

## **Coventry City Council Fostering for Adoption/Early Permanency scheme**

# **Could you foster a baby or child with the possibility of adoption?**

### **What is Fostering for Adoption?**

Fostering for adoption is used for babies and children where the Local Authority plan is adoption, where it considers that there is very little chance that the child will be able to live with parents or extended family, but where the court has not yet made the final decision that they should be placed for adoption. In these circumstances the child may be placed with approved adopters who are also temporarily approved as foster carers for the child, whilst assessments are carried out with the birth family, and the court decides whether the child should be placed for adoption or not.

- This could be where parents have previously had one or more children removed and adopted and they have made little or no improvement in their circumstances to indicate they can safely care for this child.
- It could be where the parents' circumstances and the risks to the child are such that there is no active plan to return the child to live with the parents or extended family.
- It could, very occasionally, be where parents indicate that they want their child adopted but they have not yet formally consented to this.

### **Why Fostering for Adoption?**

Usually children who are adopted are first placed with foster carers and then moved on to their adopters once the court grants a placement order. This is a huge disruption for a child at a vulnerable age. Fostering for Adoption protects children from experiencing moves within the care system. It provides children with good quality, uninterrupted and consistent care whilst the plan is being decided. If the court decides adoption is right for the child the Fostering for Adoption adopters will be considered as permanent adoptive parents for the child. Consistent care from an early age with the same carers reduces possible trauma and supports the child in developing healthy attachments. Fostering for Adoption enables the child to live with potential adopters at the earliest opportunity so they can form an attachment to their new family sooner.

### **What does it involve?**

Babies and children without a placement order can be placed with approved adopters if these adopters have also been approved as temporary foster carers for the child/ren. These 'Fostering for Adoption' adopters will provide the day to day care for the child and will continue to work with the child's social worker to ensure that the child has all of their needs met. At the same time, the child's social worker will continue working with the child's birth family to see if they have made the changes needed to have the child returned to their care. The Court will make the final decision on the plan for the child but this can take 6 months or longer. If the decision is that the child should be adopted and the placement is going well, the Fostering for Adoption adopters will attend the adoption

matching panel. If panel and the Adoption Agency Decision Maker agree, they will become the prospective adopters for the child and the placement becomes a 'placement for adoption'. After this they can apply to the court for a final Adoption Order.

Alternatively, if the court decides that the child should be returned to their birth family then the Fostering for Adoption adopters will need to help the child move on.

## **How are the children placed?**

If a Fostering for Adoption placement is needed and potential Fostering for Adoption adopters are identified, information will be shared with the potential adopters about the child. This will include as much information as we have about the child's health, development, birth family history and the reasons we think they are unable to live with their birth family. Because children placed through Fostering for Adoption may be very young and placements may need to be made very quickly there may be less information available in these circumstances.

If the social workers feel that the adopters and child/ren are a good match and that the adopters are able to meet all of the child/ren's needs they will meet with the adopters to discuss the child/ren further and to plan the placement.

The adopters' social worker will recommend that they should become temporary foster carers for the child and a report will be submitted to the Agency Decision Maker for approval. The social workers will then arrange for the child to be introduced and placed, initially under fostering regulations.

## **Will the child still have contact with their birth family?**

Yes, until the court makes a decision that the child should be adopted, most children will have regular supervised contact with their birth family. This could be several times a week.

The confidentiality of the Fostering for Adoption adopters is protected as much as possible so the birth family will not know their details and address. They will only be expected to take the child to contact with birth parents if it is safe to do so.

## **What are the benefits for the adopters?**

Fostering for Adoption adopters have the immense satisfaction of providing stability and security for the child at an early stage in their development, with the possibility that the infant may become their legally adopted child, if the court agrees. They also take on board the emotional risk that the child may be returned to the birth family if the court decides this is best.

## **Do Fostering for Adoption adopters get financial help?**

Yes, Fostering for Adoption adopters receive a fostering allowance for the child during the 'fostering phase' and are also entitled to claim the normal amount of adoption leave and pay, either when the child is first placed, or when the court gives the placement order and the placement changes to a 'placement for adoption'.

## **What support is available for Fostering for Adoption adopters?**

When a child is placed the Fostering for Adoption adopters are supported by their adoption social worker who will be able to provide ongoing advice and supervision. Their social worker will help the adopters understand the fostering regulations and requirements and support them through the particular challenges and uncertainties involved in this type of placement. The child's own social worker continues to visit the child at the adopters' home and also keeps the adopters updated regarding the plan for the child and the court process. If the placement becomes a 'placement for adoption' the social workers will remain involved through to the adoption order. Support will also be available to the adopters from the Adoption Support Team after the final adoption order is granted.

## **Do Fostering for Adoption adopters have a different type of adoption assessment?**

Fostering for Adoption adopters are approved adopters who have the added skills, emotional resilience and willingness to be able to offer a child a loving and nurturing home whilst living with the possibility that the child may be returned to their birth family if a placement order is not granted.

Fostering for Adoption adopters go through the normal prospective adopter's assessment but during this time their social worker provides additional information and training on Fostering for Adoption. In particular they need to be clear about the fostering role and how they will be expected to work with the agency and other professionals. They will get the chance to talk with others who have done Fostering for Adoption.

Adopters and their social worker will discuss whether they have the special qualities needed to offer a Fostering for Adoption placement. Fostering for Adoption adopters will need to be able to deal with uncertainty and be robust enough to manage the potential loss of the child/ren if they are eventually returned to the birth family, helping the child move on if need be. Fostering for Adoption adopters also need to be able to work with birth parents in a positive way and in some circumstances facilitate contact until such time as the decision about the child's future is made. Fostering for Adoption is not suitable for everybody.

Fostering for Adoption adopters can be considered for any child needing a Fostering for Adoption placement (but may also wish to be considered for adoption placements made in the usual way.)

**If you are interested in Fostering for Adoption please contact the Coventry City Council Adoption Service for further information or register for one of our Information events.**

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