

Cumbria Matching Procedures- revised March 2021

These procedures have been updated to reflect changes in practice arising from the importance for children of early linking to ensure they can live in their adoptive family at the earliest opportunity.

1. Pre Matching Stage In the week between papers being submitted for SHOPA and the decision from ADM, a meeting will take place to fully capture the child's needs and complete the family finding plan.

This will be ideally attended by between the child's Adoption Social Worker, the Family Finder, the foster carer and their Social Worker. (this may take place in parts rather than 1 meeting)

This will usually include the opportunity to meet/observe the child in placement.

The purpose of this meeting is to: -

1. Clearly identify and record the child's needs to inform the matching process.
2. Complete the child's profile on the Linkmaker template, for uploading the week of ADM decision.
3. Complete the pre-matching template of needs and the individual family finding plan for the child. Identify and resolve any discrepancy with the information in the CPR.
4. Identify whether we are likely to be able to match in the RAA or need to seek approval to search outside the RAA, also whether we need to gain agreement the child is eligible for adoption allowance
5. Identify any outstanding work/actions, who is responsible and a timescale for completion.
6. Ensure the Social Worker has requested the court's permission to share relevant reports with potential adopters and national family finding where required.
7. Consider whether the CPR needs to be updated at this stage.
8. Consider the secure base checklist completed by the SWF with foster carers

The following issues need to be clarified if not fully covered in the CPR:-

1. Geography-areas to avoid (including any need for placing outside of Cumbria due to risk),
2. Medical info-including blood borne viruses and testing (M and B forms available).
3. Contact plans (at that point, ideal- and bottom lines.)
4. Birth parent meeting
5. Info to come from future appts which will need to be added in and followed up 6. e.g. paediatrician appts
6. Whether they can live with- e.g.- other children, pets, an adopter working away.
7. If we don't know some things- when will we?
8. Work to prepare the children

The Family Finder will ensure the child is now proactively included in consideration at monthly tracking meetings and added to AC2C Linkmaker

2. Matching Meeting

In advance- check if the CPR is up to date. Redacted CPR ready if needed.

Where there is more than one potentially suitable adoptive family, the consideration by the child's SW and FF will be recorded in part A of the matching meeting form. If the CAT SW isn't available in the timescale, the FF will progress this. The child's TM will provide oversight where required (e.g if there is a different view). This to be done within 5 days of receipt of the PAR (adopters on hold on Linkmaker for 5 days)
We wouldn't expect to be looking at more than 2/3 families maximum at any one time— FF will select the best links at that point. We need to use resources sensibly.
Where only one family is being considered we proceed straight to part B.

Attendance Part B – within 5 days of receiving the PAR, or if a Part A consideration has taken place, within 5 days of completion of part A.

To include: - Chair: Family Finder; Child's Adoption Social Worker; Adopters' Social Worker, plus Foster carers' Social Worker if they are available in the timescale.

Invitations will be sent to the IRO and the SAP team SW can be included. Anyone attending or giving a view needs to have read the papers in advance. The Virtual School Deputy Head will be informed a potential match is in progress.

If a key person cannot attend within 5 working days the timescale may be extended to 6/7 working days in exceptional circumstances. It cannot go beyond this, so either a substitute will need to attend, or agree the attendees will decide.

Purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to look at the individual needs of the child and whether the identified possible adopters could meet these needs. The CPR, pre-matching meeting minutes and PARs will have been read by the child's and adopters' SWs before the meeting, and the Family Finder will have started to record the matching analysis, for completion and agreement at the meeting.

We will share the CPR with the ASW before any MMB – we will ask that the ASW does not give the CPR to the adopters until after the MMB (full CPR if we have a PO and redacted version if not) when it has been confirmed that this is a match we wish to progress, respecting the very personal and confidential information in the CPR about children and their families. However, the ASW can share verbal info from the CPR with their adopter/s before the MMB if they assess that their adopter/s can manage this. They will need to be clear with their adopter/s that this is not a match until after MMB and some ASWs may assess that their adopter/s will find this too difficult and wait to share info. This will be the same for all matching whether within the RAA, contracted VAA, or National.

The analysis will be systematically recorded on form Matching Meeting Record, so the reasons to proceed to the next stage, or not, are fully documented/ evidenced as a record for the child.

Adopters will not usually be considered at this point for more than one child / sibling group at the same time.

The ability of the adopters to meet the child's identified needs will be explored in detail, using the secure base model. Strengths in the potential match will be noted. Risk factors/vulnerabilities will be fully considered, and an analysis undertaken of whether the adopters can be supported / able to access support to manage these risks.

If it is agreed the match is not suitable, family finding will restart.

If it is agreed there is sufficient evidence to proceed, the meeting will agree the information to be shared and any areas requiring particular attention. This will include consideration of a Chemistry meeting(s) and Child Appreciation Day.

Dates will be set for the pre-Panel meeting and Matching Panel at this meeting. If the Placement Order is already in place, and if there are no contraindications or outstanding work, the Pre-Panel meeting will be expected to be within 3 weeks of the MM, with the Matching Panel 3 weeks after that. It is recognised that for older children the timescale may need to be adjusted to allow full consideration of the child's needs and consultation with key people.

Following the meeting:-

1. The adopter's social worker will share the child's profile(if not already shared) and initially anonymised information on the child with the adopters, talking with them about the child's needs and how they may or may not be able to meet these. (Including information from CPR, medical reports, attachments, other assessments, secure base checklist.) Any written information shared will need to be anonymised/redacted or have permission for sharing pre Placement Order. The information sharing arrangements will be followed.

If the child is subject to a Placement Order, full information will be shared (Including CPR, medical reports, attachments, other assessments, secure base checklist.)

The adopters will consider this information and respond.

A response will be expected within 1 week of the Matching meeting.

2. Subject to a) being positive, then within one week a joint visit to the adopters will be undertaken by their Social Worker with the child's Adoption Social Worker. The purpose of this visit is for both parties to clarify information and make a decision on whether they wish to proceed and whether further information is required. The adopters may require a short time after the visit to discuss this with their Social Worker before confirming their commitment to proceed. There may be occasions when the first visit is by phone/skype/Teams, then followed up by a face to face visit.
3. The child's Adoption Social Worker will ensure preparation work with the child is underway (generally at this point - child will know we are looking for a family, they will know why they are in care)

4. The Social Worker Fostering will talk to foster carers about the proposed match and confirm their contribution to the process and the direct work they will be required to undertake with the child, including update of the secure base checklist.
5. If the stages above are positive, the adopters will be given the opportunity to meet with others agreed at the MM who can contribute to their understanding of the child's needs, e.g. foster carers, nursery, school, health professionals and medical advisor. This will include consideration of any proposed chemistry meeting and confirm the plan for a child appreciation day, if applicable
6. The information checklist for adopters will be started.
7. It is acknowledged that if the match is being progressed as a result of an Activity Day, the adopters will already have met the child.
8. The date for the pre- Panel meeting will be confirmed.

If there is disagreement, the final decision about progressing a match is made by the Children's Team Manager, with the expectation that consultation/discussion at Team Manager level will take place regarding any different views-involving Service Managers if necessary.

Note- timescales for introductions may be impacted on by the contact plan and dates of final contact.

3.Pre-Panel meeting

Attendance

Chair-Family Finder

Attendees- Child's Adoption Social Worker, Adopters' Social Worker, Foster Carers' Social Worker, and virtual school team if agreed important for that child

Invitation- IRO, Strengthening Families Team

Purpose

Where the child's Social Worker and Team Manager and the adopter's Social Worker are in agreement that there is sufficient evidence to progress the proposed match to Adoption Panel:-

The Pre-Panel meeting will be held to:

1. Ensure the ability of the adopters to meet the child's needs have been fully considered.
2. Ensure the Adoption Support Plan has been completed and quality assured.
3. Ensure the APR has been completed and quality assured.
4. Agree what the contact plans are post - adoption
5. Confirm any financial matters
6. Agree proposed arrangements regarding parental responsibility
7. Consider any factors in relation to availability of staff and carers which will impact on introductions and placement.

8. Agree with the Virtual School team the possible need for a school place and timing of this.
9. Agree draft introductions plan - the optimum timings and length of introductions, including any dates to be ruled out.
10. Confirm the date of Panel
11. Confirm Adopter Network meeting date
12. Confirm date papers will be given to adopters.
13. Confirm APP will be completed and provided to adopters on Panel date.
14. Reports will then be shared with adopters giving them 5 working days prior to Panel submission for their response

These discussions will form the basis for the matching report presented to Panel.
(BAAF form H1 is currently used with other Adoption Agencies)

Sharing children's profiles where adopters are in stage 2.

The adopters and their Social Worker will decide in stage 2 whether the adopters will see profiles of children and/or take part in Exchange and Activity Days. They will decide according to the adopters preferences and readiness. This will be included in the stage 2 plan and the mid-point review.