

S U F F O L K A D O P T I O N A G E N C Y
Guidance for social workers on matching and family finding

Introduction

This paper provides guidance to social workers and their managers on what to do after a "best interests" decision to identify a family for their child and move towards placement. Some of the tasks are shared between the child's social worker and the adopter's social worker.

*This document refers to a number of other forms and guidance. **The documents mentioned in underlined bold italics below can all be accessed by going to the Adoption and Permanence A-Z page.***

Practice Checklist for Family Finding and Matching

Tick Here	What to do	Why?
	Book your child in for discussion at the Matching Meeting immediately after the "best interest" decision. Action by child's social worker.	<i>Book with Tracey Barnett on 700 3414. The <u>Matching Meeting</u> will aim to clarify your child's needs in placement and suggest existing prospective adopters for further exploration or to work out a family finding plan.</i>
	Bring the child's foster carer to the Matching Meeting. Action by child's social worker.	<i>Their day-to-day detailed knowledge of the child is often invaluable and unless there are particular contraindications, the Meeting will want to hear from them. If the foster carer doesn't attend, the meeting will want to know why they are not there.</i>
	Ask the foster carer to complete a <u>Child Portrait Form</u> if they haven't already done so. Action by child's social worker.	<i>Ask the foster carer to complete the Child Portrait Form. You may already have asked the foster carer to complete this for the medical adviser.</i>
	Complete an <u>Assessment of the Child's Need for Adoption Support</u> which doubles as a Matching Matrix for the child. Action by child's social worker.	<i>This is a vital tool to help us profile the kind of family that will best suit your child and devise a family finding plan. You should have completed the Assessment of the child's need for Adoption Support for the "best interests" panel. This is your chance to make clear on the child's behalf what the important requirements are.</i>
	Also bring your <u>Assessment of Birth Relatives' needs for Adoption Support Services in relation to contact with a child being placed for adoption</u> for reference. Action by child's social worker.	<i>The Adoption Support Regulations 2003 are now in force. They require us to assess this at the best interests stage and you should have already done this by the time matching is being discussed.</i>
	If parents are able to engage, seek their	<i>If the parent is ready to talk about their</i>

	<p>preferences about their child's future placement. Bring a completed "Preferences" questionnaire to the meeting. Action by child's social worker.</p>	<p>preferences for their child's future, take them through the "Questions for Birth Parents Regarding Adoption Preferences".</p>
	<p>As part of family finding you will be asked to register the child with the Adoption Register for England and Wales if he or she remains unplaced for 3 months after the full care order is made. Make sure that your form E is sent to the permanence panel business support in electronic form. That way, if registration is necessary you will not have to complete another form but part 1 of the form E can be deposited on the Adoption Register's secure site. Action by child's social worker and their team's business support.</p>	<p><i>If the child has been subject to a full care order, freeing order or after December 2005 a placement order and there has been a best interests decision, the child must be referred to the Adoption Register if they have not been linked three months after the final order. You can refer them before that 3 months if it is agreed that the child will be hard to place within Suffolk. If the child is of sufficient age and understanding, they may elect for their details not to go on the Register or to the Consortium . If they cannot meaningfully consent, then the parent or the social worker (where Suffolk have parental responsibility) must do so on the consent form you will find at the link opposite.</i></p>
	<p>Also complete an <u>East Anglian Consortium of Adoption Agencies profile</u> of the child. Send this to Tracey Barnett at adoption admin, St Edmund House. Action by child's social worker.</p>	<p><i>Hopefully, you will have done this already and included it in the Form E. This will be the first text that prospective adopters outside of Suffolk see about your child. Please do an e version of this form. Place it in the adoption area of your team's O drive and email Tracey Barnett.</i></p>
	<p>When a match has been identified, complete a <u>Matching Report</u>. Action by child's social worker and adopters' social worker.</p>	<p><i>This should be co-written with the family's social worker. You will see that the child's needs column can be cut and pasted from the Assessment of the child's need for Adoption Support. Do update the child's needs where necessary.</i></p>
	<p>Ensure that an <u>Adoption Support Plan</u> is prepared. Action by child's social worker and adopters' social worker.</p>	<p><i>The Adoption Support Regulations 2003 are now in force. They require us to include an Adoption Support Plan with the Matching Report, the child's form E and the adopter's form F. You should be able to include material from the previous Adoption Support Plans for the birth parents, child and adopters. If <u>adoption allowances</u> are proposed arrange for financial assessment.</i></p>
	<p>Ensure that the prospective adopters have a copy of all the documents listed on the Matching Report. Action by child's social worker and adopters' social worker.</p>	<p><i>The quality of information provided for adopters has been a major issue in family placement lately and has been implicated in disruptions and in cases brought by adopters against adoption agencies. It is also a National Minimum Standard that adopters should be properly briefed and informed.</i></p>

	<p>Set up a <i>Placement Planning Meeting</i> including the adopters, foster carers and others. Action by child's social worker and adopters' social worker.</p>	<p><i>See Placement Planning Meeting agenda for the purposes of this meeting and tasks.</i></p>
	<p>If for any reason this is not possible then at the least, arrange with the adopters' social worker to meet the adopters for them to discuss the proposed placement, and sign their agreement to the Matching Report and the Adoption Support Plan going forward.</p>	
	<p>Ask The Chair of the County Matching Meeting to sign off the Matching Report and Adoption Support Plan. Action by child's social worker and adopters' social worker.</p>	
	<p>Complete the Agency <i>Front Sheet</i> fully. Send it, the Matching Report and the Adoption Support Plan with the forms E and F and any updates to adoption admin at least 2 weeks before the Permanence Panel. Action by child's social worker and adopters' social worker.</p>	<p><i>Please record the dates requested and the reasons for any delay in meeting Adoption Standards time scales on the Front Sheet.</i></p>

If you have a problem and need advice please contact me on 700 1636 or email at John.Clifton@socserv.suffolkcc.gov.uk
Tracey Barnett (phone 700 3414) (or email at Tracey.Barnett@socserv.suffolkcc.gov.uk) can give advice about bookings at the Matching Meeting and about the Adoption Register and the Consortium.

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3 October 2005