

Good Practice Guidance on Payment of Adoption Allowance and one off payments

1.1 Criteria for the payment of an Adoption Allowance

The circumstances in which provision of financial support may be paid are as follows:

- i. Where it is necessary to ensure that adoptive parents can look after a child;
- ii. Where the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the continuing consequences of neglect - and the child's condition is serious and long-term;
- iii. Where it is necessary for the local authority to make any special arrangements to facilitate the placement or the adoption by reason of the age or ethnic origin of the child or the desirability of the child being placed with siblings or a child with whom he/she has previously shared a home;
- iv. Where such support is to meet the recurring costs of travel for visits for the child to members of the birth family/significant others;
- v. Where the local authority considers it appropriate to contribute towards expenditure on legal costs, including Court fees (in cases where the adoption is supported by the local authority), or expenses associated with the child's introduction to adoptive parents or expenditure on accommodating the child (e.g. adaptations to the home, furniture, clothing or transport).

1.2. Responsibility

Adoption Counts will be responsible for the assessment for adoption allowances including a benefits and entitlements check undertaken by Stockpot Advice service.

The Local Authority of the child will be responsible for approval of the assessment and payment of all Adoption allowances. The process for requesting and approving new payments is outlined in Appendix A

2. Adoption Allowance Payment Types

Adoption Allowance payment types will fall into the categories below

2.1 One-off payments

Legal costs – The local authority will pay the legal fee for the adopter’s application to court for an Adoption Order. This does not require a means test to be undertaken.

Settling in Allowance - In certain circumstances the local authority may consider paying an allowance of up to £250, when a child is placed with Adopters. For sibling groups, there may be consideration as to whether this is required for the first child, but may be applicable for additional children given the increased costs of taking a sibling group.

1 st Child	£250	To be considered
2 nd Child	£250	May be payable
Each child thereafter	£250	May be payable

The settling in allowance is discretionary, is subject to means test and will be considered on an individual basis. This will take in to account the financial circumstances of the adopters and the additional needs of the child/children. Evidence will need to be provided of why a settling in allowance is needed. Payment of a settling in allowance will not be standard practise in all cases.

Expenses incurred during introductions

Payment must be agreed by the LA designated officer but does not require a means test

Adopters will be paid a maximum flat rate of £15.00 subsistence, per day per person by the LA, during the period of introductions. Any payments to foster carers during this period are subject to local authority policy.

If accommodation is required to facilitate the introductions, only accommodation approved by the agency may be used.

The local authority will pay the travel costs incurred during introductions, which may be by car (10 p per mile). The cost of train, plane (if more cost effective) and in exceptional circumstances we will consider paying for the hire of a car, for example, if there are clear and evidenced safety issues for the adopters in transporting a large sibling group, or if they have travelled to introductions by plane.

Direct contact

Financial support for continuing direct contact is entirely at the discretion of the local authority

2.2 On-going Payments

Payments fall into a number of categories. An ongoing weekly maintenance allowance may be agreed. This will be reviewed annually by the local authority and payment may change dependent upon the circumstances of the child or the adopters. In other circumstances a short term allowance may be agreed to meet a specific need for a specific period of time. Local Authorities are also able to agree

exceptional payment which may be necessary in exceptional circumstances – see 2.2.3 below

The majority of allowances are considered at the point of match and placement however the regulations allow for an Adopter to request a financial assessment at any point in time should their circumstances change. In these circumstances Appendix B is not applicable

2.2.1 Maintenance Adoption Allowances

The payment of an Adoption Allowance is discretionary and based on the individual needs of the child, which means there is no guarantee that every adoptive family is entitled to financial support.

The LA may agree to a regular maintenance allowance subject to a means test, the terms and timing of which will be clearly defined in writing. The Adopter will be required to complete a financial assessment - **see Appendix C** which will be submitted to the Finance Officer at Adoption Counts. The Finance Officer will liaise with Stockport Advice Service to check the Adopters entitlement to benefits. Thereafter the Finance officer will complete a means test calculation to be submitted to the designated officers within the Local Authority. NB the requirement to annually review all adoption allowances is the responsibility of the paying Local Authority not Adoption Counts.

When considering whether a child is entitled to an Adoption Allowance, the LA will not apply a single criteria, but will require evidence that the child's needs are such that additional financial support is required. Evidence will need to be provided in the assessment that the child has additional needs which will incur additional expenditure.

Whether or not the child may attract an allowance will be considered **in principle** at the "should be placed for adoption" stage by the agency decision maker. **See appendix B**

The actual level of allowance payable will need to be authorised by the designated LA officer prior to matching panel. The Family finder will submit a financial request application **See appendix D**

The standard allowance payable for all new requests will be at the agreed rate below. Any exceptions to this rate will be considered as a short-term allowance as clarified below.

Age Group	Boarding Out	Boarding Out (less Child Benefit)
0-7	£60.76	£47.06
8-10	£66.50	£52.80
11-12	£72.38	£58.68
13-15	£87.50	£73.80

2.2.2 Short-term financial allowances - may be requested prior to match or the request may occur post placement if there is a change in circumstances.

There may be specific circumstances where the above criteria are met and following a means test, it may be considered appropriate to provide short-term financial assistance to facilitate placement and /or the ongoing needs of the child. For example the Local authority and the adopters may come to a view that it would be advantageous for the adopter to take a longer period of adoption leave than originally envisaged by the adopter. This may be to facilitate the placement of a more complex child-or may arise following ongoing assessment of need after placement.

The local authority may agree to pay an Adoption Allowance for an agreed period or pay a one off lump sum. The local authority will not agree to a figure related to replacement salary but will consider the financial assessment, welfare rights advice and any income gap this evidences. The local authority designated officer will need a clearly evidenced proposal setting out why any funding is requested.

2.2.3 Exceptional Payments

There may be exceptional circumstances arising due to the placement of larger sibling groups or children with significant additional needs.

In exceptional circumstances, the local authority may assist with the cost of replacing an adopter's car for a larger model if the needs of the children indicate this is necessary. It is likely that the LA will expect adopters to contribute to the cost of replacing their car and will agree a reasonable proportion for the agency to contribute. This will need to be considered prior to formal matching

In exceptional circumstances the LA may consider assisting with adaptations to the home. This will only be agreed if it directly links to the needs of the child. Adopter contributions are likely to be considered. There will need to be a clear assessment of need by the health service and an application to fund under the DSG will be required.

3. Welfare rights input

Adoption Counts has a SLA with Stockport Advice Service to provide a benefits check following receipt of the adopter's financial assessment. This is an essential part of the process of assessment for eligibility for an allowance. The payment of a time limited or ongoing allowance is conditional on the adopter agreeing to the benefit check. Any benefit payable as a result of the placed child joining the adoptive family will be deducted from the total figure calculated as payable by the local authority .This deduction will be made 3 months after placement, in order to allow the adoptive family time to submit any relevant benefit claims.

4. Reviews/ Appeals process

If the LA Designated Officer decline a request for payment a clear reason will be provided and summary of the decision will be recorded on the financial request form. The Adoption Counts Finance Officer will inform the Adopters of the outcome in writing.

Adopter Appeals against the decision should be made via the Local Authority Complaints procedure.

5. Supporting Documents

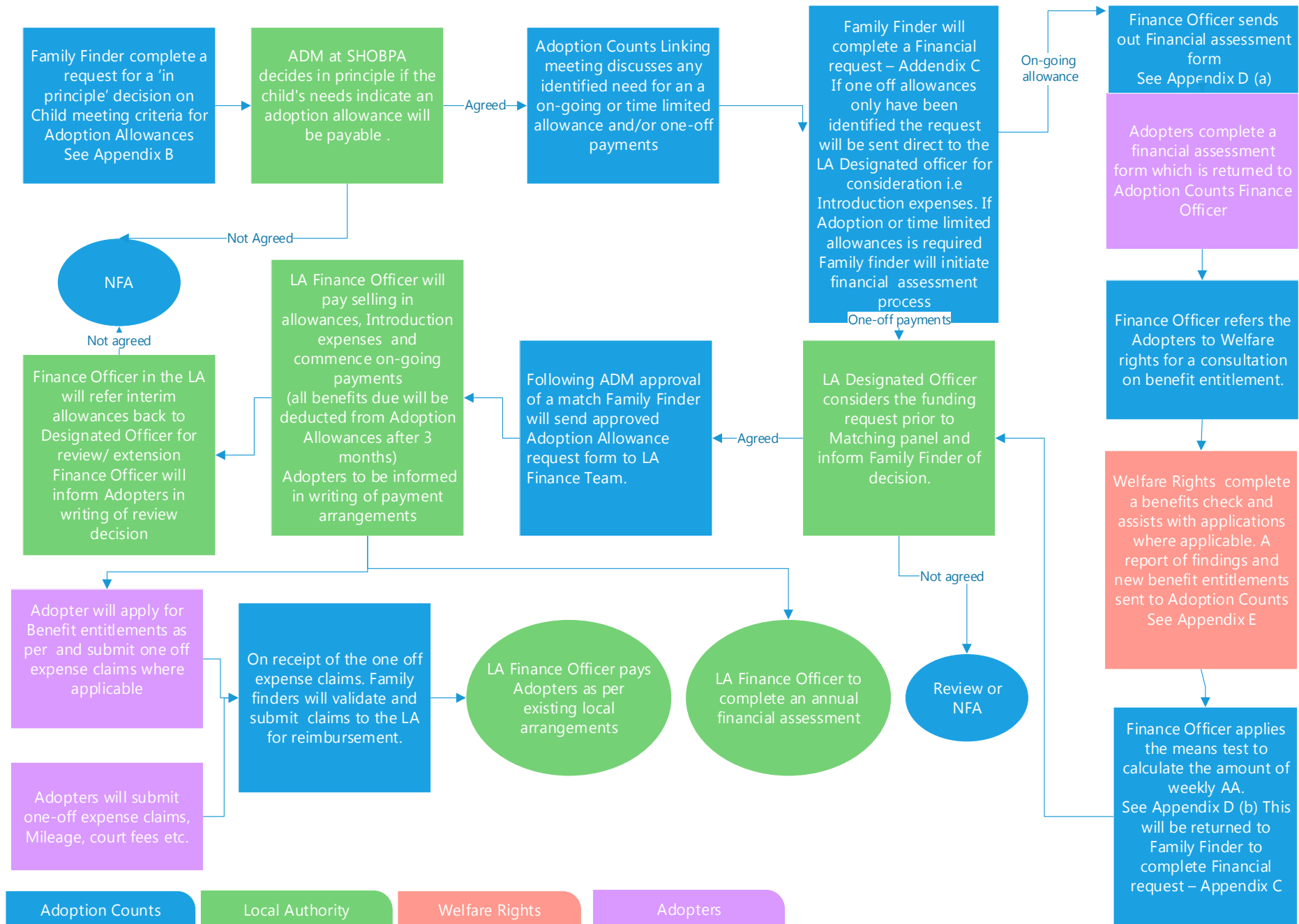
Appendix A – Adoption Allowance process flow

Appendix B – Request for principle decision at SHOBPA

Appendix C – Adoption Allowance financial assessment form

Appendix D – Request for approval of Children’s Adoption Allowances

Appendix A – Process flow for New Adoption Allowance requests





Request for principle decision regarding a child's eligibility for an Adoption Allowance.

Payment of an adoption allowance is discretionary and based on the individual needs of a child. This application and the (Child's assessment of need will be submitted by the Family Finder at Adoption Counts, for consideration by the ADM the SHOBPA stage.

Child's/ Children - Name	
DOB:	Case No
Child's Social Worker	Family Finder

In principle, does the child meet one of the following criteria? <i>Family Finder to provide evidence below for ADM to a make decision</i>	ADM Decision Yes/No
Where it is necessary to ensure that adoptive parents can look after a child.	
Where the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the continuing consequences of neglect - and the child's condition is serious and long-term.	
Where it is necessary for the local authority to make any special arrangements to facilitate the placement or the adoption by reason of the age or ethnic origin of the child or the desirability of the child being placed with siblings or a child with whom he/she has previously shared a home.	
Will the Adopter require reimbursement of the following expenses? <i>Family Finder to provide evidence below for ADM to a make decision</i>	ADM Decision Yes/No
The recurring costs of travel for visits for the child to members of the birth family/significant others.	

Contribute towards expenditure on legal costs, including Court fees (in cases where the adoption is supported by the local authority)	
Expenses associated with the child's introduction to adoptive parents or expenditure.	
In exceptional circumstances only, expenditure on accommodating the child with the adopters in the future (e.g. adaptations to the home, furniture, or transport). <i>N.B This is likely to apply where the child is part of a large sibling group or where the child has a significant disability</i>	

The 'in principle' decision requested by the Family Finder from Adoption Counts	
Submitted by (Insert Name)	
Signed	Date

Approval 'in principle' to discretionary allowances	
Child's Local Authority: (Insert Local Authority)	
Approved By: (Insert ADM)	
<i>The decision is made under the 'The Adoption Agencies (Panel and consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 and statutory Guidance.</i>	
Comments	
Signed	Date



Supporting
families
through
adoption

Adoption allowance scheme Financial support assessment

Applicant details

Name(s)	
Address	
Home Tel no	
Mobile no	
E-mail	

Children for whom the application is being made

Name	D.o.B.

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1. Are there any other children or dependants in receipt of Child Benefit?

Name	D.o.B.

2. Do any of your children have a disability or long-term health or behavioural problems? Yes / No

If yes, please give details:

3. Does anyone in your household receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP)?

If yes, please state who receives this (including children)

Name	Rate

4. Do you own any property other than your home?

If yes, please give details - we may write to you for more information about this.

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5. Please state any monthly amounts you receive for the following (please put a dash in both boxes if no payments are received).

Income	You	Your Partner
Earnings including regular overtime (after Tax and National Insurance deductions)		
Self Employed Earnings		
Employers' Sick Pay (after compulsory deductions)		
Statutory Sick Pay		
Statutory Adoption Pay (or other maternity/ paternity payments)		
Working Tax Credit (paid separately from wages and excluding any Childcare Element paid)		
Child Tax Credit		
Universal Credit		
Pension Credit		
State Pension		
Occupational Pension(s) or Private Pension(s)		
Carer's Allowance		
Bereavement Benefit		
Other Benefits (Please specify)		

6. Please state any monthly amounts you receive for the following (please put a dash in both boxes if no payments are received).

Other Income	You	Your Partner
Maintenance received for any child in the household		
Interest received on savings, capital or investments		
Existing Adoption/ Special Guardianship allowances		

7. Please state any monthly payments you make for the following (please put a dash in both boxes where you do not make any).

Outgoings	You	Your Partner
Pension Contributions paid by you		
Council Tax (after any benefit)		
Rent (after any benefit)		
Mortgage (including linked endowments)		
Other Loan payments (please explain what they are for and when they were taken out)		
1		
2		
3		

Maintenance Payments made		
University Fee Payments or Grant Contributions		
Court orders		
National Insurance contributions (from self-employment, but not for fostering)		

Other Information

Further information or proof of income/outgoings may be requested.

Declaration

I declare this a true statement. I agree to inform the agency of any changes in my/our financial circumstances, or if I/we move to another area. I will also notify the agency if the child / children cease to live with me or start work.

I understand that you will refer details of my finances to a Welfare Rights Officer. I agree that you can take into account any benefits that I am entitled to when assessing my circumstances, and that the financial assessment section and the Welfare Rights Officer can share this information.

**Your
Signature** _____

Date _____

**Partner's
Signature** _____



Salford City Council





Request to the LA – Designated Officer for approval of Children’s Adoption Allowances

Child/ Children Name(s)	
DOB	Case No
Child’s Social Worker	Family Finder

Criteria for Payment

(Using the criteria set out in the practice Guidance, please outline why financial support is necessary with reference to the needs of the child.)

Allowance Requested

Settling In Allowance Yes/No Amount £

If yes, please provide the reason a settling in allowance is required?

On-going Weekly Allowance

Outline sum requested

Reimbursement of Adopters Court fees	YES/NO
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Introduction Costs

Mileage	YES/NO
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Accommodation /travel requirements/ Other – please state

One- Off or time limited exceptional payments

Please detail the nature of the request, the amount and the duration (if applicable). Provide sufficient detail to enable the designated officer to fully understand why this assistance is necessary.

Attachments applicable to this Authorisation request.

- Decision in principle at SHOBPA
- Financial Assessment and Benefit check guidance

Submitted by Adoption Counts, Family Finder

Name:

Signed

Date

**For completion by the Designated Officer for
(Insert Local Authority)**

Decision

Signed

Date



Salford City Council

