



Service Specification

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1. Introduction

The provision of adoption services is the function of a complex system involving a number of agencies. Each part of the system has to play its role and to work collaboratively with the others in order to deliver positive outcomes for children. This document sets out the respective responsibilities of each agency through agreement by all partners involved in the creation and delivery of Adoption Central England (ACE).

1.2 Statutory Requirements and Service Provision

The Adoption and Children Act (2002) places a statutory requirement for all partners in ACE (Adoption Central England) to:

- (i) Recruit, assess and support prospective adopters. Undertake annual reviews as required
- (ii) Work in partnership with the child's social worker to seek a permanent placement for the child through adoption
- (iii) Work in partnership with the child's social worker to support and plan for children who have a twin track plan of adoption
- (iv) Assess and support parents/partners and family relatives who wish to adopt a child on a non-agency basis and foster carers who are seeking to adopt the child in their care
- (v) Assess and support those adults who are seeking to adopt from another country (inter-country adoption) and provide the ongoing support and reports as required
- (vi) Provide advice, counselling and information to adopted adults post 18 years

- (vii) Provide independent support to birth parents involved in proceedings and beyond
- (viii) Administer and support Adoption Panels to recommend the approval of prospective adopters.
- (ix) Provide professional advice on best practice and regulations to agency decision maker
- (x) Deliver training to all stakeholders involved in adoption including social workers, adoption panel members, adoptive parents and special guardianship order holders
- (xi) Ensure a quality assurance role across all services/teams involved in adoption within the region.

1.3 In addition, ACE partners agree to provide the following:

- (i) Complete assessments for adoption support services
- (ii) Commissioning of /or supporting adoptive parents and children to access specialist support as determined by an assessment of need
- (iii) Signpost and support adopters to access Early Help, Children in Need, Children and Families (including Safeguarding) Services as appropriate
- (iv) Develop, manage and provide a range of adoption support services including therapeutic interventions
- (v) Provide advice on therapeutic approaches on local authority assessments of families where there are children subject to Special Guardianship Orders. This is done by delivering or commissioning therapeutic interventions

- (vi) Provide support services for special guardians excluding supervised direct contact and assessment of need for SGO support
- (vii) Operate an adoption duty service during office hours across the region, provide advice and consultation on the full range of adoption related matters
- (viii) Provide specific services to adopted children to meet identified assessed needs
- (ix) Promote the delivery of early permanence placements
- (x) Deliver a Letterbox Exchange Service/Keeping in Touch Service
- (xi) Provide an adoptive family finding service
- (xii) Increase the opportunities for children to be adopted who are sibling groups, older children and children with additional needs and a plan of adoption to be placed with an adoptive family
- (xiii) Track children with a potential or actual adoption plan and reports on adoption and timelines of adoption services against national and local indicators

1.4 Service Collaboration and Rationale

Warwickshire County Council acts as the host authority for the Regional Adoption Agency and brings together the Local Authority adoption services and Voluntary Adoption Agency partners under a Partnership and Hosting agreement of the following authorities:



1.5 ACE Service Principles, Vision and Values

ACE is committed to upholding the principles and values agreed by the ACE Board which ensures an innovative adoption service that is 'better than the best'

ACE principles and how we put into practice:

(1) Achieve permanence for children is the primary function of ACE.

We help achieve permanence for children by:

- tracking children from point of concern to permanence as stipulated in the pathways document
- recruiting adopters who can meet the needs of the children with adoption plans (specifically older children, sibling groups and children with additional challenges)
- offering high quality support to adopters and carers and all parties involved with the child.

(2) Children's needs always come first.

Systems and practice always have children's interests and needs as the first priority.

- (3) Provides the highest quality adoption service, which draws on best practice from each component partner, making the ACE service one that is 'Better than the Best'.**

We ensure a culture of continuous challenge, innovation and improvement. We use research, academic input and stakeholder views and experiences, combined with rigorous performance and quality assurance systems. This includes a comprehensive approach to therapeutic parenting.

- (4) Is led by its stakeholders.**

Key stakeholders (local authorities, VAAs, staff, adopters, and adoptees) all have a strong voice and role in developing the organisation. There is input from birth parents and relevant professionals. We work collaboratively with adopters where possible and extend volunteering and employment opportunities for adopters.

- (5) Covers parties affected by adoption and special guardianship, and is accessible to all parties (adopters, adoptees, birth families, SGO carers and children in their care) throughout childhood and beyond if needed.**

The agency provides a comprehensive range of services in relation to adoption and permanence for children, throughout their childhood and beyond if needed.

(6) Achieves value for money. This includes making use of modern technology to be effective and efficient.

We design and continually improve services to make sure ACE provides value for money. We use modern technology to support communication with stakeholders, and to enable efficient processes and practice in the agency.

(7) Works jointly with other organisations and Regional Adoption Agencies where this improves services.

This may include commissioning or delivering training across the whole of the West Midlands, and includes linking closely with the National and Local Adoption Leadership Boards.

(8) Communicates in plain English.

We take care in all of our communications to avoid jargon, ensure accessibility and use plain English.

1.6 ACE Vision

ACE provides an innovative service to children, adoptive families and others affected by adoption. This is by offering lifelong support based on up-to-date evidence based practices and interventions and supported by modern technology.

To be better than the best and deliver better outcomes for:

CHILDREN

- Have a strong sense of their identity and improved wellbeing
- Decisions are made in their interest as early as possible
- Experience secure family lives and a sense of wellbeing

ADOPTERS

- Are prepared to meet the needs of children in the long term
- Are resilient and able to support their adopted children
- Are able to seek help and are supported in the right way at the right time

BIRTH PARENTS

- Are able to support their child's identity development
- Are less likely to have children taken from their care in future
- Experience improved health and wellbeing through participating in the adoption process

ORGANISATION

- ACE is a well respected brand and a centre of excellence
- ACE involves and thinks ahead to meet the needs of all service users
- Delivers efficient, value for money services
- ACE has a united approach, that recognises local and regional needs and integrates with case holding local authorities

1.7 Eligibility Criteria

ACE is responsible for providing or commissioning services to:

- Children who require adoption
- Adults who wish to adopt
- Adoptive families approved by the service
- Adoptive families living in the region eligible for adoption support services
- Adopted adults
- Birth family members and others who require the Letterbox Exchange Service/Keeping in Touch Service
- Birth parents and former guardians eligible for independent adoption support services
- Intermediary services where adopted adults wish to have direct contact with their birth family and a tracing service
- Overseas adoption
- Non-Agency (step parent) adoptions
- Foster carers who are seeking to adopt the child in their care
- Eligible adoptive families living in the region, currently 3 years after adoption order is made
- Eligible special guardianship order holders and children requiring a therapeutic intervention or other specialist service based upon assessment of need completed by the local authority.

1.8 ACE Service Delivery

- (1) ACE at all times places the needs of children, young people, prospective and approved adopters at the heart of service delivery
- (2) ACE maintains a system that ensures involvement in service design and delivery, as well as in decision making.
- (3) ACE operates on a full time basis providing core services flexibly, as required according to the needs of all users.
- (4) ACE at all times is sufficiently resourced to fulfil its statutory duties as an adoption agency, as well as any specific requirements, targets and outcomes of this specification
- (5) ACE maintains an appropriately qualified and skilled workforce that is sufficient to fulfil all of its statutory duties as an adoption agency, as well as any specific requirements, targets and outcomes of this specification
- (6) ACE has in place a detailed contingency plan to deal with workforce absence caused by planned leave, sickness and vacancies that is cost effective and causes minimum disruption to service delivery
- (7) ACE complies with safe employment practices
- (8) ACE maintains a system for the management of complaints and representations that complies with statutory standards for timeliness, transparency and information sharing
- (9) ACE maintains a system for data protection and handling that complies with the Data Protection legislation.

1.9 Contract Monitoring

ACE provides quarterly data submissions and associated reports to the Board as agreed in the governance structure. Additionally, in accordance with the terms of reference of the Board, ACE is responsible for conducting an annual review of the quality of the service it provides and also produces a bi-annual report for the local authorities in line with regulatory requirement.

Mechanisms to monitor the quality and outcomes of the service include:

- Effective line management, supervision, support and training of staff employed by the service
- A set of regional policies, procedures and practice standards
- A range of methods to obtain feedback on the functioning of the regional service from service users, local authorities and other stakeholders
- Systems to audit the performance of the service against performance indicators and compliance with legislation and standards
- system to monitor and manage complaints against the service

1.10 Ofsted Inspections

ACE complies with the inspection regime in place.

2. Service area responsibilities

Part 1. The Child

Service Area	Responsibility of (Child's) Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
1.1 Case management responsibility	<p>The local authority (LA) retains case management responsibility for the child until the making of the Adoption Order. The local authority is responsible for all statutory functions including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory visits to the child. • Management and supervision of contact between child and family members. • Supervision, administration and finance of foster placements and communication with foster carers (including Fostering for Adoption placements). 	<p>ACE provides specialist advice and support to assist LA staff to fully understand the adoption process, influencing and promoting best practice.</p>	<p>The statutory visits and other work may be undertaken by ACE on the LA's behalf. Where such agreements are made, this should be put in writing or included in plans shared by all parties and authorised by the line manager in ACE.</p>
1.2 Early identification of children requiring adoption	<p>The LA is responsible for identifying, at the earliest possible stage, children who may require adoption; making them and their needs known to ACE; providing relevant and timely information in the agreed format.</p>	<p>ACE tracks all children identified as possibly requiring adoption. Children with more complexities are allocated an individual worker.</p> <p>ACE develops working practices with each LA to ensure close involvement in care planning in order to assist with the earliest identification and to provide</p>	<p>ACE and the LAs will jointly agree how ACE will connect with the LAs' care planning processes.</p>

		<p>external challenge.</p> <p>Staff from ACE are involved in identifying children and promoting early permanence.</p> <p>Representatives of ACE attend meetings in each local authority (such as legal gateway meetings, looked after review meetings, care decision meetings etc.) to better understand the needs of the children who may require adoption and, where appropriate, to begin to identify suitable adopters at an early stage.</p>	
1.3 Tracking of children requiring adoption.	<p>The LA retains a responsibility for tracking the progress of children in care proceedings or looked after under section 20 Children Act 1989. By this, up-to-date knowledge of their potential need for an adoption placement is maintained.</p> <p>The LA utilises the ACE tracking system for this purpose and must support ACE's ability to effectively track by providing and maintaining accurate and timely data.</p>	<p>ACE promotes early permanency practice.</p> <p>ACE actively tracks all children who require a plan for adoption, a contingency plan or for whom initial information indicates that adoption may be required, using the tracking data base or the host's case recording system. ACE enables a designated person in each LA to have direct access to their child data and the anonymised full data set. ACE ensures that children with potential, or actual adoption plans, are logged onto the tracking system.</p>	<p>ACE will agree with each LA a process to regularly obtain the information.</p>
1.4 Range of decision	Should be placed for adoption decision The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in each	ACE supports the 'should be placed for adoption' decision making process as	As required ACE can give advice where the

<p>making for permanence</p>	<p>LA is responsible for the ‘should be placed for adoption’ decision.</p> <p>The LA undertakes a regular review of this decision and associated plans and keeps the family finder in ACE informed of changes in the required format for the tracker.</p> <p>The LA is responsible for quality assuring the paperwork required by the ADM.</p>	<p>requested, particularly in the provision of information relating to the availability of adopters.</p> <p>The aim is to provisionally match the child with a potential adopter prior to the ‘should be placed for adoption’ decision and, where this is not possible, advise the Agency Decision Maker as to whether to commence an individual recruitment campaign in addition to national searches.</p>	<p>ADM is considering the ‘should be placed for adoption’ decision.</p>
	<p>The matching decision</p> <p>The LA Agency Decision Maker, having considered the papers and the ACE panel recommendations, makes the matching decision.</p> <p>The LA Agency Decision Maker plans dates for decision making meetings in advance.</p> <p>The LA is responsible for quality assuring the paperwork required by the ADM.</p>	<p>ACE provides the LA Agency Decision Maker with the matching panel paperwork and recommendations.</p>	<p>Panel and ADM meetings and processes need to be closely co-ordinated to meet timescales and ensure all relevant information is available.</p> <p>As required ACE can give advice where the ADM is considering matching decision.</p>
<p>1.5 Family Finding Process</p>	<p>The LA seeks court permission from the outset to allow ACE to share the child’s information for the purposes of securing potential adopters in the event that the child is not able to return to their family.</p> <p>The LA should visit the (2) potential sets of</p>	<p>ACE leads the tracking/family finding process in consultation with the local authority.</p> <p>ACE endeavours to identify 2 potential matches for each child as a minimum.</p>	

	adopters within 7 working days of being provided with their profiles.		
1.6 Communication during the family finding process	It is the responsibility of the LA to keep the Child Permanence Report (CPR) updated and to inform the ACE family finder of any changes in the child's development or circumstances (e.g. change of placement) in the appropriate format.	ACE tracks the child from the point of being identified as a child who may require adoption and seek potential adopters. ACE builds on the work of the LA and keeps the LA regularly updated about progress on family finding.	
1.7 Hard to place children	<p>The LA is responsible for identifying potential complexities as part of the child's assessment.</p> <p>The LA and ACE collaborate as to whether further specialist assessments are required to enable high quality matching and the right adoption support. This should happen at the identification stage and the LA is responsible for commissioning specialist assessments e.g. genetic testing in a timely manner to inform the permanence process.</p> <p>The LA is responsible for submitting a request to the court requesting permission to seek potential adopters for the child prior to the making of the placement order. The LA gathers the relevant information and assessments and forwards these to</p>	<p>Where ACE is unable to identify a suitable match prior to the 'should be placed for adoption' decision they provide a service for more complex children which may involve some of or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased publicity – DVD, photos etc. ● Press and digital media advertising ● Profile the child at specific events ● Attempt to recruit carers specifically for the child ● Provide additional training and preparation for potential carers ● Advise on or assist with additional preparation work with the child. 	<p>Some of these issues need addressing with each LA on a case by case basis and prior to obtaining a placement order may need court permission.</p> <p>In response to placement needs ACE will coordinate specific recruitment activity/ campaigns where it is identified that suitable adopters are not readily available.</p>

	ACE at the earliest opportunity.		
1.8 Early permanence arrangements	<p>The child's LA decision maker (a) determines whether the early permanence (fostering to adopt) placement is the appropriate plan for the child and (b) agrees the proposed placement of the child on a fostering to adopt basis under reg. 22c Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011 to the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and grants temporary approval as foster carers as approved prospective adopters under Regulation 25A of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010</p> <p>The child's local authority is responsible for paying the fostering allowances and setting up costs etc. where prospective adopters are fostering a child via early permanence arrangements.</p> <p>The child's LA Fostering Service should provide the ACE social worker with advice about fostering requirements as needed.</p>	<p>ACE Panel for adopter approval also considers the suitability of the prospective adopters for early permanence/fostering to adopt.</p> <p>ACE recruits early permanence carers for children.</p>	A standardised policy and approach will be developed across ACE.

<p>1.9 Pre-placement reports</p>	<p>The LA is responsible for the completion, commissioning and cost of all reports prior to an adoption placement being made including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child permanence reports • Sibling assessments (expected for all children with siblings even where the siblings' care plan is not adoption and where siblings are separated should include recommendations about post adoption contact) • Health reports • Other specialist assessments. 	<p>ACE advises on and supports the completion of the Child Permanence Report and early profile of the child.</p> <p>ACE provides support and challenge to help ensure that CPRs are of a consistent high quality across partnership LAs.</p> <p>ACE also provides advice regarding more specialist assessments that might be appropriate.</p>	<p>The statement of delegation at the point of placement is drawn up by the child's LA.</p>
<p>1.10 Post adoption support plan</p>	<p>The LA is responsible for decision making, paying and reviewing adoption allowances.</p> <p>The LA assesses the child's needs in respect of a future placement and ensures that any required financial support for a future adoptive placement is available. This is based on information and advice from ACE on the potential needs of the child/ren once placed and sources of future support.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to whether there is need for short term settling in allowances and costs to be met by the LA.</p>	<p>ACE provides additional information and advice on the potential placement needs of the child and the adoption support plan.</p> <p>It is necessary for ACE and the LA to work closely and collaboratively to ensure that the needs of the child can be met and that planned support is sustainable.</p>	

1.11 Legal fees and advice	These are the responsibility of the LA until the Adoption Order is made. In exceptional circumstances the L Ay may be asked to pay for legal advice for the adopters for the adoption application.		
1.12 Contact	The LA is responsible for arranging and providing supervised contact for children pre and post adoption.	ACE provides advice to the review of any direct contact arrangements and assists in resolving any issue around contact. ACE provides the Letterbox Exchange Service	
1.13 Health Assessment	The L A is responsible for obtaining and recording all required health information in respect of children who are being considered for adoption and that of their birth parents in accordance with the regulations. Where it is identified that complex assessments such as genetic testing may be required, these should be undertaken promptly to avoid potential delay for the child.	ACE is responsible for obtaining the medical report in respect of adults being assessed as adopters. ACE needs to give specific consideration to medical information in the identification of a possible match. ACE ensures that adopters' medical information is kept up-to-date.	
1.14 Preparation of the Child	The LA is responsible for preparing the child for an adoptive placement.	ACE advises the LA on the preparation of the child, in particular in respect of the future placement. ACE may develop or commission specific expertise in the preparation of children who are hard to place and who are being	

		prepared using a more bespoke family finding model.	
1.15 Child's Profile	The initial child's profile is drawn up by the LA. It is recommended that where the child is fostered that the carer helps to produce this.	<p>ACE offers training, support and advice on compiling child profiles to the LA social workers and foster carers.</p> <p>ACE is responsible for subsequent profiles of the children and in identifying early matching considerations. This includes taking into account information and advice from adoption support services on the potential needs of the child/ren once placed, and potential sources of future support.</p>	
1.16 Life story books	The LA is responsible for the preparation of the child's life story book.	<p>ACE offers training and advice to the LA on life story work.</p> <p>ACE may undertake post adoption therapeutic life story work .This is separate to, but may build upon the life story book prepared by the child's social worker.</p>	
1.17 Later in life letters	The LA is responsible for producing the later in life letter. This must be handed to	ACE offers training and advice to the LA on the formatting and production of later	

	the adopters no later than 10 days after the making of the Adoption Order.	in life letters.	
1.18 Matching, Introductory costs and arrangements	The LA meets the costs of introductions between children and potential adopters.		

Part 2. The Adopters

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
2.1 Recruitment of Adopters	<p>The LA signposts any enquiries from potential adopters to ACE and not to any other adoption agency.</p> <p>The LA ensures that information relevant to potential adopters is included in its own marketing materials and website, clearly signposting potential adopters to the ACE website and not to any other adoption agency.</p>	<p>ACE is responsible for recruiting adopters appropriate to the needs of children waiting in each LA.</p> <p>Marketing information reflects that ACE is delivering the service on behalf of partnering LAs.</p>	
2.2 Enquiries		ACE provides a centralised enquiry process for the region to meet all statutory requirements.	

		ACE provides written information to potential adopters and holds a programme of information events.	
2.3 Stage 1	The LAs provide all information required for statutory checks of potential adopters resident in the LA.	ACE undertakes all stage one functions.	
2.4 Stage 2		ACE undertakes all stage two functions.	
2.5 Legal and medical advice in respect of adopters assessment and approvals		ACE is responsible for obtaining legal and medical advice for adopters.	
2.6 Approval		The ACE Agency Decision Maker approves ACE adopters.	
2.7 Registration of adopters		The ACE Agency Decision Maker approves the registration and deregistration of adopters.	
2.8 Adopters approved as temporary foster carer Ref above 1.8	The LA is responsible for payment of fostering allowances in line with the child's local authority fostering allowance scheme.	The ACE panel is responsible for recommending to the ACE Agency Decision Maker whether adopters are suitable to be considered as temporary foster carers..	The ACE ADM approves their status, but it is the LA ADM who approves the early permanency/fostering to adopt arrangement.

2.9 Pre and Post approval training and support		ACE is responsible for the provision of pre and post approval support and training to adopters. Partner agencies are encouraged to share suitable training with adopters.	
2.10 Adoption allowances	Adoption allowances are paid for by each LA after undertaking the appropriate assessment. The child's LA retains responsibility for reviewing, assessing and paying the financial element of the adoption allowances.		LAs to agree to consider potential to harmonise adoption allowances as far as possible.
2.11 Payment of inter-agency adoption fees		ACE is responsible for the payment of inter-agency fees. ACE is responsible for the management of inter-agency income.	Where there is potential for the inter-agency fees to exceed the available budget this will be referred to the ACE Executive Board.

Part 3. Adoption Support Services

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
3.1 Initial adoption support plan	The LA takes responsibility for the initial plan in collaboration with ACE. A LA manager agrees and signs off the plan.	ACE supports and advises the LA. An ACE manager agrees and signs off the plan.	The plan needs to be presented as an integrated plan reflecting all parties and services. It is signed off by both managers
3.2 Payment and review of adoption allowance.	Before the point of placement the adoption allowance assessment is undertaken by the LA. Adoption allowances are paid and reviewed annually by the child's LA.	Post adoption, ACE is responsible for the review (other than finance) and revision of the adoption support plan.	Some adopted children may also be eligible for an assessment and access to services for additional support, Early Help, or require a Child in Need plan under Children Act 1989 Sect 17. This will be facilitated by both services working closely together.
3.3. Review of adoption support plans		ACE is responsible for assessing needs /changing needs for adoption support. Any recommendation about financial support/changes to adoption allowances is made to the LA	

<p>3.4 Application to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF)</p>	<p>The LA supports ACE to make timely applications.</p>	<p>ACE is responsible for completing the assessment and making applications to the Adoption Support Fund where appropriate.</p>	
<p>3.5 Funding of therapeutic or other post-adoption service not included in the core ACE offer or eligible for any support grant</p>	<p>If identified that specialist therapeutic intervention or additional support is required prior to the making of the adoption order in order for the placement to be successful, the LA has responsibility to fund.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, post the adoption order, the LA may agree to fund the service to support the placement.</p> <p>Where a therapeutic need is identified the relevant LA should support ACE and the adopter using its influence to access the relevant services from partners such as education and health.</p>	<p>ACE is responsible for providing or commissioning therapeutic services using the agreed framework.</p> <p>If an application to ASF is required prior to an adoption order being granted this application and assessment is undertaken by ACE in consultation with the LA Social Worker.</p>	<p>ACE considers themes arising from needs assessments and post adoption support plans in order that exceptions occurring post order are kept to a minimum.</p> <p>When it does happen this should be noted within the ACE Agency Report together with reasons and outcomes to facilitate improved planning for future years.</p>
<p>3.6 Adopted children who may require Early help or Child in Need services (including Safeguarding)</p>	<p>The assessment, plan and responsible worker are the responsibility of the child's LA.</p>	<p>ACE is responsible for liaising and sharing information with the LA to make relevant referrals for Early Help or Child in Need. The adoption support plan and work should be revised to complement any arising plans.</p> <p>Where there is an allocated ACE adoption worker, they are assigned, but not the allocated worker.</p>	<p>Adopted children may access other services either by signposting from or via the post adoption portal or may access children's services direct.</p>

3.7 Post adoption financial payments	<p>The child's LA provides all direct financial payments as agreed in the adoption support plan and scheme of delegations.</p> <p>Exceptional allowances are agreed by the LA e.g. vehicles and home extensions for larger sibling groups.</p>		<p>LAs to agree to consider potential to harmonise adoption allowances as far as possible and to standardise procedures around this.</p> <p>LAs consider drawing up a statement of delegation whereby ACE administers standard expenditure on behalf of the LAs.</p>
3.8 Post adoption support (Universal)		<p>ACE provides a specified range of adoption support services for adopters.</p>	
3.9 Post adoption support (Specialised)		<p>ACE assesses families who require more than the universal adoption support services for the therapeutic fund and post adoption specialised services.</p>	
3.10 Out of Hours Services	<p>Adoptive families are able to access out of hours services in their local authority areas.</p>	<p>ACE has a duty system only during office hours.</p>	
3.11 Letterbox /Keeping in Touch service	<p>Ensuring the Letterbox agreements are signed and recorded on child's adoption record before being transferred to ACE. It is the</p>	<p>ACE has a system to oversee Letterbox contact between adopted children and their birth families. Retaining Letterbox correspondence in</p>	<p>Ensure standardised process and language is used.</p>

	responsibility of the LA social worker to explain the Letterbox exchange system to birth family members.	child's records.	
3.12 Supervised and direct contact arrangements for siblings and birth relatives	Direct supervised contact arrangements rest with the LA.	ACE supports contact arrangements	Family Group Conferencing approaches are developed where direct contact needs to be re-negotiated.

Part 4. Special Guardianship Arrangements

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
4.1 The assessment of suitability to become a Special Guardian	<p>The child's LA assesses whether adults are suitable to become holders of Special Guardianship Orders.</p> <p>The child's local authority is responsible for paying the allowances and setting up costs etc.</p>		
4.2 Special guardianship support plan	LA takes responsibility for the support plan	ACE advises the LA of available support services to SGO carers	The plan needs to specify and review processes; if section 17 applies the LA SW is the lead SW or if Early Help then this is the relevant lead key worker. ACE

			may provide advice.
4.3 Request for assessment of need for Special Guardianship (SG) support services	LAs respond to requests for assessments through their existing arrangements.	ACE advises the LA of available support services to SGO carers and provide the support services as per the ACE arrangements .	
4.4 SGO financial payments	The child's local authority is responsible for paying and reviewing any allowances agreed as part of the SGO support plan.		
4.5 Post SG support (Universal)		ACE provides a specified range of post adoption services open to special guardians.	
4.6 Post SG Support (Specialist)	The child's LA undertakes any necessary assessment of need for SG support. This may include assessment of eligibility for therapies in the scope of the Adoption Support Fund.	Where a child needs an early help, CIN or CP assessment ACE can support/advise the LA in their assessment and what support might be appropriate and available.	ACE is available for consultation with the LAs regarding specialist therapeutic interventions
4.7 Supervised and direct contact arrangements for SG children and families	Direct supervised contact is arranged and supported as needed by the LA.		

Part 5. Access to files and records

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
5.1 Child's adoption case record	The LA has responsibility for setting up the adoption case record from the point that the plan for adoption has been agreed by the ADM. The LA updates the child's record.	MOSIAC work flow starts at point of ADM. ACE records the work they complete on the child.	Arrangements for passing information onto the child's adoption case records e.g. Letterbox documentation to be agreed.
5.2 Birth records counselling	The LA is responsible for enabling ACE access to adoption case records	ACE to provide advice and counselling to adopted adults.	
5.3 Access to adopters records/files	The LA is responsible for all historical/closed adopter case records up until 1.2.2018.	ACE is responsible for the preparation and provision of relevant files of adopters approved by the agency. Where adopters are transferred into the agency ACE is responsible from the point of transfer.	

Part 6. Independent adoption support service for Birth Parents

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
6.1 Support services to birth parents	The LA has effective processes to make birth family members aware and encourages access to these services.	ACE provides or commissions this service if within the agreed process. ACE provides suitable publicity materials in accordance with each existing LA process.	Provision in each local authority will be as provided/commissioned from 1.2.2018 pending review and the agreement for future service arrangements.
6.2 Support to birth parents contact	The LA may provide support and supervision.	ACE provides advice and guidance to the LA.	

Part 7. Intermediary Services

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
7.1 Intermediary services to the relatives of adopted person seeking information and contact with the adopted person	The LA provides information and refers to appropriate services as required.	ACE provides or commissions a service.	Provision in each local authority will be as provided/commissioned from 1.2.2018 pending review and the agreement for future service arrangements.

Part 8. Non-agency (step- parent) adoptions

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes/Areas to develop
8.1 Non-agency adoptions	<p>The LA provide checks as requested by ACE.</p> <p>The LAs are responsible for non agency adoption work that exceeds the agreed number</p>	<p>ACE provides families with advice as to the different options for stepchildren.</p> <p>ACE provides a maximum of 10 each per authority non-agency adoption assessments for Coventry, Worcestershire and Warwickshire in any 1 year, and 3 for Solihull.</p> <p>If one authority does not require their full quota and another LA requires more in that year ACE provides up to a total of 33 assessments in a year.</p>	<p>ACE will not take historic waiting lists i.e. applications made 30 or more days prior to 1.2.2018</p>

Part 9. Intercountry Adoptions

Service Area	Responsibilities of Local Authority	Responsibility of ACE	Notes
9.1 Intercountry Adoptions	<p>The LA provides checks as requested by ACE.</p>	<p>ACE provides or commissions.</p>	<p>By March 2018 ACE will harmonise the fees and arrangements for the provision or commissioning this work.</p>



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