

The Agency Decision Making (ADM) Process

Introduction

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is the person who makes the decisions as to whether the proposed Care Plan for Adoption, Early Permanence and Foster to Adopt and Permanent Fostering is the right decision for the child.

The ADM will give consideration to the Welfare Checklist in Section 1 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, information in the CPR and other reports. Minutes from the Adoption Panel are presented.

The ADM will identify key arguments in the Care Plan and set out their reasons for making the decision. The medical advisor and agency advisor will be available to give advice to the ADM if required.

The ADM will sign off the decision after considering all the information presented to them.

Birth parents will be informed verbally by the allocated Social Worker, within 2 working days of the ADM decision and a letter will be sent to the birth parents by the allocated social worker within 5 working days confirming the decision.

There will be a designated day for cases to be presented to the ADM Panel.

The Principles Guiding the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) Process

- The welfare checklist in Section 1 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002
- The child's ascertainable wishes and feelings regarding the decision considered in the light of the child's age and understanding
- The child's particular needs
- The likely effect on the child throughout his/her life of having ceased to be a member of the original family and become an adopted person
- The child's age, sex background and any of the child's characteristics which the court or agency considers relevant
- Any harm within the meaning of the Children's Act 1989, which the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering
- The relationship which the child has with relatives, and with any other person in relation to whom the court or agency considers the relationship to be relevant including:
 - The likelihood of any such relation continuing and the value to the child of it doing so
 - The ability and willingness of any of the child relatives or any such person, to provide the child with a secure environment in which the child can develop, and otherwise to meet the child needs
 - The wishes and feeling of any child's relatives, or of any such person regarding the child.

- All the information surrounding the case including the reports submitted to the Adoption Panel (where applicable), and confirmation that the authors of the reports are appropriately qualified to prepare them.
- The stability and permanence of the relationship of any couple under consideration
- The recommendation and reasons of the Adoption Panel and any Independent Review Panel under the IRM.
- The final minutes of the Adoption Panel including any minutes from the adjourned Panel meeting and the Independent Review Panel

Administration of the paperwork

The Adoption Team Administrator has the responsibility for the administration of the paperwork in readiness for ADM decisions.

The role of the Childcare Teams and Service Manager for Family Safeguarding Teams

The Team Managers and social workers will need to ensure that the quality of the CPR's is good, care plans are written to a good standard, viability assessments have clear reasoning and all checks are completed.

The Agency Adviser

The Agency Advisor, with the support of the Adoption Team Administrator and Adoption Team Manager, will be the person to complete the Agency Advisor recommendations which would include a summary of the case and the recommendations. This means that the Agency Advisor will read the information from the child's social worker: the CPR, care plan, viability assessments and all other assessments completed in the care proceedings such as experts reports and kinship/SGO assessments to support the recommendations and decision making.

The summary must have critical thinking around the outcome of assessments. For example, if an applicant is ruled out at the viability assessment stage, the Agency Advisor should have reasons for this and importantly a good analysis of the reasons. The same would apply to full assessments of friends/family members.

The expectation is that once the Agency Advisor has made recommendations, this is put in the pack with all the assessments and given to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) along with the ADM decision sheet.

Legal Advice

Legal Services provide legal advice to the ADM on the merits of the plan for adoption and whether the application for a placement order is likely to be successful

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) - Director of Operations

The Agency Advisor recommendations, the completed ADM decision sheet and all the paper work will be presented to the Agency Decision Maker

The ADM will use a summary of the information provided by the Agency Advisor to help them make their decision.

No case should be presented to the ADM in 'bits' without the Agency Advisor's clear recommendation

The Process and time scales:

The date for ADM decisions is determined by the 26 weeks court timescale. The ADM decision is to be made by the date the Local Authority files its final evidence and care plans to the court. The date of the final evidence will be agreed by the Childcare Team at the case management hearing (CMH). When the Childcare Team receive the approved Case Management Order (CMO) from Legal Services they are to inform the Agency Advisor and Adoption Team Administrator of the date of the final evidence.

The child's adoption medical should be requested once the plan for adoption or parallel planning is being considered.

The CPR, care plans, viability assessments and any other assessments necessary to inform the ADM decisions need to be ready to be sent to the Adoption Team Administrator 3 weeks before the ADM Panel date so it can be collated in readiness for presentation to the Panel Advisor and subsequently to the ADM.

The Team Managers and social workers will need to ensure that the quality of the reports is to a good standard. Viability assessments should have clear reasoning and all checks must be completed. All assessments obtained within the care proceedings such as experts reports and kinship/SGO assessments are to be sent to the Adoption Team Administrator with the CPR.

All information is sent by the Childcare Social Worker and Team Manager to the Adoption Team Administrator who will collate the information for the Agency Advisor.

The Agency Advisor has responsibility for the final quality assurance of all the documents before they are collated for the ADM.

The final Legal Planning Meeting should be requested by the Childcare Team for a date when all assessments have been completed and should take place no later than 5 working days before the Agency Advisor's recommendations

A copy of the legal advice to the ADM is sent by Legal Services to the Agency Advisor and the Adoption Team Administrator within 5 working days of receipt of the quality assured final version of the CPR

The Agency Advisor completes both the Agency Advisor Recommendation Sheet and the decision sheet by the ADM.

All the information: CPR, legal advice, copies of assessments from the Childcare Team, Panel minutes, Agency Advisor recommendation sheet and the ADM decision sheet) is put together in a pack ready for the ADM to access for decision making.

All paper work collated by the Adoption Team Administrator will be sent to the ADM inbox by the Wednesday before ADM Panel meetings and decisions on the following Friday.

The ADM Panel will be held on a Friday and the following persons are to attend;

ADM

Agency Advisor and / or Adoption Team manager

Childcare Team Manager and Social Worker

Child's social worker

Service Manager (Safeguarding)

Legal Services representative

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