

## Information for social workers

Welcome to the Adoption Register!

This leaflet explains what the Adoption Register is, and how social workers can use the Adoption Register to help match children awaiting adoption with appropriate adoptive families.

### **Why do we need an Adoption Register?**

There are currently about four thousand children waiting to be placed in adoptive families. There are also many people approved as prospective adopters who are waiting to be matched with the 'right' child for them.

Adoption agencies do not have detailed information about all the children and families outside their own region, so the Adoption Register will work with adoption agencies and adoption consortia to make sure that all children and families have the best chance of finding a suitable match.

### **What is the Adoption Register?**

The Adoption Register has two major elements.

- There is a computer database that stores details of children awaiting adoption where their own agency has not been able to find the right adoptive family, and details of approved adopters awaiting a placement where their own agency has not been able to match them with appropriate children
- There is also a staff team of experienced database operators and family placement social workers who will look at the information on the database to see whether they can suggest possible 'matches' between children and prospective adopters

### **How will the Adoption Register work?**

The following notes should be read in conjunction with the government circular LAC(2004)27 issued by the DfEs on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2004.

#### **Children:**

Agencies refer to the Register those children who have a plan for adoption but where there is not already a link identified locally which is being actively pursued.

The children will be referred at the latest by three months after the agency has formally decided that adoption is in the child's best interest and either:

- A full care order with a plan for adoption has been made, or

- There is an Interim Care Order and all required consents, including that of the Court, have been obtained, or
- The child is accommodated and the consent of those with parental responsibility has been obtained

Once a child's details have been recorded on the Adoption Register database, a computer search will be undertaken to identify potential adopters for him/her. Brief details of a maximum of five potential adoptive families and of their adoption agency will be checked by the Register social work staff and, if appropriate, sent to the child's social worker to consider further.

If the database identifies a possible match within the referring agency's own consortium, Register staff will contact the child's social worker to confirm that this match has already been considered and ruled out.

Agency staff will be asked to notify the Register within one month whether they wish to proceed with any of the possible links. If no notification has been received at the end of this period all five families will become available for consideration by other agencies.

If no possible links are identified by the initial search the child's social worker will be notified and there will be a discussion between the child's worker and Register staff about possible future actions.

Repeated searches will be carried out at regular intervals for children where it is not possible to identify appropriate families at the time of the first search. Additionally a computer search will be instigated with every new family referral received. This will ensure that any child already on the Register, whose details match the new family's details, will be identified and considered as a possible match.

### **Families:**

Referrals of families to the Adoption Register will follow a similar process to the referral of children.

Agencies can refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register as soon as they have been 'approved' by the agency and will usually do this if it seems unlikely that the adopters will be matched quickly with a suitable child in their own region.

Government guidance LAC(2004)27 suggests that statutory adoption agencies should refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register three months after they have been approved if there is not a match with an identified child being actively pursued.

Voluntary adoption agencies may also wish to refer adopters approved by them to the Adoption Register at this stage. Agencies who are referring families to the Adoption Register must certify that they have the families' consent to referral.

Once the details of a family have been recorded on the Register database, a search will be undertaken to identify a child who matches the family's approval profile. Relevant details of the family, including a written description (profile), and details of

the approving agency will be sent to the child's social worker who will consider the proposed link further.

Information about the family can initially be sent out up to five times to different social workers for consideration with children. At this point the family's Register entry will be put 'on hold' whilst the social workers are given time to pursue possible links with any of the children. If none of the suggested links is pursued, the family's details on the Adoption Register database will again be made available to enable further searches and links to be made with other children.

### **Self-referral by adopters**

Once they have been approved as adopters for at least three months, adopters will be able to refer themselves to the Adoption Register if their agency has not already done so. The adopter will need to complete a self referral form (**AD02**) which will be available in paper form from their adoption agency or can be downloaded from the website: [www.adoptionregister.org.uk](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk), and send it to the Adoption Register, Unit 4 Pavilion Business Park, Wortley, Leeds, LS12 6AJ.

When Adoption Register staff receive the self referral form they will contact the adopter's agency and ask for the adopter's details to be sent to the Adoption Register.

### **Adopters' telephone help-line: 0845 450 3934**

Prospective adopters will be able to contact the Register direct on the above telephone number. Once the adopter's identity has been established Register staff will confirm that the adopter's details have been referred to the Register, give them information about the number of times their details have been sent out to social workers for consideration, and give them general advice. If their details have been sent out for consideration but a link is not being pursued, they will be advised to contact their social worker and ask about the reasons given by the child's social worker for not pursuing the link.

### **What is the process for referring children and families to the Adoption Register?**

Successful collaboration between adoption agencies and the Adoption Register will depend on Register staff keeping in regular contact with agencies, to keep agency social workers up to date with what is happening with children and families who have been referred. We will always be happy to talk to workers for individual children and families and will depend on you keeping us informed of any new information.

However, to ensure clarity of communication between the Adoption Register and agencies we also need one central communication point within agencies and have therefore decided to continue the existing system of each agency identifying an Adoption Register coordinator. We shall be using the existing list of agency coordinators unless agencies notify us that they wish to make a change.

We have set up new referral systems, based on BAAF Form E and F, which we hope will minimise the work needed by agency social workers. Set out below are the different ways in which agency workers can refer children and families, and detailed instructions for using these systems.

### **1. Secure Document Management Portal**

Our secure portal allows the Register and agencies to electronically share documents such as referral forms and matching reports electronically. Only the Register staff, and workers at your agency who hold the password will be able to access these documents.

If your agency has a licence to use **Form E** and **Form F** electronically your workers can send us these completed forms to make a referral without re-entering any data, providing these forms are in common formats (e.g. word or wordperfect).

You can also use this system to send us the alternative Register referral forms (**AC01**) and (**AD01**). You can download these forms as word documents from our website at [www.adoptionregister.org.uk](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk).

To start using this system your coordinator will need to obtain from the Adoption Register the unique link (URL) to your portal, your username and password. You can apply for these details through the Adoption register website. This information is issued only to a single contact point within each agency.

Your coordinator will then be able to log on to the agency's portal site. The portal site provides instructions for the transfer of electronic versions of forms to the Adoption Register where Register staff will extract the relevant information.

When the Register identifies possible matches, we will return matching reports to you by filing them in your portal site. Automatic email alerts keep Register staff informed of all new documents you send us by this method and keep your agency coordinator informed of new matching information sent to you. Matching reports sent back to agencies will be in pdf format for which you will need Adobe Reader (free from the Adobe website).

### **2. Sending us forms by post.**

If your agency cannot or does not wish to use the document management system you can use the appropriate referral forms (AC 01 and AD 01) which can be found on the Adoption Register Website and as attachments to the government circular LAC (2004) 27. These forms can be downloaded, completed and sent by post to the Adoption Register. If you send the forms by post, we will post back the matching reports.

### **3. Filling in our secure online forms**

Forms AC01 and AD01 are also available on our website as forms you can fill in and send to us securely online. If you make a referral using these online forms we will return your reports via the secure document management portal (as explained above) unless you instruct us otherwise.

**Due to the sensitivity of the data the adoption Register will not accept forms by email**

**Please note:** Database entries will contain the names of children and families and reference will be made to them by name rather than by the use of a reference number. Our experience in operating mechanisms similar to the Adoption Register suggests that the use of names rather than numbers increases the possibility of identifying possible matches. Agencies who, for confidentiality reasons, are reluctant to give the full name of children or adopters, are asked to complete the referral form using the initial of the first name and the first three letters of the surname/family name.

**Whose consent is needed before a referral is made to the Register?**

- Adopters must give their consent to being referred to the Register, in the understanding that this means information about them will be shared with other adoption agencies
- Children who have the capacity to understand the purpose and functioning of the Adoption Register must give their consent to being referred to the Register
- Where a child is the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order and the agency has parental responsibility, the agency manager entitled to exercise that parental responsibility must, after consultation with all others with parental responsibility, give consent to the child being referred to the Adoption Register. Where there is an Interim Care order only, the agency should also obtain the agreement of the court
- Where a child is accommodated the birth parent who holds parental responsibility must consent to the child being referred to the Adoption Register

The referral form includes a declaration by the person completing the form that all the necessary consents have been obtained. It is the responsibility of each agency to ensure that such consents have been obtained and are recorded on file, and that those giving their consent understand the implications of their consent.

**How can workers be sure that information on children and families will be kept safe?**

- Information will be entered on the database only when we have the agency's confirmation that all necessary consents have been obtained. It is the agency's responsibility to obtain and record these consents
- Access to the data base is by means of restricted passwords
- Adoption Register staff have all been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau police check and have signed confidentiality agreements
- Information about children and adopters will be sent only to other approved adoption agencies and only for the purpose of a possible match

We hope you find this information useful, and we look forward to working with you

**Adoption Register Contact Details**

Address: Adoption Register for England and Wales,  
Unit 4,  
Pavilion Business Park,  
Royds Hall Road,  
Wortley,  
LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Tel: 0845 450 3931

Fax: 0845 450 3932

Adopter's Help-line: 0845 450 3934

E-mail: [mail@adoptionregister.org.uk](mailto:mail@adoptionregister.org.uk)

Website: [www.adoptionregister.org.uk](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk)