

**Why do children
need permanence?**



“Achieving permanence for a child will be a key consideration from the day the child becomes looked after”

(Children Act 1989)

Two ways of achieving early permanence for children are concurrent planning and fostering for adoption.

So what does this mean?

Fostering for Adoption

“Fostering for Adoption is a way of placing looked after children, for whom the local authority is considering adoption, with their potential carers more quickly”

(DfE 2013)

This means a child can be placed with an adopter who is also an approved foster carer. The Local Authority will have already assessed the likelihood of anything other than adoption being the final outcome as being very small. The decision that adoption is the care plan for the child will have been made at the child’s Statutory Looked After Review.



Concurrency

This is used for children where the Local Authority thinks it is **likely** the plan will be adoption but work is still being undertaken to see if the child can return to their birth family. This usually means placing new born babies with adoptive families who have decided concurrency is right for them.

(Research from the Coram Concurrency project 2000-2011-59 children placed (almost all under age of one year, including 20 placed at birth). Of these 59, 54 adopted by current carer, 3 returned to birth family and 2 ongoing court cases)

Children are placed with adopters who are also approved as foster carers. The adopters are prepared to support and work with the Local Authority to rehabilitate the child back to their birth family but are prepared to adopt the child should this not be possible. The care plan for the child is therefore parallel planning, rehabilitation to birth family or permanence via adoption if this is not successful



The Legal Context for Adoptive Carers considering **Fostering for Adoption (FFA)**

Two routes:

1. As part of the adoption assessment, it is identified you are able to manage F4A, you are therefore approved as both an adoptive family and a foster family. You can then consider a child for whom F4A is deemed suitable.
2. Once approved as an adopter, you are approached about a specific child for whom F4A is deemed suitable. You are then temporarily approved as a specific foster family for this child.



The Legal Context for Adoptive Carers considering **Concurrency**

To be a concurrent carer, the adoption assessment and your own learning will have enabled you to consider not only the overall task of being an adopter and a foster carer but also some additional considerations. These additional considerations are whether you can manage uncertainty, whether you can work with professionals even if sometimes you may not agree with them, whether you are able to manage contact arrangements with birth family members and whether despite all of this you are still able to form a bond with a young child. If it is felt to be appropriate then you will be approved as concurrent carers and can then consider children for whom a concurrency plan has been agreed.



The Legal Context for children for whom fostering for adoption is appropriate

- Pre-birth: previous child has recently been removed from parents care due to risk of significant harm. The pre-birth assessment identifies rehabilitation as unlikely due to no significant change in circumstances.
- Birth parents have indicated they may wish to place their child for adoption.
- Where the circumstances of the birth parents are such that the care they will offer a child will significantly harm them, there are no other birth family members available and the plan is adoption.
- At the point of placement the child whilst having an adoption plan, this will not yet have been agreed by court. Because of this the child has to be placed with you as a foster child.



The Legal Context for children for whom concurrency is appropriate

- Concurrent planning is distinct role; it is different from both regular foster care and traditional adoption.
- It is suitable for children where previous history tells us the likelihood of the child remaining in their birth family is very low.
- Children will usually be placed from birth. There is no clear plan for adoption at that point and assessments of the birth family need to be undertaken.



Benefits for Children of both routes

- Children develop a sense of permanency and don't have to have another move
- Children develop a sense of security and their future can be more easily predicted
- Children can develop stronger attachments to their adoptive family earlier
- The emotional burden of uncertainty move from the child to the adult



Benefits for **Adopters**

- To parent your child from an earlier age
- To develop a stronger attachment to your child much earlier on
- You won't have parental responsibility for your child, but because you will be their main carer you can contribute to some care planning process such as Statutory Reviews
- To develop a greater understanding of your child's birth family, in the longer term this will help you to explain to your child more about them



What do I need to know about being **A Foster Carer?**

- You will need to work as part of the team around the child, this means attending meetings to discuss the plan for your child
- To be able to engage in support and supervision sessions with your social worker
- You will not have parental responsibility and will need to discuss the day to day decision making with social workers
- You will have to support all contact arrangements for the child, including where safe with birth parents
- In becoming a Fostering for Adoption or concurrent carer, you will need to manage a level of uncertainty about the final decision of the court. You won't be alone, your social worker will support you with this
- You will get some financial support. However, you will need to think about finances if the plan for your child takes longer to move through to adoption and the impact this may have on your current or future employment opportunities
- Whilst you are acting in the role of a foster carer, you are not 'mum or dad'

So...

Is this for you?

Questions:

Could I love and care for a child even though there is a small chance they may not stay with me?

Can I see myself being able to talk to a birth parent about their child's progress?

Can my existing child or children and extended family manage the potential uncertainty and loss?

Could I see myself caring for a newborn child where little is known about their health or development?

Could I see myself taking a child to see their birth parent, even though I know they have not looked after them safely?

Would I really like the opportunity to care for a child from as early as possible?

Am I able to care for a child full time for longer than 12 months?

Yes or No?



If you answered either yes or a maybe to any of these questions, then Fostering for Adoption or concurrency may be for you! Please use the learning from this module to discuss in more detail with your assessing social worker in Stage Two.

If you answered no, it doesn't necessarily mean Fostering for Adoption or concurrency is not for you, it might be that you need more information and the opportunity to discuss it further. Or it might mean it isn't for you and you are best suited to adopting a child for whom we already have the legal authority to place for adoption.