Early Permanence Practice Guidance

This guidance is to be read in conjunction with the Children and Families Act 2014 Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement and Review statutory Guidance 2015 and CoramBAAF good Practice Guidance.

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**Appendices**

Appendix 1: Report for Temporary Approval as a Foster Carer
Appendix 2: Summary of allowances Provided to Early Permanence Foster Carers (EPC)
1. Permanency Policy Statement

We are committed to providing appropriate resources to secure the upbringing of children and young people within their families or wider kinship network. Where this is not an option, it will be necessary to plan for legal and emotional security (permanence) through the provision of high quality substitute care. Our primary purpose is to ensure that Birmingham’s children and young people grow up in safe and stable homes and communities; are protected from harm; nurtured to reach their full potential and supported to make positive contributions. Our primary aim is to ensure that this is achieved at the earliest point in the care planning process.

2. Planning for Permanence

Planning for permanence is at the centre of all social work activities undertaken with children and their families and should underpin work undertaken in each of our core services, from family support at the beginning right through to adoption at the close. Permanence Plans should consider the emotional, physical and legal conditions that will give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging. When planning for permanence, the objective is to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. Determining which permanence option might be in a child’s best interests requires a thorough and balanced assessment of current and future needs; risks and likely outcomes informed by multi-agency contributions; the wishes and feelings of the child and the views of the family (see Voice of the Child Practice Guidance). The conclusion of the assessment should form the Permanence Plan, which is incorporated into the Care Plan and finalised in time for the second Child in Care Statutory Review.

3. The Early Permanence Option

Early Permanence is a child centred practice that aims to ensure that those children unable to live safely with their birth families are placed with their permanent substitute families at the earliest, preventing multiple moves and the associated trauma of separation from and loss of attachment figures.

There are two types of Early Permanence; “Fostering for Adoption” and “Concurrency”. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably. To simplify
matters, the Adoption Service recommends that we plan for Early Permanence in the first instance, with the options to be considered thereafter.

Early Permanence should be considered as a potential option at the initial stage of assessment, legal and care planning for all children though typically it is for babies and young children whose circumstances are such that they have a high risk of being unable to return safely to the care of their birth families and where there is a strong likelihood of an adoption plan being agreed. For example, where birth parents have had one child or more previously removed from their care and either adopted, or placed under another permanency arrangement, and where the evidence strongly suggests that their circumstances have not changed. To support an analysis of whether Early Permanence may be a suitable option, complete the Early Permanence Screening Tool and use your findings to inform permanency decision making.

Early Permanence is not a “fast track” to matching and placement for adoption. The child’s Social Worker will still need to ensure that the Adoption Plan is endorsed at the Child in Care Review and thereafter agreed by an Agency Decision Maker via the Panel Team. When and if a Placement Order is granted, it is also the case that the match will be presented to Panel as per the standard procedure. It is only when the Adoption Plan has been agreed; a final Care Plan has been endorsed by the courts, or parental consents given, and the match approved by an Agency Decision Maker that the status of the Early Permanence Carers will transfer to Prospective Adopter and a share of parental responsibility can be exercised.

The advantage of an Early Permanence Placement is that the child will live with dually approved carers (i.e. approved for both fostering and adoption) who, subject to a Placement Order being made, or parental consent being given, are expected to go on to become the child’s adoptive parents. Consequently, the child is spared the trauma of separation and loss through transition from foster care to adoption at a critical time in early child development when attachments should be secure and enduring. This is especially relevant when considering the findings of Van den Dries et al’s (2009) international review, which concluded that those who were adopted before 12 months of age were as securely attached as their non-adopted peers, whereas those adopted after their first birthday showed less attachment security than non-adopted children. The inference is that Early Permanence is critical to secure attachment and future emotional stability.
4. Early Permanence Carers

Early Permanence Carers offer a very special service to children unable to live with their families, putting themselves forward to care for children for life. They take a huge emotional risk when fostering a child with a view to adoption because it is possible that after many months, the child may be reunified with the birth family. As such, they will need to have demonstrated capacity to manage the stresses of uncertainty and to work with a change of plan whilst experiencing the symptoms of grief. Early Permanence Carers will receive training to understand the risks inherent in Early Permanence Placements and if the child does return to the birth family, they will be given support to address their emotional needs to enable them to support the child to move to their new home.

Early Permanence Carers are dually approved by the Adoption Service as both foster carers and adopters after demonstrating capacities that they are both suitable to adopt and to manage the specific tasks of Early Permanence. Once approved, they are available to provide Early Permanence although they are also able to consider children with Placement Orders awaiting permanence. In other words, Early Permanence Carers are not protected solely for Early Permanence use.

Early Permanence Carers provide the full range of fostering services expected of any other Birmingham Children’s Trust Foster Carer. For example, they will be expected to complete case recordings, participate in routine supervision, comply with statutory visit arrangements, provide updates to the child’s Social Worker, commence and maintain life story work, facilitate contact and attend Child in Care Reviews/meetings pertaining to the child. All professionals in the team around the child must remember that the Early Permanence Placement might well become an adoptive placement; maintaining confidentiality (names and addresses etc) during meetings, when writing reports, updating the electronic system etc is crucial.

5. Duty to Consider Early Permanence

Where Birmingham Children’s Trust has considered -

a. the suitability of all birth family members and connected persons as permanent caregivers for the child

b. AND concluded that it is unsafe for the child to live with birth parents, birth family members or other connected persons
c. AND has no plan for reunification

d. BUT does not yet have authority (parental consent or Placement Order) to place the child for adoption THEN under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Trust

e. MUST consider placing the child with an Early Permanence Carer.


6. Early Permanence Planning

The child’s Social Worker will consider whether an Early Permanence Placement is a viable option in consultation with their Team Manager, the child’s IRO, Adoption Services and Legal Services. The Early Permanence Screening Tool may help set the agenda, structure discussions and reach a conclusion. The key points of the discussion and the outcome should be recorded on the child’s file by the child’s Team Manager.

Unborn Babies
Where planning is underway for unborn babies and

a. it has been concluded that it is unsafe for the child to live with birth parents, birth family members or connected persons once born;

b. AND it is considered highly likely that an adoption plan will be agreed owing to significant risks;

c. AND a Placement Order will be granted or birth parents will give advanced consent to adoption;

Early Permanence can be considered at the point of the child’s discharge from hospital preventing a need for a short term foster home. Note that in these cases Birmingham Children’s Trust is placing the child with foster carers who are dually approved, and therefore are not pre-empting any court decisions with regards to the Final Care Plan.
6.1 **Relinquished Babies**

Where planning is underway for relinquished babies, early consultation with the Adoption Service is strongly recommended to plan the response jointly. This is because the Adoption Act Regulations sets out a duty to provide adoption counselling to each birth parent, at all stages of the process, to ensure the immediate and life-long implications of adoption are understood and the capacity to give consent is assessed, particularly where decisions are being made immediately following the birth. In addition, the rights of the father and the paternal family in cases where the mother has concealed and or relinquished without the consent, can be extremely complex and the legal implications need particular consideration.

A pre-birth meeting (wherever possible) with the birth parent(s) and or birth family must be set up by the child's Social Worker. An Adoption Social Worker should also attend to give the necessary advice and guidance on adoption matters. It may be necessary to offer further meetings to assist the birth parent(s) to understand the ramifications of the decision and test the possibilities of the child remaining in the birth family further.

If it is confirmed that the child will be relinquished for adoption, there being no alternative options, the child's Social Worker must follow Birmingham Children's Trust's procedures relating to adoption planning for relinquished children as well as referring to the Family Finding Service for Early Permanence.

6.2 **Children with Adopted Siblings**

Where planning is underway for children with siblings who have been adopted, it is important to consider whether Early Permanence should be privileged over a possible sibling adoption placement. In other words, a decision should be made as to whether it is more important to settle the child into an Early Permanence family than have the child enter short term foster care and await the outcomes of sibling adopter enquiries or a sibling adopter assessment.

In some cases, it may be that sibling adopters are aware of additional children being born into the family and express an interest in being assessed. Early Permanence with a sibling adopter is possible if sibling adopters are dually approved or can be temporarily approved as Early Permanence carers. For temporary approval to be considered, they would already need to be
approved as mainstream adopters. If the child’s Social Worker is aware of a sibling adopter being interested in assessment for the next child born into the birth family, consultation should take place with the Adoption Service.

6.3 **Children Living with Family Members**

In some instances, children may be living with family members though the situation is no longer safe and there is a plan for them to enter BCT foster care. Whilst Early Permanence might be desirable in such instances, to prevent multiple moves, it is usually preferable for the child to enter foster care initially in order that their needs can be understood before progressing. Early Permanence Carers will generally expect that children will be entering their care at the point of hospital discharge (new-borns) or from foster carer where there may have been some opportunity to recover from early experiences.

7. **Early Permanence Consultations**

In all cases where Early Permanence is under consideration and may be viable, it is essential that the child’s Social Worker meets with the birth parents, including fathers without parental responsibility and any other significant connected persons, to ensure that they understand the Early Permanence proposal.

*Note that in cases where the child has been relinquished, the meetings to discuss the ramifications of the decision may include the consultation regarding Early Permanence if this is considered to be suitable; if not, a separate, additional Early Permanence consultation must take place.*

Adoption Services can provide support to the child’s Social Worker to manage the Early Permanence Consultations during which the following points must be made:

- Early Permanence Carers are approved to foster and adopt though when the placement is made, it is done so under fostering not adoption regulations;
- Early Permanence Carers do not have any parental responsibility for the child, they take instructions from BCT, comply with any court directions, consider any parental requests, facilitate contact and support reunification to the birth family where agreed;
- Early Permanence Carers are considered to be the best option for the child as it is the view of BCT that it is unlikely that the child will return to the birth parents or a birth relative or other connected person;
Despite Early Permanence being promoted as a viable permanence option by BCT, the child’s final Care Plan has not yet been agreed by the Court;

Only when and if the Court decides that adoption is in the child’s best interests and grants a Placement Order or when and if parental consent has been made explicit, will BCT move forward with plans to change the status of the Early Permanence Carers to prospective adopters;

The child’s Social Worker and the Adoption Service will make a final assessment as to whether the Early Permanence Carers are suitable to adopt before proceeding with the usual tasks to match the child at a Permanency Panel;

It is only when the match has been recommended at a panel and agreed by an agency decision maker that the status of the placement changes from fostering to adoption and only when an Adoption Order granted that the former Early Permanence Carers take on full legal responsibility for the child;

Further support about Early Permanence is available to the birth family from the child’s Social Worker who can request support from Adoption Services as necessary.

During the Early Permanence Consultation(s) the Social Worker for the child must ascertain and record the wishes and feelings of the birth parents and any other significant attendees from the child’s connected person’s network. In addition, where possible, in a separate meeting, the child’s Social Worker should discuss Early Permanence with the child and record their understanding about the situation, along with any wishes or feelings.

All consultations should be written up by the child’s Social Worker and placed on the child’s file (see Appendix 1).

8. Referral for Early Permanence

Following discussions with the team around the child and the Early Permanence Consultations with birth family members or significant connected persons, if the decision is that an Early Permanence Placement would be suitable, the child’s Social Worker must make a referral to the Family Finding Service as soon as possible to prevent delay in the care planning. **Note that a referral for Early Permanence is not a fast track to adoption; all of the standard adoption planning procedures must be followed in line with the child’s Care Plan.**

There is no specific Referral Form for Early Permanence; the standard referral is used and has space for the provision of information pertaining to the child’s Early
Permanence needs. When completing the referral, it is important that the child’s Social Worker provides information that will assist the Family Finding Service in making an appropriate match; at this stage, there is unlikely to be a Child Permanence Report to reply upon for the necessarily details.

Once the referral is processed, the Family Finding Service will review whether Early Permanence is a viable option based upon the information provided about the family history, the current assessments and likelihood of an adoption plan being agreed. Further discussions with the child’s Social Worker or Team Manager may need to be held and should be recorded on the child’s file.

9. Considering Early Permanence Options

Where Early Permanence is a viable option, the Family Finding Service will review whether there are any approved Early Permanence Carers who could be a suitable match. Assessing match suitability at this early stage is important because it could be that the Early Permanence Carers go on to become the child’s adopters.

In addition to considering dually approved Early Permanence Carers, the Family Finding Service will consider approved Birmingham Adopters who are not dually approved though could be a suitable match. In these cases, the prospective adopter could gain approval to foster under Regulation 25a of the Care Planning, Placement and Review Statutory Guidance 2015.

When considering the Early Permanence Placement options, BCT is not bound by the requirements that normally apply to placements of a looked after child. BCT does not have a duty to consider the following points though will take them into consideration;

- to place the child near his/her home;
- avoid disrupting the child's education;
- place siblings together; and
- to place the child within the Local Authority’s area.

If there are no Early Permanence options available internally, the Family Finding Service will consider Early Permanence Carers approved by external agencies. These families will be identified by making enquiries with adoption agencies undertaking searches of the adoption registers of which BCT has membership. Prior to search work commencing, permission to move to an external provider will be sought from a Senior Adoption Manager.
When placing a child with Early Permanence Carers approved by an external agency, the Family Finding Service will take into consideration the standard of the fostering provisions as well as the standard of adoption support given pre Adoption Order and post. In addition, the Family Finding Service will consider factors such as location, to ensure that contact arrangements can be maintained.

If there are no suitable options internally or externally, the Family Finding Service will provide an update to the child’s Social Worker and the referral will be held within the Adoption Service to be actioned at a later date, should the adoption plan be agreed.

10. Allocation of a Family Finder for Early Permanence Placements:

If there appears to be a viable Early Permanence Carer a Family Finding Social Worker will be allocated to co-ordinate the Early Permanence Care planning and ensure the child’s needs are critically analysed and formulated clearly from the outset.

Within 5 days of allocation, the Family Finding Social Worker will

a. contact the team around the child to notify of the allocation, make enquiries of the professional views held about the child, the child’s needs, the family circumstances and any other relevant matters and clarify on the Early Permanence Process
b. review the referral documents and the child’s electronic file to gather information relevant to an assessment of placement needs
c. set out any relevant dates and deadlines such as court hearings, statutory reviews and other professional meetings to timetable any plan of action
d. visit or book a date to visit the child’s current foster carer (if already in foster care) to discuss the child’s journey since being placed, their routine, strengths and vulnerabilities

Where appropriate, within the first two weeks of allocation, the Family Finder will arrange a visit to meet the child. The appropriateness of a visit will be determined through discussion with the child’s Social Worker, foster carer and the fostering Social Worker. If appropriate the visit could be made with the allocated child’s Social Worker: any visit should be planned with consideration given to the child’s needs, age, communication abilities, understanding of the plan and preparation for permanency.
At this stage the role of the Family Finding Social Worker is to gather, triangulate and analyse information and begin to define the child’s current and long term placement needs. A statement of the child’s needs should be recorded by the Family Finding Social Worker.

During the period of family finding for Early Permanence, the Family Finding Social Worker will attend relevant professional meetings relating to plans for the child such as Child in Care Statutory Reviews: the child’s Social Worker should consider invitations as appropriate. Attendance at key care planning meetings will enable the Family Finding Social Worker to review and update the formulation of the child’s permanency needs.

11. Matching where there are Early Permanence Options

The Family Finding Social Worker will make contact with the Adoption Support Social Worker for any family identified as a potential match which is either already approved as an Early Permanence Carer OR any family who might be approved as an Early Permanence Carer under Regulation 25a.

The Family Finding Social Worker will discuss the child’s needs with the Adoption Support Social Worker and request the Prospective Adopter Report and Panel Minutes to review.

The Family Finding Social Worker will ensure that the Adoption Support Social Worker has received the relevant reports about the child in order that they can assess the prospective Early Permanence Carers capacities to meet the child’s needs and share information with them if this is considered appropriate. Note that in cases where Early Permanence is being considered, a Child Permanence Report may not yet be completed. Family assessments, court chronologies, medical assessments etc may need to be used by the Adoption Support and Family Finding Social Workers to gather a sense of the child’s needs. The Adoption Support Social Worker should carefully consider what written information is provided to the prospective adopters if any. If information about the child is shared with prospective adopters, the Confidentiality Agreement should be signed.

When one or more possible Early Permanence Placements have been identified, the Family Finding Social Worker will review and compare the information provided about each family and assess their capacities against the needs of the child. The
Family Finding Social Worker will then share information with the child’s Social Worker and discuss the options.

If two or more families are deemed equally able to meet the child’s identified needs, prospective adopters who are already approved as Early Permanence Carers should be prioritised. This is because any prospective adopters not yet approved as Early Permanence Carers would have to be assessed for their suitability and temporarily approved under Regulation 25a (Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations).

12. Initial Visit to the Early Permanence Carers

Once the Family Finding Social Worker, the Child’s Social Worker, the Adoption Support Social Worker and prospective Early Permanence Carers are in agreement about the suitability of a potential match, the Family Finding Social Worker will arrange a visit to the Early Permanence Carers.

All parties should be aware that the Initial Visit in Early Permanence cases covers the issue of match suitability and the question of whether the Early Permanence Carers are prepared to manage the child’s interim Care Plan to include contact arrangements with birth family members and any outstanding health or developmental assessments that might alter the child profile of needs.

The meeting will be chaired and minuted by the Family Finding Social Worker who will ensure that all parties are aware of the agenda, the paperwork to be shared and the steps to be taken to progress the match should the visit conclude with an agreement to match.

When the Initial Visit has been completed the Family Finding Social Worker, the Child’s Social Worker and the Adoption Support Social Worker will consider the match and inform all parties of their decision to proceed and provide reasons if not proceeding within 48 hours; a longer period for reflection can be agreed as required.

Following this meeting, the prospective Early Permanence Carers should have time to reflect with support from their Adoption Support Social Worker before confirming a wish to proceed. The Family Finding Social Worker and Child’s Social Worker should be updated by the Adoption Support Social Worker of the decision. Once the Early Permanence Carers agree to proceed their Adoption Support Social Worker will act as the Early Permanence Social Worker.
The current foster carer for the child and any relevant professional including the child’s Independent Reviewing Officer should be updated and advised of any proposed meetings and timescales by the Family Finding Social Worker or Child’s Social Worker.

In addition, the Child’s Social Worker should make contact with the birth family to advise them that an Early Permanence Placement has been sought, reiterating what this means in terms of the care planning for the child.

13. Temporary approval as Foster Carers of Approved Prospective Adopters

In cases where the prospective Early Permanence Carers are not dually approved it will be necessary to update their approval to include fostering. The Report for Temporary Approval as A Foster Carer (Regulation 25A Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations) will need to be completed jointly by the Child’s Social Worker and the Adoption Support Social Worker (please see template at Appendix 1). The final report should be submitted to an Adoption Manager for review.

Once the Report for Temporary Approval as A Foster Carer has been agreed, the Family Finding Social Worker will collate and submit the following paperwork to the panel administration team for the Agency Decision Maker’s attention to A&FPANELMINUTES@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk:

- The Report for Temporary Approval as A Foster Carer;
- The Prospective Adopters’ Report;
- The Suitability to Adopt Panel Minutes and ADM Decision;
- A recent assessment of the child’s needs (i.e. Pre-birth assessment; CPR; Interim Care Plan);
- Outcomes for connected person’s assessments / other family assessments.

Temporary Approval to Foster is given by the Agency Decision Maker (for Adoption). The Agency Decision Maker must be satisfied that:

- The placement is the most appropriate available for the child and will safeguard and promote his/her welfare; and
- The child’s wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration; and
- The IRO has been informed; and
- If their whereabouts are known, the child’s parent(s) /guardian(s) have been notified
On receipt of the Agency Decision Maker’s recommendations, the Adoption Support Social Worker ensure that the prospective adopter’s approval has been updated to include fostering by contacting the Panel Team at (A&FMINTUES@Birminghamchildmestrust.co.uk).

Once the change of approval has been made, the Adoption Support Social Worker will act as the Early Permanence Social Worker.

14. Early Permanence Placement Planning

Once all parties have agreed to proceed and if needed, Temporary Approval to Foster has been agreed by the Agency Decision Maker, the Family Finding Social Worker will arrange a meeting between the current foster carer (if child is in foster care) and the proposed Early Permanence Foster carer and the child’s Social Worker. The child’s Social Worker will need to draw up the Placement Plan as it has statutory requirements which will need to be covered. Additional meetings with any key professionals who can offer useful information to the proposed Early Permanence Carers should also be arranged; for example, a meeting between the Early Permanence Carers and the health visitor. In some cases, the child may not be in foster care but awaiting hospital discharge. It may be possible to arrange a meeting with a member of staff from the ward, who has been involved in the child’s care.

These meetings will be supported by the social work team as necessary. The aim of the meetings is to facilitate information exchange with the Early Permanence Carers about the child’s routines, preferences, likes, dislikes, personality, behaviour etc. It also gives the Early Permanence Carers an opportunity to prepare in practical and emotional terms and to consider their commitments to the child further.

The Family Finding Social Worker will also arrange an Early Permanence Placement Planning Meeting to include the Child’s Social Worker, the Early Permanence Social Worker, the current Foster Carer and their Fostering Social Worker and the prospective Early Permanence Carers.

The Early Permanence Placement Planning Meeting will be chaired and minuted by the Family Finding Social Worker. The meeting will cover the following:

- Preparation of the Child for transition
- Child’s Possessions and Equipment
Current contact arrangements and expectations for transport and supervision
A contact risk assessment
Life Story Work and Memory Box
Preparation of the Early Permanence Carers
Information received and understood and any outstanding information required
Health and safety review of accommodation
Health and Education Registrations
Delegated Responsibilities
Work Arrangements/Leave/Letters of Support
Financial Support/Entitlements
Post Placement Roles and Responsibilities of the Early Permanence Carers
Post Placement Support for the Early Permanence Carers
Post Placement Finances for the Early Permanence Carers
Timetable for Care Planning to include dates for outstanding assessments and court hearings
Introductions Plan to consider an observation and an Introductions Review
Introductions Expenses
Introductions Support
Visiting Requirements

To prepare for this meeting, Early Permanence Social Worker may need to seek guidance from the Fostering Service regarding some of the fostering roles and responsibilities required of the Early Permanence Carers. This is to ensure they are providing the appropriate advice and guidance with regards to both the adoption and fostering tasks linked to these particular placements.

If there is a BCT Fostering Social Worker in attendance at the Early Permanence Planning Meeting i.e. because they are supervising the child’s current carer, they should offer the necessary support with regards to fostering matters. If there is no BCT Fostering Social Worker within the team around the child, the Early Permanence Social Worker can, if needed, access advice from the Senior Practitioner or Team Manager for the relevant area.

During this meeting the Family Finding Social Worker will assess what the child needs to manage the transition to the Early Permanence Placement; consider the Early Permanence Carers’ needs for emotional and practical preparation and draw up an Introductions Plan to include a Review. Any outstanding or new actions required to support the child or the Early Permanence Carers will be minuted with agreed timescales for completion set out by the Family Finding Social Worker.
The Early Permanence Introductions Plan will be sent to the Family Finding Team Manager for authorisation. The Family Finding Social Worker will send copies of the minutes of the Early Permanence Placement Planning Meeting and authorised Introductions Plan to the Child’s Social Worker, the current foster carer and Fostering Social Worker, the Early Permanence Carers and their Early Permanence Social Worker.

The Child’s Social Worker will explain the decision and any plans to the child in an appropriate manner, having regard to the child’s age and understanding and update the birth family (including fathers without Parental Responsibility) explaining the legal implications of the move into an Early Permanence Placement. The points set out in the initial consultation on Early Permanence (see section 3) should be reviewed. Where the child is voluntarily accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the birth parents should be reminded of their right to remove the child from the care of BCT and provided with advice on access to legal advice and or other relevant advisory bodies.

15. Setting up the Early Permanence Placement

Prior to the Early Permanence Placement commencing the Early Permanence Social Worker will arrange a visit to the proposed carers to ensure their readiness for Early Permanence and to offer advice and guidance as required though specifically in relation to the fostering tasks. Again, if additional advice is required, the Early Permanence Social Worker can either contact the Children’s Trust’s Supervising Social Worker for the current foster carer or the Senior Practitioner or Team Manager for the relevant area.

During this visit they will undertake the following tasks:

- Review the child’s Care Plan including contact arrangements, expectations and responsibilities
- Review the Introductions Plan if this has been drawn up at this stage
- Complete an Early permanence Foster Carer Agreement
- Discuss Delegated Authority
- Set out the recording and reporting requirements
- Specifically set out expectations for recording and reporting accidents or incidents
- Provide contact numbers including emergency/out of hours
- Provide the Weekly Diary Sheets
- Provide the Medical Sheets
Discuss the carer training and development programme which should include Paediatric first aid, delegated authority – This is included in the current EPP training day.

- Highlight the support / supervisory arrangements
- Confirm financial arrangements including the Early Permanence Grant

Following the Early Permanence Setting Up Meeting the Early Permanence Social Worker will notify the Panel Team (A&FMINUTES@Birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk) to advise that fostering payments will need to be set up.

- proposed Early Permanence Placement (name of child and Early Permanence Carers)
- expected date of placement
- the name of the IRO, the child’s Social Worker and Family Finding Social Worker

The Panel Team will:

- Notify the Early Permanence Carer in writing
- Notify the IRO by email of the Early Permanence Placement
- Notify fostering payments of the decision and provide them with the name of the Family Finding Social Worker, the Adoption Support Social Worker and the Child’s Social Worker and the proposed date of placement

16. Early Permanence Introductions

The Family Finder acts as the co-ordinator of the Introductions Plan and will monitor the progress of the introductions by liaising with the current foster carer, the Fostering Social Worker, the Early Permanence Social Worker and the Child’s Social Worker.

Should there be a need to make any changes to the plan; these should be discussed with the Family Finding Social Worker who will discuss the issues arising with all parties to confirm agreement to new proposals.

The Family Finder will chair and minute an Introductions Review, during which discussions will be held on how relationships between the child and Early Permanence Carers are forming. If additional meetings are required, these will be planned, otherwise arrangements for the child to move to their new home will be
finalised. Any outstanding tasks or paperwork will be considered during this meeting.

Minutes of the Introductions Review Meeting will be finalised by the Family Finding Social Worker and shared with all parties.

17. Post Placement Actions

Once the child has been moved into the Early Permanence Placement, the Family Finding Social Worker will;

- update the Panel Team confirming the date of the placement
- update Fostering Payments confirming the date of the placement
- request the Early Permanence Settling in Grant
- process the introductions expenses according to adoption guidance
- send the Introductions Review Meeting Minutes and Introductions Plan to the IRO

The Child’s Social Worker will:

- Update the child's electronic records with the details of the placement.
- Ensure the confidentiality of the Early Placement address on systems and forms by noting “Placement address withheld”. Fostering payments will need to have the address.
- Notify all birth family members consulted and involved in the decision-making process.
- Update the team around the child of the change in placement.

18. Post Placement Visits

Weekly visits should take place for the first four weeks of the placement. The Child’s Social Worker and the Early Permanence Social Worker will agree the visiting arrangements; visits can be undertaken jointly or alternated. The outcome of the visits should be shared between the Child’s Social Worker and the Early Permanence Social Worker to ensure that professionals are aware of what is taking place for the child and the Early Permanence Carers and the necessary support can be offered. Communication should take place in-between visits to ensure that the Early Permanence Social Worker is aware of the care planning activities for the child.
Following the 4 week period of visits, the statutory visiting schedule for Children in Care should be followed by the Child’s Social Worker unless there is a requirement for additional visits.

The Early Permanence Social Worker will visit at least monthly to provide support and undertake supervision which will be recorded on the Early Permanence Carers’ file. If advice or guidance is required to ensure fostering standards are met by the Early Permanence Carers, the Early Permanence Social Worker can access support from the Senior Practitioner or Team Manager for the relevant area.

Annual review should not be required but if there is a need for an annual review, the standard fostering review process would be followed.

19. Post Placement Review

Within 28 days of an Early Permanence Placement a Child in Care Review will take place, chaired by the IRO for the child. The IRO will need to meet separately with birth parents to enable the review to take place in the Early Permanence Carer’s home.

This meeting will be organised by the Child’s Social Worker or the Family Finding Social Worker who will attend with the Early Permanence Social Worker and any other relevant professionals.

Once the Post Placement review has taken place, the Family Finding Social Worker will end their involvement with the child and Early Permanence Carers. Within 2 weeks, any outstanding tasks should be completed and the file closed to the Family Finding Service.

All remaining tasks, including presentation of the match to panel should the Adoption Plan be agreed, will be by the Early Permanence Social Worker and the Child’s Social Worker.

20. Changes to the Care Plan

If at any point during the planning of an Early Permanence Placement or the placement itself, there is any change to the circumstances of the birth parents / the birth family, which might alter the Permanence Plan, the child’s Social Worker must
update the Early Permanence Social Worker as soon as possible. A decision can be made about how the Early Permanence Carers are to be given the new information. It may be necessary for the Child’s Social Worker to call a meeting with the Early Permanence Carers and all relevant professionals in order for new care planning tasks to be set and for the Early Permanence Carers to make an informed choice about their position.

If at any point during the planning of an Early Permanence Placement or the placement itself, there is any change in the position of the Early Permanence Carers (i.e. they no longer wish to progress towards adoption of the child) or there are changes in the position of the Early Permanence Social Worker or Child’s Social Worker (i.e. they no longer support the match long term), a meeting between all relevant professionals involved should be called. A decision will need to be made as to whether the Early Permanence Carers attend the initial meeting or whether their views are sought and represented.

21. Progressing from Early Permanence to Adoption - Adoption Planning and Matching

Once the Adoption Plan has been agreed by the Agency Decision Maker; the Placement Order application lodged or the necessary Advanced Consents for Adoption (Section 19 and 20 of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002) given by the birth parents or persons with parental responsibility for the child, it is possible to progress the match for adoption.

The child’s Social Worker should make contact with the Early Permanence Social Worker to confirm the plans and agree that that the match for adoption is in the child’s best interests. Where possible, the wishes and feelings of the child will be sought by the Child’s Social Worker.

The Early Permanence Social Worker should discuss the move towards finalising the adoption plan with the Early Permanence Carers and confirm that they are in agreement to proceed.

The Early Permanence Social Worker will book on to a Permanency Panel to present the match. It is possible to attend panel prior to the Final Hearing / making of a Placement Order where there is written legal advice that the application for the order is likely to be heard and endorsed.
The Matching and Placement Report and Adoption Support Plan will be completed by the Early Permanence Social Worker and reviewed by their Adoption Support Team Manager / supervisor.

The Child’s Social Worker will update the Child Permanence report and ensure the child has an up to date Permanence Medical (within 6 months of the panel for a child under 5 and within 12 months for a child over 5).

All necessary documents required by the panel considering the match will need to be collated (using the panel checklist) and submitted by the Early Permanence Social Worker by the deadline set.

The Early Permanence Social Worker will advise Fostering Payments of the match panel date by way of an early alert to cease payments at an appropriate time. The Early Permanence Carers must be made away of the projected end date for payments.

When the Agency Decision Maker agrees the match for adoption, the Early Permanence Placement will end and transfer to an Adoption Placement. The Agency Decision Maker will record that the carers are de-registered as foster carers from the date that the match for adoption is agreed.

The date of the Agency Decision to agree the match and de-register the Early Permanence Carers becomes the date that the Early Permanence Carers become the child’s prospective adopters and the adoption “placement” is made. It marks the end of the Early Permanence Supervision period and the beginning of the Adoption Support period.

Within 1 day of the Agency Decision, the Adoption Support Social Worker will:

- notify the Fostering Service of the adoption “placement” date (i.e. the date of the Agency Decision Maker’s approval of the match) to ensure that fostering fees are ended
- complete the Notification of Placement for Adoption which will be sent to PSSFamilyFinding@Birminghamchildrestrust.co.uk.

Upon receipt of the Agency Decision, the Child’s Social Worker will:

- verbally notify the child’s birth family of the Agency Decision within 2 days
- provide the written notification of the Agency Decision within ?? 5/7 working days?
update the child’s life story book and Child Permanence Report
work with the prospective adopters to agree how the child will be updated about
the decision

Upon notice of the adoption “placement”, PSS Family Finding will send out the appropriate notifications as follows;

- Letter to child’s Health Authority
- Letter to child’s GP
- Letter to other LA
- Letter to Education Authority
- Letter to notify Fostering Support Worker / Agency

22. Adoption Placement Planning and Review

Within 10 days of the Agency Decision, the Adoption Support Social Worker will complete a meeting with the prospective adopters to ensure that they understand the transition that has taken place. The Adoption Placement Plan will be completed, a visiting schedule agreed and the Undertaking and Acceptance Form signed. If required by the prospective adopters, the Adoption Support Social Worker will provide the Matching Certificate.

Within 28 days of the Agency Decision, the Child’s Social Worker will schedule a Child in Care Review with the child’s IRO to revise and update the Care Plan. The child’s Social Worker will provide the updated Life Story Book and Later Life Letter in time for this review.

The prospective adopters will continue to receive support and training to support them in their new role as prospective adoptive parents.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Report for Temporary Approval as a Foster Carer

Appendix 2: Summary of allowances Provided to Early Permanence Foster Carers (EPC)