Gloucestershire’s Adoption Team

The next steps for Approved Adopters
Working in Partnership

Just like the assessment process, we ask you to be committed to open and honest exchanges between yourselves, your social worker and the Family Finding Team.

Once you are approved as adopters you will be asked to complete a Matching Agreement which will set out;

- The expectations for both parties
- Means and frequency of contact you can expect between yourselves and The Adoption Team
- The name and contact details of your social worker for the matching stage (this may be different to your assessing social worker)

We hope that by having a schedule of contact set out in advance, you will be able to discuss any issues or concerns that may emerge as part of the matching process.

We ask you to agree to respect confidentiality and keep secure all information provided to you in respect of any early discussions of children during this period.
Matching Agreement

This is an agreement between (Name of applicant/s) and (Name of Adoption Agency)

Now that you have been approved as prospective adopters, this matching plan will help us to work together with you to identify and successfully match you with a child/ren. It sets what we will be doing and what we will ask you to do during this period leading up to a child being matched with you. The plan can be reviewed at the request of either party.

On-going training and development
We would ask you to keep in touch with us and inform us of any changes in your circumstances

We will provide you with information about any training and support groups we offer and maintain regular contact with you every (state frequency) by T’phone/ email/ letter whilst actively pursuing an appropriate match

We would ask you to commit to attending any ongoing training and support workshops which we have agreed with you would be helpful in preparing you further for a child being placed with you. These will be provided by our agency /consortium as set out below;

Identifying a Match
We will discuss with you a referral to the Adoption Register for England and South West Adoption Consortium, so you can decide whether this is something you want us to do.

We will keep you informed and updated about any potential child/ren identified within the agency / consortium and any events such as exchange events, activity days being run in the agency/consortium/ Adoption Register.

We ask you to respect confidentiality and keep safe any information and paperwork that is shared with you relating to individual children.

We will discuss and review your views on the children you wish to consider on an on-going basis, recognising this may change as you learn more about the children who need adoption.

We will give you information about matching and support opportunities such as publications like Adoption UK and Be My Parent and other organisations / message boards which you may want to use to identify children.

Where you become interested in child/ren who are featured externally we ask you to inform us of any children you have expressed an interest in.

You may decide that you need to take a break or slow down the process due to your personal circumstances and in that situation we would ask you to initially discuss this with your assessing social worker and following this to put this in writing for our case files.
Once a possible ‘match’ has been identified with a child, we will ensure you are provided with a copy of the child’s permanence report and all other relevant information. This will include all known details of the child’s background and comprehensive information about physical and mental health and development and the implications for the future so you are able to make an informed decision to proceed.

We will support you during the meeting with the child’s social worker to discuss the proposed placement and ensure that your questions are answered and as far as possible that you receive whatever further information you need.

We will also ensure that a copy of the adoption placement report and Support Plan is shared with you so that you can express your views on it before the panel meeting and support you through the panel meeting.

If the match is agreed we will support you during the planning for the adoption placement and ensure you receive a copy of the adoption placement plan prior to the start of introductions to the child.

We will give you details of the agency’s process for making representations or complaints. If you have any concerns or queries please raise them with us so that any issues can be resolved at an early stage.

Any other points to be covered

Signature of 1st Applicant

Date

Print name

Signature of 2nd Applicant

Date

Print name

Signature of social worker

Date

Print name

Signature of team manager on behalf of the agency

Date

Print name
Roles of social worker and adopter during matching

What you can expect from us

Verifying your status, as approved adopters, with agencies and Organisations

Registration with South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC)

Ongoing support

Following up any interest you may have expressed (in children)

Following contact schedule as set out in your Matching Agreement.

What we expect from you

Registration with Adoption Link, Adoption UK, Adoption Register England (ARE).

Consideration and exploration to attend profiling events that are held by SWAC and ARE and also Adoption Activity Days.

When to expect contact from your social worker?

A visit from your social worker within a couple of weeks of approval at panel and a visit every 4-6 weeks. Your social worker may call or email you as well with updates on the family finding activities.

N.B. While we will make every effort to follow up any matches you identify, we may not receive a response for every single child we enquire about. This is due to the nature of adoption at the current time, a single child can receive in excess of 60 enquiries, and it is just not possible for agencies to respond to every show of interest. Please bear with us.
Matching Process

1. Adopter searches for profiles
2. Possible link identified by adopter
3. Inform social worker
4. Social worker contacts child's agency
5. Profiles shared
6. Fuller reports (CPR and PAR) shared
7. More information requested
8. Home visit from child's social worker
9. Linking meeting
10. Meet foster carers and medical and other professionals
11. Matching Panel

Link Unsuccessful
Things to think about when considering children

During your assessment you will have carefully considered the right age range and number of children for you. However, there will still be a huge number of factors you will need to consider when deciding whether a child is right for you. We hope that the following points will help you in your decision on whether to proceed with any possible enquiries.

- If you have other children, try to imagine how a prospective child will fit in with them.
- Look at your community. Ask yourself how your new child would develop a racial/cultural identity within your town or city?
- Are there resources available in your area to help a child with special needs?
- Consider what you have learnt, in relation to how the child’s background may impact on your lives with regards to behaviour and difficulties the child may present.
- Consider the long term impact of any additional needs, on both your lives and that of the child.
Guide to writing your profile

Your picture

We appreciate having your photo taken is everyone’s ‘cup-of-tea’, but it really helps bring your profile to life, in the same way you seeing a child’s photo can trigger a connection.

Choose a photo that is as natural as possible, we find ones taken in the home or outdoors work well, but play close attention to anything that might appear in the background.

Recently some couples have opted to have photos taken by a professional, and these have worked really well. Alternatively, you could ask a friend to take some pictures specifically for inclusion in your profile.

Try to avoid formal attire in your photo, such as pictures taken at weddings.

Please refrain from using pictures where you are drinking.

Images that focus on faces and upper body, work better than full length images.

Happy smiley faces are preferable.

If you have a child, please include them in the photo (if you are happy to do so).

This image could be the first glance your future child’s social worker sees of you, so you need to be really happy with it.

A helpful exercise is typing ‘couple looking to adopt’ into Google images, which ones would you place a child with? What appeals about their photo?
Guide to writing your profile

Your profile

It can be strange writing about yourself, especially with a view to finding a child. We feel that writing in the third person works better, and to keep a factual approach.

Essential points to include

- Your name
- A bit about your lifestyle, what do you enjoy doing? How do you spend your spare time?
- Brief details about your home and where you live.
- A bit about your personality.
- Your childcare experience.
- Your occupation, including details of the adoption leave you intend to take.
- Your support network
- What you are hoping to offer a child.
- What sort of child you are approved to adopt (age, gender and any other considerations).

Your whole profile needs to fit on one side of A5 (including your photo), so space is at a premium.
The Matching Panel

When will I/we attend the panel?
Following the Linking Meeting reports will be produced by your social worker and the child's social worker showing how you are able to meet the child's needs. At the Linking Meeting a date will be agreed for these reports to be presented to the panel, usually four weeks from the Linking Meeting.

How does the panel make its decision?
The reports mentioned above and a support plan are presented to panel, and you are invited to attend (as is the case for your Adoption Approval Panel). The recommendation and decision are made in the same way.

Who is on the panel?
The independent Gloucestershire Adoption Panel, is comprised of County Councillors, medical and independent people, who may have personal experience of adoption; a birth parent, adopted adult or social worker. You are invited to attend the panel, as it gives both the panel and you the chance to ask questions and clarify any information, you will be supported through the process by your social worker (or representative from the team).
Suggested topics for reading

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder
  www.fasdtrust.co.uk

Effects of neglect on children

Effects of stress on unborn babies

Therapeutic and empathetic parenting, particularly the work of Dan Hughes and Amber Elliott

Your social worker may advise further reading depending on the needs of the child/ren.
Moving on to Matching

The Moving on to Matching course is a **one day course** held on a Saturday, 10am -3.30pm, locally in Gloucester.

It is targeted at adopters who have recently been approved and who are now waiting for a placement.

I. The morning is focused on looking at **what happens next in their adoption journey**
   - The **family finding process** within Gloucestershire is explained
     • helping adopters understand the different ways of finding a family
     • looking at the issues around linking and matching (including a linking exercise)
     • an opportunity for adopter’s to read an anonymised Child Permanence Report (CPR)
     • discussion around what helps make a ‘connection with a child’

The following **meetings** are discussed as part of the family finding process
   • Linking meetings
   • Risk assessment meetings
   • Meeting the adoption medical advisor
   • Matching panel along with the subsequent reports and parental responsibility is explained.

Late morning /early afternoon discussions are centred around **introductions**
   • A foster carer comes along and talks about introductions from the **fostering perspective** and how foster carers prepare children to meet their new parent/s.
   • The foster carer stays over lunch so adopters can talk to him/her informally as well.

The afternoon session considers **empathic parenting**;
   • Looking at Dan Hughes – PACE
   • The work of Amber Elliott
   • Theraplay.

Adopters are given a scenario and asked to consider what everyday parents would do in that situation – hopefully drawing out the reward/punishment model of parenting.

After talking about empathic parenting – the adopters are asked to reconsider the scenario using some of the new parenting techniques.

These courses are held on a regular basis and we encourage all adopters to attend.

Please ask your adoption worker for the dates of the next course.
Friends and Family Support

This course is aimed at the close support network of adopters, to help them understand the following:

- Attachment cycle
- Loss for the adopted child
- Parenting traumatised children
- Importance of contact

It is hoped that increased understanding among the adopters support network, will help them embrace the different parenting styles required for adopted children, and support adopters with this.

This Friends and Family course runs six times a year, and usually takes place in on a weekday (evening or day). We welcome your friends and relatives to attend the course once you are in Stage 2 and onwards (including post approval and placement).

If you have anyone that you feel would benefit from further understanding of the issues listed, please contact

charlotte.overthrow@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Group for adopters with Birth Children

The course is a full day and is an opportunity to think about the potential impact of adoption on your birth child/ren. During the day we think about loss, behaviour, adjustment and challenges in terms of your birth child/ren. We look at ways you can help your child/ren manage waiting for their new sibling and ways you can prepare them for the adjustments they will need to make when the new child joins your family. We have a speaker who talks through their experiences of adopting with a birth child and how they have managed challenges, they also share any tips they have learnt along the way.

kate.worthington@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Evening Support Groups

We run various support groups around the county for adopters, as waiting adopters you are welcome to attend any of these. Details can be found in our Newsletter which is produced four times a year.

Alternatively, your social worker will be able to provide you with support group details.

We also run a dedicated evening support group for waiting adopters, you will be informed of the next one available to you by letter or email.
Who to contact for further information:

Your named social worker will be able to answer any questions you may have.

Alternatively, during the week we have a duty worker available on 01452 427753

During the time that we are working with you we will be striving to keep to the highest possible standards. We want you to tell us about how you found our service and we will use your feedback to help us improve.

Complete a questionnaire online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/cypfeedback