



Adoption Support

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RELEVANT GUIDANCE

[Adoption Passport: A Support Guide for Adopters](#)

[Mott Macdonald/DfE, Adoption Support Fund](#)

RELEVANT CHAPTER

[Adoption Policy](#)

AMENDMENT

The chapter was updated in December 2016 to add a link to Mott Macdonald/DfE, Adoption Support Fund (see Relevant Guidance above).

Further information was provided in May 2018 to include the Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption in Merseyside, consisting of Knowsley, Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton.

Updated in March 2021.

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1. What is Adoption Support?

Adoption Support includes any support likely to be required for an adoptive placement to endure through to adulthood and is applicable to both existing and new situations.

Local authorities must make arrangements, as part of their Adoption Service, for the provision of a range of adoption support services. Prospective adopters should receive full information about any adoption support

services to be provided. Since April 2018, four Merseyside Local Authorities consisting of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral combined to make one Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption in Merseyside, to provide adoption support on behalf of these Local Authorities, to families living within the Merseyside area..

See also [Adoption Support Fund](#).

2. Examples of Adoption Support

Adoption support includes:

1. Financial support to adopters. This can include paid adoption leave at similar rates to maternity and paternity leave;
2. Priority access to social housing, and access to additional support to cover a spare room whilst adopters wait for their child to arrive in their new home;
3. Priority admission for school places, including academies and free schools;
4. Services to enable groups of adoptive children, adoptive parents and birth parents to discuss matters relating to adoption;
5. Assistance, including mediation, with contact arrangements between adopted children and their birth parents or others with whom they share a significant relationship;
6. Therapeutic services for adopted children;
7. Assistance to adoptive parents and children to support the adoptive placement and enable it to continue, including respite care;
8. Assistance to adoptive parents and children where a placement disrupts or is at risk of disruption;
9. A range of adoption support services, including access to counselling, information and advice for both adoptive parents and their children, who may have complex needs;
10. Intermediary Services - see [Intermediary Services Procedure](#);
11. Advice given about available benefits and employee rights to leave and pay;
12. Assistance given with any cross boundary matters.

Support provided under 4) to 8) above may include cash assistance, for example to pay for a babysitter, although this would not be regarded as financial support.

3. When to Assess the Need for Adoption Support

1. In relation to adoptions arranged by the Local Authority, practitioners must assess the need for adoption support at the following stages of care and permanence planning:

- a. When preparing the **Child's Permanence Report** for presentation to the Adoption Panel as to whether the child should be placed for adoption;
 - b. When preparing the **Prospective Adopter's Report** for presentation to the Adoption Panel as to the suitability of prospective adoptive parents to adopt;
 - c. When considering and preparing the **Adoption Placement Report** for presentation to the Adoption Panel in relation to the proposed placement of a child with particular prospective adopters.
2. In relation to placements arranged by the Local Authority, adoption support must also always be considered at a child's Adoption Reviews following the adoptive placement. See **Adoption Reviews Procedure**
 3. Local authorities must also undertake assessments of need for adoption support at the request of the following:
 - i. Children who may be adopted, their parents or guardians;
 - ii. Persons wishing to adopt a child;
 - iii. Adopted persons, their parents, birth parents and former guardians;
 - iv. Other children of adoptive parents (whether or not they are adopted);
 - v. Birth siblings of adopted children;
 - vi. Relatives of the adopted child or other persons with whom the child has a beneficial relationship.
 4. In Inter Country adoption cases, children from overseas are entitled to be assessed for therapeutic services and/or disruption support.

The requirement to assess the need for support is limited to the entitlement to services of the person making the request.

It is only where the adoption is by a step parent that there is no requirement to carry out an assessment, although in such cases, counselling, advice and information may be offered as appropriate.

4. Which Local Authority should Carry Out the Assessment?

The table below sets out which local authority has responsibility for carrying out the assessment of need for adoption support, and in what circumstances.

Circumstance	Responsibility for Assessment
Child being Looked After and in respect of whom an adoption plan is being considered	The local authority looking after the child

Child placed with or adopted by family living in the area of the local authority arranging the adoption	The local authority for the area where the child and adopters live
Child placed with and/or adopted by family living outside the borough	The Placing Authority has responsibility at the time of the placement and for up to 3 years after the Adoption Order is made, and then the local authority where the adopters live will have the responsibility.
In all other cases (i.e. non agency placements except step parent adoptions)	The local authority where the requester lives must assess

5. Which Local Authority Should Provide Support?

The local authority responsible for carrying out the assessment of need should provide support to meet the identified needs.

The exception to this is where ongoing financial support and/or supporting contact arrangements have been agreed by the Placing Authority before the Adoption Order was made, in which case the responsibility to provide such support will remain with that authority for as long as eligibility for the service continues.

6. Process of Assessment for Adoption Support

In all cases where an assessment is required, the practitioners involved should conduct assessments by following the guidance set out in the **Assessment Framework**. The assessment should take account of the adoption context and, where the assessment relates to the child, all the developmental needs of the child should be covered including health, education and emotional needs, and contact issues. The relevant education authority and health trust should be consulted as necessary.

Assessments of need for adoption support under **Section 3, point 1** above should be carried out by the child's social worker and have the approval of the Child Care Team Manager prior to being presented to the Adoption Panel. The assessment at the time of the child's proposed placement with prospective adopters should be considered at the Matching Meeting and also have the approval of the Adoption Team Manager prior to being presented to the Adoption Panel with the Adoption Placement Report. At all stages, the Adoption Panel must consider and may give advice on the proposed adoption support and this advice will be considered by the Agency Decision Maker, before making a final decision on the contents of the **Adoption Support Plan** - see **Placement for Adoption Procedure**.

Any assessment considered necessary at an Adoption Review, as a result of which a change in the Adoption Support Plan is required should be referred to the Adoption Team Manager for approval who will consider whether the case should be referred back to the Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.

Following the making of the Adoption Order, the child's and adopters' **Adoption Case Records** must be closed. The allocated workers must be sure that the file contain all the required documents (see Adoption Case Records Procedure - to follow) before passing to their manager to agree closure. The files are then passed to the

Business Support Officer, responsible for the adoption archive. The allocated adoption social worker will open an Adoption Support File following the agreed format.

Requests for assessment for adoption support under [Section 3, point 3](#) above will be allocated to the adoption support social worker to carry out an assessment, with advice from the Adoption Support Team Manager as necessary. The assessing social worker will usually need to interview the person being assessed - where this is a child, the adoptive parents will also need to be interviewed depending on the case and the age, understanding and wishes of the child.

An assessment will not be required before providing advice and information.

Where an assessment is carried out as a result of a request, a written report of the assessment should be produced and agreed by the Adoption Manager.

A copy of the assessment report, once approved, should be sent to the person assessed with notice of the outcome of the assessment, which should state:

1. The person's assessed needs for support;
2. Whether the local authority proposes to provide adoption support services and if so, what the proposed services are;
3. Where the assessment relates to the need for financial support, how this has been determined and calculated and the conditions to be attached (see [Section 8, Financial Support](#)).

Where the person assessed is a child, and it is not appropriate to send the notice to the child, notices should be sent to the adoptive parent or the most appropriate adult.

Where services are proposed, a draft Adoption Support Plan should usually be attached to the notice and those assessed should be allowed time to consider and make representations on the proposal as set out in [Section 7, The Adoption Support Plan Section](#).

Where the service proposed is one-off, the notice of the outcome of the assessment will be sufficient to outline what is proposed and a draft plan will not be required.

7. The Adoption Support Plan (pre and post adoption)

An Adoption Support Plan should set out clearly:

1. The objectives of the plan and the key services to be provided;
2. The timescales for achieving the plan;
3. Those responsible for implementing the plan and the respective roles of others; what should be provided, when and by whom;
4. The criteria that will be used to evaluate the success of the plan;
5. The procedures that will be put in place to review the services to be provided and the plan.

The Adoption Support Plan will need to be completed after consultation with the appropriate Health **Clinical Commissioning Group**, **CAMHS** or education departments where any special arrangements may need to be made. Where the child is placed in the area of another local authority, the agencies in that authority's area will need to be consulted as to what services may be available for the adopters and the adopted children.

The Adoption Support Plan should include any proposed financial support, how the amount has been calculated, where it is to be paid in instalments - the frequency of payment, the period over which it will be paid and when the first payment is to be made, the conditions and the consequences of failing to meet them and the arrangements for review, variation and termination (see Section on **Section 8, Financial Support**).

Once a proposed Adoption Support Plan has the approval of Designated Manager, a copy should be sent to the proposed recipients of the support, as well as to any party involved in the delivery of the plan.

The recipients of the proposed support should be given 10 working days to consider the proposals and make representations to the local authority about the proposed plan. Any representations made should be considered by Designated Manager, who will amend the draft plan as appropriate and inform the recipients of the outcome of his or her consideration.

In relation to proposed agency adoptive placements, the proposed Adoption Support Plan should then be submitted to the Adoption Panel when the proposed placement of a child with particular prospective adopters is recommended. The final Adoption Support Plan will be approved by the Agency Decision Maker, taking into account any advice given by the Adoption Panel (see **Placement for Adoption Procedure**).

In relation to other situations in which adoption support is proposed, the Adoption Support Plan can be approved by Adoption Manager, who may decide to refer the matter to the Adoption Panel for advice.

A copy of the final plan should go to all those involved in implementing it, and to the recipients of services (or appropriate adult). Where the plan relates to a Looked After child, a copy should be sent to the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

Where adoption support is in place prior to an Adoption Order, the Adoption Support Plan should be reviewed at the reviews of the adoptive placement- see **Adoption Reviews Procedure** - or at any time if there is a significant change of circumstances, within four weeks of the notification of the change.

After the Adoption Order has been made, the Adoption Support Plan will be reviewed if a change in circumstances is brought to the notice of the local authority. The Adoption Manager will decide on the format and content of any such review, which will depend on the circumstances of the case. It may refer to only one element of the Plan or be relatively minor in which case an exchange of correspondence may be sufficient. (For annual reviews of financial support, see **Section 8.7, Annual Review of Support**).

Where the change of circumstances is substantial, such as a serious change in the behaviour of the child, it may be appropriate to conduct a new assessment of needs involving other parties.

If as a result of a review, whether before or after an Adoption Order has been made, it is proposed to vary or terminate the support, the proposed change must be referred to the Adoption Manager for approval, who, in the case of agency adoptive placements, may decide to refer the case back to the Adoption Panel for information and advice and then to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision to be made.

Once approved, the person concerned must be notified of the proposed change, together with a copy of the revised Adoption Support Plan in draft. He or she must then be given 10 working days to make representations on the proposals.

Any such representations should be submitted to the Adoption Manager whose decision as to the final contents of the revised Adoption Support Plan should take into account any representations made.

Notice of the decision must then be sent to the person concerned with reasons and, where appropriate, a copy of the revised plan.

Where there is an urgent need for support, the support can be provided before a Plan is drawn up but the above procedure should then be followed as soon as possible.

8. Financial Support

8.1 Introduction

Financial support is intended to supplement existing means of support available to adoptive parents and the child or children being adopted. Adopters must be given advice of entitlements to benefits, tax credits and allowances, and these should be taken into account when considering amounts of financial support.

8.2 Criteria

The circumstances in which provision of financial support may be paid are as follows:

- i. Where it is necessary to ensure that adoptive parents can look after a child;
 - ii. Where the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the continuing consequences of neglect - and the child's condition is serious and long-term;
 - iii. Where it is necessary for the local authority to make any special arrangements to facilitate the placement or the adoption by reason of the age or ethnic origin of the child or the desirability of the child being placed with siblings or a child with whom he/she has previously shared a home;
 - iv. Where such support is to meet the recurring costs of travel for visits for the child to members of the birth family/significant others;
 - v. Where the local authority considers it appropriate to contribute towards expenditure on legal costs, including Court fees (in cases where the adoption is supported by the local authority), or expenses associated with the child's introduction to adoptive parents or expenditure on accommodating the child (e.g. adaptations to the home, furniture, clothing or transport).

8.3 Types of Payment

Payment to adoptive parents may be made in the following ways:

- Regular payments - which will be based upon the developmental age of the child and calculated as agreed from time to time by the local authority;
- Lump sum payments (settling in costs, special needs and adaptations), which will cover items or adaptations that are required as a consequence of assessment of each child's individual needs. Payment may be in instalments and will end at a time specified by the local authority;
- Payments in special circumstances (for example, a child with additional needs or where foster carers adopt a child for whom they are already caring or where adopters incur legal expenses in contested cases.) Payment may be in instalments and may end at a time specified by the local authority.

Financial support cannot generally include the "reward" element which may be payable to foster carers and neither will payments be made so as to provide an income.

8.4 Assessment for Financial Support

Where regular financial support is considered appropriate, the amount to be paid to adoptive parents may be determined by an assessment of their means. This will take account of the adopters' income and resources (excluding their home), reasonable outgoings and commitments, and the financial needs and resources of the child. (N.B. Support provided under [Section 8, Point 2 \(v\) above](#) to assist with legal costs or expenses associated with the child's introduction to the placement will not be subject to an assessment of means.)

As part of this assessment, the adopters should be asked to complete a Financial Assessment for Adoption Support Form and the completed form should be forwarded to the Service Manager. The Service Manager will decide the level of support to be included in the draft Adoption Support Plan (see [Section 7, The Adoption Support Plan](#)), having regard to this assessment, and obtain budgetary approval as necessary depending on the amount.

In relation to proposed financial support for a new placement, the Adoption Support Plan will be submitted to the Adoption Panel with the Adoption Placement Report when a matching recommendation is being considered. See [Placement for Adoption Procedure](#).

8.5 Notification

The adopters will be sent written confirmation of the decision to provide financial support (Notification of Payment for Ongoing Financial Support (Adoption Allowance)). This will include the amount and terms of the support and information about annual reviews.

8.6 Terms and Conditions

If it is decided that financial support should be given to adoptive parents, payment may be subject to conditions and a date specified by which the condition is to be met.

Prior to making financial support available to prospective or adoptive parents, they will be required to inform the Placing authority:

- i. Of changes to their home address
- ii. If the child (for any reason) no longer lives with them

- iii. If there are any changes to their financial situation/the resources of the child.

Where information is given orally, adoptive parents must confirm this in writing within 7 days.

Should adoptive parents fail to comply with the requirements, the authority may suspend payment of the financial support provided.

8.7 Annual Review of Support

Adoptive parents must also agree to complete and supply the Placing authority with an annual statement of their circumstances for the annual review.

The adopters should specify the following in the statement:

- i. Their financial circumstances
- ii. The financial needs and resources of the child or children
- iii. Their home address and whether or not the child or children live at home with them
- iv. If there have been any changes to their own or the child/children's circumstances.

The Placing Authority will carry out an annual review of the financial support, taking into account the information given. Any proposed variation or termination of the financial support must be notified to the person(s) concerned and dealt with by the Service Manager in accordance with the procedure set out in [Section 7, The Adoption Support Plan](#). Any decision to vary or terminate should also consider whether it is appropriate to seek to recover all or any of the financial support already paid.

Should adoptive parents fail to supply an annual statement, the authority must send a written reminder and give 28 days to comply. If they fail to comply, the authority may suspend payment of the financial support provided.

8.8 Ending of financial support

Financial support will end in the following circumstances:

- When a child reaches age 18, unless he/she continues in full time education or training when support may continue until the end of the course of education or training being undertaken, subject to any other financial support the child may be entitled to receive;
- Where a child ceases full-time education or training and commences employment;
- Where a child qualifies for income support or job seekers allowance in his/her own right;
- Where circumstances have changed significantly and the criteria are no longer met;
- If a child leaves the adoptive home and this is regarded as a permanent departure. Temporary absences do not apply, e.g. boarding school, hospital, and respite care;
- The child dies.

End

Author: Wandzia Cody

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