

# Coventry City Council.

## Information on Fostering for Adoption/Early Permanency

### What is Fostering for Adoption?

Fostering for adoption is used for babies and children where the Local Authority plan is adoption but the placement order has not yet been granted. In these circumstances the child may be placed with approved adopters, who are also temporarily approved as foster carers for that particular child, whilst assessments are carried out with birth parents/connected persons and the court decides whether the child should be placed for adoption. This option should only be used where there is a very strong reason to believe that the court will grant a placement order.

- 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. Also where there are no viable connected persons available to care for the 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 potential 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 it 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 the new family sooner.

### What does it involve?

All approved Coventry City Council adopters will have been through a process of preparation, assessment, panel scrutiny and Agency Decision Maker approval. During this process they will have been given the opportunity to consider Fostering for Adoption. If they are interested in this option and the assessment shows a thorough understanding of the task as well as the practical and emotional capacity to take this on, they may be approved as adopters with advice that they can also be considered for a Fostering for Adoption placement.

If a child is identified as potentially benefitting from a Fostering for Adoption placement an initial referral will be made by the child's social worker to the Adoption Team. If a potential Fostering for Adoption adopter is available, a planning meeting will be held between the child's social worker, the adopters' social worker and an adoption manager in order to discuss the circumstances. This

meeting should clarify whether Fostering for Adoption is the right option for the child, identify the risks and benefits of such a placement (including contact arrangements) and consider whether the potential adopters are a suitable match with regard to the child's checklist of needs.

The potential Fostering for Adoption adopters will be contacted and initial information about the child and their circumstances will be shared with them. Note that the child may be unborn at this time.

If the adopters wish to proceed, a further meeting including the child's social worker, adopters' social worker, adoption manager and potential adopters will be held to exchange information and plan the placement if a decision is made to proceed. An Interim Care Order will be in force or will need to be applied for at this stage/once the child is born.

A report requesting temporary approval of the adopters as foster carers for a specific child under Regulation 25a of the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010 will be completed by the adopters' social worker and submitted to the ADM.

When an order is in place and the ADM has agreed the temporary approval of the adopters as foster carers for the specific child, the child may be placed with the adopters under fostering regulations. This arrangement (with fostering allowances payable) will remain in place until such time as a placement order may be made. Statutory visits to the child and child care reviews will apply. Contact with birth parents is likely to continue and consideration must be given to the need to protect the Fostering for Adoption adopters' confidentiality.

If a placement order is granted the formal matching for adoption of the child with the potential adopters will be considered and reports will be submitted to adoption matching panel in the normal way. Panels' recommendation will be submitted to the ADM and, if approval is granted, the placement will become 'placement for adoption' until such time as an adoption order may be granted.

### **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 the emotional risk that the placement order may not be granted and the child may be placed back with birth family.

### **Do Fostering for Adoption adopters' get financial support?**

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 other 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 them understand the fostering regulations and requirements and support them through the particular challenges and uncertainties involved in this type of placement. In accordance with regulations the child's own social worker also continues to make statutory visits to the child at the adopters' home and keeps the adopters updated regarding the plan for the child and the court

process. If the placement becomes 'placement for adoption' the social workers will continue to support the child and their adopters through to the Adoption Order. Support remains available to the adopters via the Adoption Support Team post Adoption Order.

**For more information or to discuss a potential Fostering for Adoption situation please phone the Adoption Team on 02476 831873.**

*Updated July 2017.*