



The Concurrent Planning Service

A guide for Regional Adoption Agencies
and Local Authorities

Early Permanence - an introduction to Concurrent Planning

Many children who cannot live with their birth parents are adopted and become part of a new family who give them love and security which is crucial to their future happiness and development. However, traditional adoption can take a long time and usually means that a child suffers the disruption of moving from a foster family to their adoptive family just at the time when they need stability and permanence.

The Government wants to see more children being adopted by loving families with less delay. Section 22 of the Children and Families Act 2014, placed a duty on the local authority to consider placing a child with a foster parent who has also been approved as a prospective adopter where a placement with the family is not appropriate. Concurrent Planning is a tried and tested way of doing this, providing the parents with the opportunity to show that they can care for their child in the future, whilst also providing babies and young children with a potentially permanent family placement and avoiding the need for children to move between carers. This means that adults take the risk of uncertainty and change - not children.

The Concurrent Planning Service is a well-established service which began in April 2014, to provide concurrent planning placements to local authorities and regional adoption agencies, predominantly in the North West.

Concurrent Planning

In Concurrent Planning, a child who cannot live with their birth parents is looked after by carers who are dually approved as both foster carers and adopters, whilst their future is decided by the court. The birth family has regular contact with their child and is given the opportunity to show that they can care for the child in the future. The concurrent carers agree to support the plan to return the child to the birth family and take the child to supervised contact sessions on a frequent basis. If the Court decides that the birth family has shown that they are capable of meeting the child's needs, the concurrent carers have the satisfaction of knowing that they have given the child love and security when they needed it most.

However, if the Court decides that the plan to return the child to their birth family, is not safe and appropriate, as is often the case, the foster carers go on to adopt the child.

The Adopting with Concurrent Planning Service is delivered in partnership by Caritas Care and Adoption Matters, registered children's charities and voluntary adoption agencies both rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Caritas Care is also an approved fostering agency also rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Together, they have over 140 years experience in the adoption sector.

www.adoptionmatters.org/ccp www.caritascare.org.uk/adoption/concurrent-planning



Children have the benefit of few moves or disruptions to their early relationships,

..which we know is *crucial* for future attachment.



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What are the benefits for the children?

Concurrent Planning works best for children if there is a possibility that the child may return to the care of their parents, but where the likelihood is that, based on previous information about the birth family, the child will require a permanent placement with adoptive carers. In Concurrent Planning the child does not have to move from one carer to another and can settle into one loving and secure family. Child development research consistently shows that the attachment bonds which children form early in their lives are crucial to their future development and that disrupting these attachments, should be avoided wherever possible.

What are the benefits for parents?

Parents have the opportunity to show that they can care for their children by attending supervised contact sessions with their child which contributes to their overall assessment. Concurrent carers are expected to bring the child to contact and facilitate a handover at the beginning and the end of the session. There is therefore the opportunity to parents and carers to get to know each other. If the child does go on to be adopted the parents will have had the opportunity to get to know the future carers and see the quality of care that has been provided. Parents have repeatedly told us that this relationship is enormously reassuring for them. They value knowing their child's adoptive parents and also feel confident that their child will grow up with real knowledge and information about them.

What are the benefits for carers?

Carers who go on to adopt get to know and love their children from a young age and care for them through the time in their life when they are most vulnerable which is not always possible with traditional adoption. They get to know the parents of the child from taking the child to contact sessions which can form the basis for meaningful contact in the future and be an important source of information in later life.

The largest service of its kind in the country

The service has placed over 150 young children & approved over 115 individuals and families.



0161 743 3682

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What support is available for carers?

- Specialist preparation, training and assessment are provided to all prospective carers.
- Intensive and high quality support from a Concurrent Planning Social Worker and from the wider team including post approval training and support groups and an out of hours emergency helpline.
- Financial support - During the fostering phase, concurrent carers will receive a fostering allowance. One carer is required to look after the child on a full-time basis during the fostering phase.
- Support from other carers at the monthly support group and stay and play sessions

What is the referral criteria for this service?

Children should be:

- Under 4 years old
- Subject to or about to be the subject of an Interim Care Order

In addition we ask that:

- Viability assessments indicate that there are no extended family members available
- If the child has older siblings who have been adopted, that the adopters have been explored and ruled out.
- Rehabilitation of the child to birth parents is being considered but the likelihood is that an adoptive placement will be needed.

Whilst historically we have been a service for very young babies, our service has grown over time and we are able to place older children and also sibling groups in concurrent planning placements and are able to be creative about how we do this.

Contact us with a referral or for an informal discussion

If you are thinking that concurrent planning might be appropriate for a child you are working with, do get in touch with the team. We very much welcome an early discussion of potential referrals to the service as it is helpful in agreeing whether concurrent planning is appropriate and so that potential carers can be identified.

You can contact us on **Tel: 0161 743 3682** or email us at: **info@concurrentplanning.org**

Further information on our service can also be found on the below websites.