER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive towards anyone and everything, without warning. Sudden outbursts of anger</td>
<td>Aggressive towards anyone and everything, without warning. Sudden outbursts of anger</td>
<td>Overly compliant – always says “yes”. Shows little or no emotion at all about anything</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Signs of Problem and Distorted Attachments

It is important to remember that the responses listed below represent a spectrum, and that children without distorted attachments may display some of these more extreme responses at times. Also, children display a range of attachment patterns along the continuum. However, should any of the extreme responses become habitual responses, this is a cause for concern.
Building Blocks for Resilience

The concept of resilience recognises that there may be protective factors both within the child (constitutional) and in their family and environment (social) which act as ‘buffers’ against adversity. The assessment should identify those areas that may be important to the child maintaining the three key building blocks for achieving resilience:

1. a secure base
2. the child’s self-esteem
3. the child’s sense of capability and effectiveness

The presence of the following factors has been found to contribute to the child’s ability to combat adversity:

- the child’s family demonstrate that they care about the child even if they cannot care for the child
- there are other supportive people in the child’s life
- the child has a network of supports
- the child has experienced a secure and harmonious loving relationship
- the child has success in accomplishing tasks that are central to their interests
- the child has experienced parenting that is responsive, consistent, warm, offers praise, support and encouragement
- the child has experienced parenting that helps them believe they can make a difference in their situation
- the child has purposeful contact with family members and other key adults from the past
- positive school experience
- friendship with peers
- interest and involvement with sport, music, hobbies
- the child displays problem-solving and coping skills and strategies.

### USEFUL READING

- Gilligan R, Promoting Resilience
  London: British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering 2001
Assessing Sibling Groups

In assessing the quality of relationships within a sibling group and each child's placement needs, it is important to carry out a full assessment in respect of:

- each individual child in a sibling group
- their relationships with each other
- the dynamics of the group
- how each child sees their role in relation to the other siblings

Important questions

Who does the "core" sibling group include?

What is the possibility of contact or placement with other siblings living elsewhere?

Who are the key people to be involved in the assessment process?

What opportunities are needed to assess different siblings living in different foster homes?

What are the individual views of each child in the sibling group?

Key issues

Factors that have affected the way siblings relate:

- position in family and gender
- type of attachment to parents
- parental conflict
- neglect/absence of carer/parent
- abuse.

What does the children's behaviour suggest about their attachment to each other in respect of:

- warmth
- degree of conflict
- rivalry
- dominance/subordination
- sharing and caring

Particularly significant behaviour:

- sharing in boisterous play
- resolving conflict through age-appropriate reasoning
- reciprocal attempts to alleviate distress

Can work be done to improve the relationship between the siblings?

What dysfunctional patterns of interactions exist and need to be taken into account in placement decisions?

Decisions to separate children, and about which child should be placed with whom, should only be taken on the basis of a full assessment.

Action to recruit carers and facilitate contact should result from the planning process and not vice versa.

USEFUL READING


Mullender A, We are Family: Sibling Relationships in Placement and Beyond, London: BAAF 1999
The younger the child, the less likely it is that direct contact will be appropriate at the time of placement. However, it is important to keep the lines of communication open with birth family members because children’s needs and wishes may change over time.

Indirect contact arrangements need to be set out clearly in writing for all parties, including the frequency of contact, which party is to start the exchange, if two-way, and whether birthday and/or cards for religious festivals, videos or presents are agreed in addition to an update letter. Some participants may need help in writing letters and others may need written reminders when their letters are due.

One-off meeting with adoptive and birth family members
A one-off meeting between adoptive parents and birth family members provides an opportunity for the birth parents to feel reassured about the child’s new parents. It also provides a reality check for both parties and makes the task of ‘telling’ and future contact that much easier. It is important that photographs are taken of this meeting wherever appropriate.

Direct contact is likely to be most successful where BIRTH PARENTS:
- have met the adopters and fully support the adoptive placement
- have “given the child permission” to live with these adoptive parents
- will agree to exchange up-to-date information as the child grows up
- accept the change of role that they will play in the life of their child

Direct contact is likely to be most successful where ADOPTIVE PARENTS:
- can empathise with the birth parents
- have met the birth parents and can sustain a positive image of them
- recognise the potential value to the child of maintaining contact
- feel entitled to parent the child
- do not feel threatened by face-to-face contact with the birth family
CONTACT ISSUES

Recording of Decision-making Process
A clear written account should be made of the decision-making process, whose views were taken into account, the reasons for the decision and an action plan.

Monitoring and Review
Determine frequency of review of contact arrangements and named persons with responsibility for reviewing, analysing and changing contact arrangements prior to the adoption order being made.

Ensure that the child is consulted on a regular basis about their views and wishes, and that these are taken into account.

After the adoption order has been made, the adopters should be given a specific point of contact should they need advice in the future negotiating any changes in contact arrangements.

Siblings
Special consideration needs to be given to maintaining contact between siblings as these are likely to be the longest relationships experienced during their lives. A thorough written assessment should include the nature of the relationship between each sibling, how long they have lived together (or apart) and their views. Siblings often have competing needs: where compromise is needed it should favour the child with the greatest prospects of a successful permanent placement – most likely to be the youngest of the siblings under consideration.

Planning contact arrangements
Preliminary assessment should clarify:

- the child’s attachment history
- the views and wishes of the child, birth family members and significant persons in the child’s life
- the capacity of the birth family and the adoptive family to manage contact constructively
- the type and level of contact with which they can realistically cope
- the aims and objectives of the contact plan
- the proposed frequency needed to ensure that there is sufficient recovery time between contacts

Options analysis
Identify all realistic methods of facilitating contact including:

- the benefits and risk factors involved in each potential method of contact
- will the contact proposals reflect the plan for the child, and support the child in his/her new family?
- will the proposed contact arrangements jeopardise the adoptive family’s need for anonymity?
- are the proposed contact arrangements likely to be realistic and manageable?
- will the timing of contact arrangements take into account the child’s need to attach to a new family?
- the resource implications
The Adoption Panel is set up under the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and the Adoption Agencies and Children (Arrangement for Placement and Review) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1997. The Adoption Panel makes recommendations to the agency decision-maker about:

1. whether adoption is in the best interests of a child, and if so whether an application should be made to free the child for adoption
2. whether applicants are suitable as adoptive parents (including the number and the age group of the child/ren)
3. whether particular applicant(s) are suitable as adoptive parents for a particular child/ren
4. eligibility for financial support

The outcome of each application will be one of the following:

- to agree the application
- to reject the application
- to defer the application

The Panel may have a role in:

- advising on placement possibilities and adoption support
- advising on contact arrangements
- reviewing the cases of children who have been subject to a ‘best interests’ decision where an adoption order has not yet been made
- reviewing the prospective adopters still awaiting a placement
- receiving management reports of agency and service provision in adoption work
- considering any adoption placements that disrupt
- quality assurance
- contributing to the development and reviewing of departmental policies and procedures
- providing training opportunities for new social workers by enabling them to observe panel meetings

To assist the smooth running of panel meetings social workers need to ensure that they:

- have completed all the documentation needed in advance
- bring the child’s file with all reports to Panel and photographs of the child
7. ATTENDING THE ADOPTION PANEL

Adoption Panel members and agency decision-makers are required to make some of the most important judgements that are ever likely to be taken in respect of looked after children. In considering whether adoption is in a child’s best interest, Panel members will want to know about the following:

- what attempts have been made at reunification
- what attempts have been made to consider and assess family members as potential carers, and reasons why they have been discounted
- the meeting at which a decision was made by social work staff to pursue a plan for adoption in respect of each child
- legal advice given about the case and the date of the final care hearing
- the child’s wishes and feelings
- health
- education and behavioural development
- identity
- family and social relationships
- attachment history including significant current attachments
- social presentation
- self-care skills
- any previous history of abuse or neglect
- views of all those with parental responsibility, including any wishes of a child’s parents or guardian as to the religious upbringing of the child
- views of the Children’s Guardian
- views of current carer(s) and any other significant persons in the child’s life
- current contact arrangements and the nature and level of contact proposed after placement for adoption, whether these arrangements are likely to support the child in his or her new family, and whether they are realistic
- child’s understanding of why he/she is separated from his/her birth family
- work undertaken with the child and work yet to be carried out, by whom, and timescales within which this is likely to be completed
- evidence for any proposals to separate siblings, and contact arrangements between them after placement
- therapy/other specialist support already provided or planned

Parallel/twin-track planning and the timing of applications to the Adoption Panel

In order to minimise delays for children, a contingency plan needs to be activated and pursued in parallel if there are serious doubts about the viability of a reunification plan. Where other family members have been explored and discounted as potential carers of the child, the Adoption Panel will need to consider whether adoption is in the best interests of the child, in principle, prior to the outcome of care proceedings.

However, LAC(97)13, Paragraph 46 states: “As part of their deliberations, where an adoption panel is considering whether adoption is in the best interests of a child, the panel is expected to consider all other possible options for that child and be satisfied that the agency’s proposal was arrived at once those options had been explored and discounted.”

LAC(99)29, Paragraph 30, confirms that “even where the facts in certain cases of the application are not disputed and the preferred option in the care plan is adoption, it is important that local authorities have satisfied themselves that sufficient assessment has taken place to rule out rehabilitation or placement with relatives, for example, under a section 8 Residence Order.”

The decision-maker will need to await the outcome of care proceedings before making a final decision of behalf of the adoption agency.

You may find the Local Information sheet on page 52 a helpful aide-mémoire to fill in and refer to.
Matching a child with a family is one of the most important decisions likely to be made by an adoption agency and should be based upon a multi-agency assessment of all the child’s needs including:

- health
- education
- emotional and behavioural development
- identity
- family and social relationships
- attachment history and the child’s capacity to make new attachments
- the quality of the child’s attachment to the current carer and the capacity of the current carer to help the child attach to a new family
- contact needs
- social presentation
- self-care skills
- accommodation and locality
- any other needs specific to this child

The agency needs to record and take into account the views and wishes of the child, all those with parental responsibility, the current carer and the children’s guardian.

In matching children with the most appropriate family it is helpful to use the dimensions of parenting capacity set out in the Assessment Framework including the prospective adoptive family’s capacity to:

- provide for the child’s basic care
- provide emotional warmth
- promote the child’s learning and intellectual development
- set boundaries
- provide a stable environment

In addition it is helpful to take account of the applicants’:

- background and experience of being parented
- previous parenting experience/transferable skills
- understanding of the type of background from which the child comes and empathy for the birth family’s situation
- expectations of the child concerned – how realistic are they?

- capacity to manage the type of behaviour difficulties this child presents or is likely to present in the future
- support systems, especially family and friends
- capacity to use support appropriately
- what each applicant has to lose and gain by the proposed placement
- coping strategies and how they have coped with past losses
- strengths and vulnerabilities

It is essential to provide a potential family with as much information as possible before the match is considered by the panel, so that the family are able to make an informed judgement about whether they feel they can meet the child’s needs throughout his/her childhood and beyond.

It is equally important not to match applicants with children of a different age range, gender or characteristics from that for which the prospective adopters have been approved and/or for which they have declared a preference, as this is a predictor of placement disruption.

It can also be helpful to identify the messages that life has thus far given to this child, as these can be critical factors in matching children with the right family, such as: “I can’t trust adults, they just let me down”, or “In our family girls don’t matter”, or “I have to look after my mum when she is drunk”.

To assist the agency in determining the appropriateness of a proposed placement, a ‘matching/linking’ report needs to include:

- reasons for believing the prospective carers have the potential to meet the child’s needs
- the health and educational facilities which exist in the prospective carer’s locality to meet the needs of the child
- the preparation the prospective family has received to equip them to meet the child’s needs
- the views of any children or other adults in the carer’s household, and the nature of any preparation work which has been/needs to be carried out with them in respect of the proposed placement
- how far the needs and expectations of the prospective adoptive parents would be met by the proposed placement
- further work which needs to be carried out before and after the placement, by whom, with time scales for completion
Direct work with children provides them with an opportunity to express their feelings about significant events that have occurred, helps them to put the past into perspective, and to participate in the planning process.

Direct work needs to be carried out with children at all stages of the legal and planning processes. The amount of detail that can be given to the child will depend on the circumstances of each case, but they will need reassurance about where they will be staying while the Court decides what is going to happen.

In working with children it is important to recognise the impact of trauma on their capacity to understand and retain information. Workers will need to:

- listen to the child’s messages about their capacity to undertake this work at particular stages
- communicate clearly and simply using concepts which are likely to be familiar to this particular child
- ask the child for feedback to confirm whether the child has understood what has been said
- simplify or build on explanations given to clarify the child’s understanding
- create opportunities for the child to express his or her feelings and wishes, especially about contact
- reinforce the positives for the child
- help the child to develop a simple script that can be used to explain to others why they are not living with their birth parents. Ensure that this is agreed with the current carer and any other significant persons
- use tools appropriate to the child’s age and understanding such as:
  - memory box
  - story books
  - eco map (a picture or diagram outlining the people involved in the child’s life)
  - picture cards
  - photos
  - jigsaws
  - drawings
  - puppets
  - toys
  - videos

If the applicants are unable to meet one or more of the child’s needs, how this will be addressed

A placement and adoption support plan, outlining:

- proposed frequency of visits by the child’s social worker and the family’s worker between placement and court hearing (to be reconsidered at reviews)
- contact point to whom the adoptive family may go for support after the adoption order is made
- support to be made available to the adopter(s) both before and after an adoption order is made, by whom and for how long
- contingency plans in the event of difficulties arising, including respite care arrangements
- post box arrangements: type and frequency of proposals
- direct contact: frequency, persons involved and worker responsible for arranging and reviewing contact arrangements

It is helpful for a senior manager to countersign the matching/linking report to confirm agreement to reasonable requests for financial assistance and services to meet the adoption support plan.
NB This section is not intended to cover life story work, the timing of which needs to take into account the child’s age, stage of development, circumstances, and readiness for this complex and sensitive piece of work.

Purpose
To provide a child with an accurate chronological account of his/her life, which remains relevant and has an enduring value.

To provide a tool by which adoptive parents or long-term carers can give the child details about his/her birth family and history in an age-appropriate way as the child grows up.

Aim
To help children to:
- understand the background and history of their birth family
- know where they came from and develop a sense of identity
- understand why they are separated from their birth family and who has cared for them
- put their past into perspective

Remember
- A child’s life story book belongs to the child and needs to be readily available whenever the child wishes to look at it.
- It is the social worker’s responsibility to collect photographs and information for the child and to encourage the carer to do so.
- It is preferable to take photos with a digital camera and store the photographs on a computer or a compact disc, as instant photographs may fade over time.
- Always keep copies of photographs (with dates and names) and the life story book(s), which should be retained on the file: they are extremely precious and may be needed if the life story book should become damaged or destroyed in future years.
- Some birth parents and grandparents are willing to participate in the collection and provision of information for a child’s life story book: this has a value well beyond the photographs themselves. It is helpful to encourage them to write a letter for the child.
- Obtain the child’s birth certificate, record of a christening/baptism/other religious ceremonies, and any other significant records, including a family tree with names and dates of birth.

- Provide information about the time and place of birth, and who was present at the birth itself, as well as the weather on the day of birth, significant political events, or other national events, and preferably a copy of a national newspaper for the day the child was born. The child’s name tag from hospital and other mementoes need to be kept safe.
- The life story book should accurately reflect the reality of the child’s history and situation and why he/she was separated from his/her birth family.
- Details of developmental milestones need to be accurately recorded, such as the date the child took his/her first steps, the first word spoken, and the first day at nursery or school.
- A picture of the child’s handprint or footprint makes an excellent keepsake for birth parents as well as adoptive parents.

Format
- The format can vary considerably, but ideally a life story book should contain photographs and factual details explaining the name/relationship of each person in the photograph and the event.
- Include the names and addresses of previous carers and the names and workplaces of workers who have played a role in the child’s life.
- Life story books need to be flexible and presented in a way which enables details to be added as further information becomes available, including after adoption. They should be sufficiently robust to withstand being repeatedly handled, for example in a ring binder with each page contained in a plastic folder or laminated.
- Ideally life story books should be written in the third person, unless an older child wishes to personally contribute to the document.
- An animal story line is not generally advised – although it might seem attractive for a 2 or 3 year old, it quickly becomes out of date, and has limited value to children as they get older.

General
- Life story books should incorporate material that has already been collected for the child prior to, and during his/her experience of being looked after.
Before planning to move a child to a permanent placement, check that the following actions have been covered:

- The matching decision has been made by the agency decision-maker following panel recommendation
- Up-to-date, comprehensive and accurate information about the child is available, including medical and educational details
- Life story work has been completed, or is well underway
- The child has an age-appropriate understanding of the proposed move
- Contact arrangements have been discussed and provisional plans made in writing
- The new carers have seen photographs or a video of the child
- The new carers have met the current carers
- Consideration has been given to a Life Appreciation Day.

Prior to the Introduction Planning Meeting, the social worker needs to draw up a schedule of essential information, including:

- Holidays and other commitments of all concerned with the move
- Present and proposed contact arrangements
- “Goodbye” meetings with birth family members should take place before introductions to the new family begin
- Proposed transport arrangements
- Equipment needed for the child (bed, stair-gate, car seat etc.)

It is helpful for the new carers to meet key people in the child’s life before introductions begin:

- Present carers; previous significant carers (including extended family)
- School staff; nursery staff; previous social workers
- Medical adviser or other professionals, if appropriate, e.g. psychologist
- Birth parents, if appropriate (although the timing of the meeting will depend on individual circumstances)

The Introduction Planning Meeting, which should be chaired by a manager experienced in adoption work, needs to include the
following persons:
- existing carers and their support worker
- new carers and their support worker
- child’s social worker
- the Team Manager
- other workers who have played a significant part in the child’s life, such as family centre workers

The purpose of the meeting is to draw up an Introduction Plan taking into account the following:
- the child’s age and understanding
- travelling distance
- holidays and commitments of carers, social workers and support workers
- education, including school holidays
- needs of other children in temporary or permanent carers’ families
- venues for introductions
- the need for “rest days” during the period of introduction, as this is a stressful and tiring process for all concerned

The plan needs to be written down and copied to key people

Do:
- set a time-scale which maintains momentum, and keep this under review
- decide who is to tell the child about the new family – when, how and what
- allow time for goodbyes to current carers and local friends
- think carefully about the timing of the move, which should be during a holiday period for children of school age, if at all possible
- reassure the child about future contact with familiar figures (temporary carers, family, friends etc.) and provide photographs
- ensure the child takes her or his own belongings to the new placement, packed in a suitcase, not in a plastic bin-liner
- support temporary carers to give positive messages about the move
- agree what names the child and new carers will call each other
- be clear about the purpose of introductions as a positive experience for the child
- remember that introductions are the start of a process of attachment
- ensure emotional support for both sets of carers
- clarify transport arrangements – who, how, when, who pays
- involve carers’ own children as appropriate
- make sure the child is well supported during the period of introductions
- make potential difficulties/risks explicit and be aware of tensions
- ensure that statutory notifications are sent out
- set a review date in order to review the adoption introductions prior to finalising the assessment date and assess:
  - the impact of introductions on all parties
  - if child and new carers feel comfortable and the “chemistry” is working
  - the extent to which the child’s attachment to the new carer is developing
  - the child’s developmental needs and progress
  - whether or not timescales need adjusting
  - whether any further work or tasks need to be completed before the placement is made
  - agree date for final move and confirm that all documentation needed by the prospective adopters has been/will be handed over to them, and by whom

Consider the need for a Life Appreciation Day or equivalent meeting, the purpose of which is to:
- bring together those people who have played a significant part in the life of the child, so that participants may take a conducted journey through the life of the child
- capture in chronological sequence the major events and changes in the child’s life, including changes of carer(s) and attachment history
- understand the factors that have influenced the child’s perceptions and reactions to events, including his/her developmental stages
- capture anecdotes and memories of the child throughout his/her life
Don’t:
- criticise current or new carers in front of the child
- encourage friends and family to visit the new placement during introductions or in the early days of the placement because the child and new parents will need time to attach and establish routines
- move the child on, or close to, significant events, celebrations, or festivals
- move the child when support systems are less available – end of the week or weekends are unlikely to be good times
- arrange for the child to go on holiday with the new carers before the child is well settled in the new family

Making the move
At the time of placement check that:
- medical card, health records, court orders and the child’s birth certificate are handed over to the new family
- arrangements have been made for payments to carers to be started from the date of placement
- all equipment has been supplied
- statutory notifications have been carried out, including to the birth parents prior to the adoption placement day
- school or day care have been notified
- the child has been or will be registered with a GP in the area in which the new family lives
- arrangements have been made for any outstanding clinic appointments to be transferred, including dentist

Summary of local authorities’ duties in respect of adoption support
The Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to make arrangements, as part of the service maintained under section 1(1) of the Adoption Act 1976, for the provision of a range of adoption support services.

They place new duties on local authorities to carry out assessments of needs for adoption support services and having carried out an assessment, a local authority is required to decide whether to provide any services.

They also give local authorities powers to pay financial support and provide services for people living outside of their area.

Local authorities must act reasonably when deciding whether to provide support services following an assessment.

Section 1(3) of the Adoption Act 1976 provides that a local authority may arrange for the facilities that it has a duty to maintain under section 1 to be provided by appropriate voluntary organisations.

When must an assessment be provided?
The new Regulations, which came into force in October 2003, provide that an assessment of needs for adoption support services must be carried out in the following circumstances:
- when considering whether adoption is in the best interests of a looked after child
- when considering a match between a prospective adopter and a particular looked after child
- when the placement for adoption of a looked after child is reviewed within the first four weeks of placement
- when requested by: an adoptive parent; an adoptive child; a child of an adoptive parent

An assessment in respect of supporting contact arrangements only should be provided at the request of:
- a birth parent or relative of the adoptive child
- a person with whom the adoptive child has an important relationship
Who should provide the assessment?
The table below explains which local authority must provide an assessment as laid out in Regulations. Authorities have additional powers to carry out assessments which are designed to allow them to act flexibly in deciding to assess in a specific case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCE</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSESSMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child is looked after by the local authority</td>
<td>The local authority by whom the child is looked after must assess a person entitled to be assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has been placed for adoption by the local authority</td>
<td>The local authority which has placed the child for adoption must assess a person entitled to be assessed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Child adopted following placement by a local authority | • The local authority which placed the child for adoption must assess a related person  
• The local authority which placed the child for adoption must assess a person (other than a related person) entitled to be assessed if it is less than a year since the adoption order or less than three years since the child was placed  
• A local authority must assess a person (other than a related person) entitled to be assessed who lives in their area if it is more than a year since the adoption order and more than three years since the child was placed |
| In all other cases (i.e. non-agency cases) | Local authority where requester lives must assess |

Assessments should follow the guidance set out in, and use the domains of, the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families – the child’s developmental needs, the parenting capacity of the adopters and consideration of the family and environmental factors. Assessments should build on past assessments (e.g. care/adoption plans and Integrated Children’s System records).
Financial support
Financial payments may be deemed appropriate following an assessment of need, but there is no automatic entitlement.
Adoption Allowances Regulations 1991 will no longer apply, although existing allowances paid under those regulations automatically transfer under the 2003 Regulations.
There is new flexibility for agencies to respond to the needs of the child and his/her circumstances in order to secure a placement. This can include:
- lump sums, as a one-off or series of payments
- regular payments for ongoing need
Support may be paid to non-agency adopters, such as intercountry adopters who have given notice to apply for an adoption order or who have adopted a child. Step-parents are not eligible to be considered.
In determining the amount, authorities must take into account any new income that will be available in respect of the child after adoption, e.g. tax credits.
Financial support paid to adoptive families will be disregarded for the purpose of determining eligibility to tax credits; also for calculating income for the purpose of income-related benefits. Financial support will be exempt from tax.
Payments can be made above the usual level for specific periods to ease transition from fostering allowance for foster carers who go on to adopt.

Who funds the services?
The Regulations give local authorities the power to act flexibly in providing services to a person who lives outside their area. The guidance sets out how the Government intends local authorities to exercise this discretion in certain circumstances.

a) For adoption support services other than financial support
The placing authority always retains the responsibility to:
- maintain the case record set up in accordance with regulation 14 of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983
- manage and support any contact arrangements (e.g. letterbox arrangements) agreed prior to the adoption order and any changes over time.

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### A Summary of Adoption Support Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible specific difficulties for children placed for adoption</th>
<th>Menu of services</th>
<th>Issues for agencies to consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recovering from abuse — physical — sexual — emotional — neglect</td>
<td><strong>ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER 2003 REGS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment difficulties</td>
<td>- Counselling, advice and information</td>
<td>- All needs may not be apparent at time of placement. Child and adoptive parents' needs should be assessed on an ongoing basis, when requested by the adoptive parents under the 2003 Regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disabilities</td>
<td>- Financial support</td>
<td>- Consider access routes into adoption support services — how will these be organised and communicated to adoptive families locally and regionally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour problems</td>
<td>- Support groups for newly adopted children</td>
<td>- Need to raise the profile of adopted children and adoptive families as potential users of these services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>- Other possible adoption-specific services</td>
<td>- Children newly adopting are already likely to be receiving services — these services should continue post-placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with loss and separation</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Importance of discussing adoption and related services with adoptees and identifying possible sources of support before placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Services can come from a variety of sources. The importance of multi-agency planning and co-ordination is vital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Role of social services in co-ordination and commission, but not necessarily to provide support services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not all children will need adoption support services. It is important that services which are known about to adoptive families to prevent unnecessary stress and avoidable disruptions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Possible Difficulties for Children Placed for Adoption

- Recovering from abuse — physical — sexual — emotional — neglect
- Attachment difficulties
- Learning disabilities
- Behaviour problems
- Depression
- Coping with loss and separation

### General Considerations

Recognising the mechanisms of different children to early life experiences will vary. Because the vast majority of children who are adopted have been looked after, their needs are likely already to have been assessed — perhaps several times.

It will be important to ensure that the learning from these earlier assessments is included in assessment of need for adoption support.

For three years from the date of placement, the placing authority should be responsible for funding adoption support services (other than financial support).

b) For financial support

Where the placing authority has decided prior to the making of the adoption order to provide ongoing financial support, it continues to be responsible until support is terminated in accordance with regulation 13. This applies also to adoption allowances currently in payment under the 1991 Regulations.

For three years from the date of placement, the placing authority should be responsible for funding ongoing financial support that the placing authority has decided to provide after the making of the adoption order.

If the adoption order is secured two years after the date of placement, the placing authority will be responsible for funding adoption support for one further year.

c) All support services (including financial support)

A local authority will only ever be responsible for funding services that it decided to provide.

Where a new request for an adoption support service (including financial support) is made more than three years after the date of placement and one year after the adoption order, the local authority where the family lives should be responsible for carrying out the assessment and funding any services.

The process for adoption support services

1. Request from eligible person
2. Adoption considered for a child
3. Assess child’s needs for support services when making 'best interests' application to the Adoption Panel.
4. Build on Care/Adoption Plan and ICS information
5. Application to Panel to match child with a prospective adoptive family
6. Notice given
   - Representations considered
7. Authority decision on adoption support
   - Support that will be provided and time-scale
8. Notice given
9. Services to be provided?
   - Yes
   - No Plan produced
   - Prepare Plan
     - Aims
     - Time-scales
     - Workers involved
     - Evaluate and review
   - Services provided
   - Review services:
     - every six months
     - if change of circumstances
   - Review financial support:
     - annually
     - if change of circumstances
   - Notice given
10. Notice given
It is important that everyone keeps a positive focus, even through these most difficult and trying times. Remember many children and families who have been involved in disruptions go on to have subsequent successful placements.

13. DISRUPTIONS

There are thousands of adoptions that result in successful families, but there will always be some placements that end prematurely. It is a traumatic time for all concerned.

Research and experience tell us that there are four main causes of disruption:

- the emergence of previously unidentified or unknown factors
- the mis-assessment of the family or the child’s readiness to make an adoptive attachment
- the appearance of unpredictable circumstances which have impacted on the process
- lack of all available information about the child given to the adoptive parents

It is important that workers:

- make sure that the child(ren) and the family have someone they trust with whom they can share their feelings and concerns
- arrange to tell the child together with the adopters why the disruption is happening, to ensure that a consistent explanation is given to the child and to provide support. This will be very difficult, but children usually know when something is wrong and need to understand what is happening, otherwise they will blame themselves
- make sure that the child has been told in simple language that they can understand
- make appropriate arrangements with the adoptive family in preparing the child for the move. This is a loss to both the child and the family, and if they can acknowledge this it will help their understanding of events at a later stage
- recognise that unless a child is at risk of harm, there are no reasons why a child should be moved without careful thought and planning
- consider the position of the birth family: they will need to be told what has happened and this will need careful planning
- ensure that support is available from a manager or another worker with experience of adoption so that neither a sense of frustration, guilt nor blame is projected onto anyone else

Arrange to hold a DISRUPTION MEETING, or an alternative meeting, to identify the circumstances leading to the disruption so that all concerned can learn from the experience and try again. This meeting should be chaired by a person with significant childcare and adoption experience.
USEFUL READING

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