

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 DfE on 22nd 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.

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.

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.

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 you will be included in all children's family finding searches undertaken. If your profile is a match with a child relevant details of your family, including a written description (profile), and details of your approving agency will be sent to the child's social worker who will consider the proposed link further.

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, 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 or 0113 289 1166

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 Agency and Register staff keeping in regular contact, to keep everyone updated 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 CPR and PAR Forms, which we hope will reduce 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. 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.

2. Sending us forms by Recorded Delivery post.

If you are unable to access the secure online system you can use the appropriate referral forms (AC 01 and AD 01) which can be found on the Adoption Register Website. These forms can be downloaded, completed and sent by recorded delivery post to the Adoption Register.

This method of referral should not be used as the normal means of making referrals.

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

Website: www.adoptionregister.org.uk