

# Early Permanence Network

Supporting the development of early permanence placements for young children in care proceedings nationwide

## Context and definitions

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**Concurrent Planning** is an evidence based approach to achieving early permanence for young children in care proceedings where the risk to them may be identified pre-birth, at birth or soon after. Where (on the basis of previous history and current circumstances) the likelihood of adoption is high (in excess of 80%), the placement of choice may be dually approved foster carers/adopters – ie concurrent planning carers. In these cases viability assessments or full assessments should have been undertaken in respect of relatives who might be available to care for the child on a permanent basis, but some assessments may need to be completed. In these cases there is likely to be ongoing contact with parent/s and/or relatives.

**Fostering for Adoption (FFA)** placements provide a legal framework to secure early placements for children in care proceedings where the local authority has completed assessments and considers that adoption is in the child's best interests. FFA placements may be made with approved adopters who have been approved as foster carers for a particular child by the ADM. These placements may also be made with dually approved foster/adopt carers. Some contact may be required.

These placements can also be made where parents wish to relinquish their baby/child for adoption, but parental consent has not yet been formally given.

In both situations there is a period of fostering whilst the court considers the evidence and reaches a decision. These placements protect the child from unnecessary moves and broken attachments. For the child the outcome is win/win, whether the child is returned home or remains and is adopted. It is the adults who shoulder the risks.

Concurrent planning and FFA placements are on a continuum of risk and uncertainty re outcome, but they all have uncertain outcome until the court has made a judgement and the carers need to understand and accept their role as foster carers during this time.

**Early Permanence placements** include both concurrent planning and FFA.

## Good Practice Guide

CoramBAAF will publish the updated Good Practice Guide to Fostering for Adoption in the summer of 2017. This will be available to all agencies to ensure their services meet the highest standards of practice in regard to these vulnerable young children.

## Evidence base

Coram produced an Outcome Study on concurrent planning in 2013, which is being updated and will be available towards the end of 2017. The Outcome Study demonstrated the strength of attachments formed during these placements, with no disruptions in the first 12 years of either children who were returned to the care of their extended families, nor those who were adopted. Adopters testified to the importance of

early bonding and having the chance to get to know the parents of their child during the fostering phase of the placement.

## **Early Permanence Network**

Since 2014 Coram has offered training in early permanence (concurrent planning and foster for adoption) to support the development of good practice. This includes Early Permanence Network Days three times pa which provide a forum where LAs and VAAs can share learning, gain peer support and be updated on legislative developments, research and practice.

Topics covered include legal updates, preparation and assessment of dually approved and FFA carers, managing contact in early permanence placements, and systemic early permanence planning including pre-birth planning.

In 2016/17 member agencies placed over 100 babies and young children in early permanence placements.

## **Regional Adoption Agencies**

RAAs and LAs will need to pay particular attention to the interface between the LAs who are responsible for the child's journey and the RAA and VAAs who provide early permanence placements. Close communication and collaboration will be essential to ensure that such placements can be made.

### **Key benefits of network membership**

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#### **Core subscription**

- Tailored programme
- Peer support
- Access to practice leaders
- National quality assurance
- Ofsted preparation

#### **Early Permanence Network**

- The basic membership fee is £150pa, which purchases one place at each of the three annual Network Days.
- Most members send their Early Permanence Champion to Network meetings on a regular basis as peer relationships and learning are developed over time.
- In addition members generally wish to send additional participants to benefit from the key learning from the theme for each Network day.
- Additional places for the three annual meetings can be purchased for £150 per participant.

#### **Bespoke Training**

It is also possible to arrange bespoke training for individual LAs/ VAAs/RAAs to meet local needs – eg training staff on assessing dually approved carers, training for permanence panels etc.

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