

Adoption and Fostering Reforms

Factsheet from Children England
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About This Factsheet

This factsheet is provided on behalf of the Department for Education's overarching strategic partnership for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations that serve children, young people and families. Led by Children England, and working with Community Matters, NCVYS, NAVCA, the Race Equality Foundation and Social Enterprise UK, the programme will include information, learning resources and opportunities, and peer support networks. Click [here](#) to find out more about the [overarching strategic partnership](#).

This factsheet has been produced by [Children England](#), the leading membership organisation for the children, young people and families' voluntary sector, and includes a brief outline of information on the Government's adoption and fostering reform programme and the changes that will be implemented as a result. Children England has also produced a [longer briefing](#) on this topic which goes into more detail, should you wish to find out more about any of the reforms mentioned below.

Recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers and adopters

As part of the reform programme the Government has announced a number of proposals (in '[Action Plan for Adoption](#)' and '[Adoption and Fostering: Tackling Delay](#)') to recruit more foster carers and adopters, speed up the process of their assessment and approval, and increase the amount of support they receive.

The reforms for foster carers include:

- Increasing the number of people applying to foster by allowing both foster carers to work unless there is a robust reason for them not to and that local authorities are flexible in arranging meetings and training to accommodate those who work and encouraging businesses and government departments to create 'foster family friendly' HR policies.
- Improving the assessment and approval process by reducing the size of fostering panels (which will also apply to adoption panels), making it clearer when the assessment process starts by introducing a short period in which various checks are carried out and prospective foster carers can receive information to decide whether to proceed with their application.
- Increasing the support available to foster carers by making it easier to change a foster carer's terms of approval, clarifying which areas of day-to-day decision making are delegated to foster carers by ensuring that this is set out clearly in placement plans and providing more training to both foster carers and social workers.

The reforms in regard to adoption include:

- Recruiting more adopters by launching a National Gateway for Adoption to provide prospective adopters with advice and information and setting local authorities a deadline of 10 days within which they must provide information to prospective adopters who make an enquiry.

- Speeding up and making clearer the assessment process through a new two-stage process over 6 months which also allows for a 'fast-track' assessment for previous adopters and foster carers and a new standard application form, currently being designed by the British Association for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF).
- Increasing the support available to adopters through allowing adopted children to retain they priority status as 'looked after children' in school admission arrangements and the possibility (currently being developed by the expert working group) of an adoption 'passport' that would provide a guarantee of minimum support for adopters and adopted children, including mental health support and parenting classes.

Maintaining family ties

The Government is consulting on [proposals](#) that when local authorities are considering birth parent contact and whether to place siblings together in care the decision should be driven by the child's best interests in the particular situation rather than assumptions about what is best and should also be reviewed regularly.

Adoption- Matching

The Government has made a number of proposals on changes to the way an adoptive family and child looking for adoption should be matched, including:

- A duty of local authorities to register adoptive parents and children on the National Adoption Register within 3 months of approval
- [Adoption Activity Days](#) where prospective adopters can meet children looking for adoption
- Search for an ethnic match should not be allowed to delay a child finding an adoptive family

Adoption- Early Permanence

The reforms include the encouragement of local authorities to use '[early permanence](#)' approaches, like concurrent planning and fostering for adoption, to reduce the time between a child being taken into care and adopted. Proposals include:

- A clarification that it is lawful to use concurrent planning and adoption for fostering and a legal duty on local authorities to consider placing a child with carers who are likely to become their permanent carers, where it is clear that a child is unlikely to return home
- Funding of [Coram](#) as a centre of excellence for early permanence to develop these approaches and enable adoption agencies to access expertise

Accountability of local authorities and changes to family court proceedings (and national minimum standards for fostering)

Reforms in relation to local authority accountability and court proceedings include:

- [National Minimum Standards \(NMS\)](#) for fostering services that outlines measurable minimum standards of provision (which will also be inspected on by Ofsted)
- The introduction of [Adoption Scorecards](#), with Government targets within three indicators to track how quickly children placed with adoptive families
- £8 million of [funding](#) to help local authorities to meet these new targets
- New timetables in which care proceedings in court should be completed within 6 months