Early Permanency Placements

Forever Families

Every child deserves a forever family, why not me?

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

www.nelincs.gov.uk

Early Permanency Placements are for children who may not be able to be safely cared for by their birth parents and who need at least a short period in Local Authority care. They are likely to need to be adopted, but still have a chance of being reunited with their birth family.

The main route to adoption can be an unsettling and disruptive time for young babies and children. The child is initially removed from their birth families due to significant concern regarding their safety and wellbeing. They are placed with temporary foster carers while social workers and other professionals work with and assess birth parents and other family members to see if the child can be safely card for within the birth family. This can take several months and can lead to the child being moved around different foster carers while a decision is made about their future. The social workers will need to make recommendations to the court about the child's future but it is the judge who will make the final decision based on detailed evidence. The child will be moved again to an adoptive family if the judge agrees that adoption is right for that child.

Early Permanence Placements seek to prevent the moves of placements for these young children at a very sensitive time in their development and growth by placing the baby with an approved adopter who can foster the child while assessments and court proceedings are ongoing. So the prospective adopter will provide the short term fostering placement and will then go on to adopt the child if the court agrees the plan for the child to be adopted and makes the appropriate legal order to allow this.

These placements will allow prospective adopters the opportunity to parent the baby from birth or soon after allowing them to be part of the baby's life from the beginning. This will enable them to parent a child from an earlier age, therefore not missing key stages of the child's development.

The carers in this route to adoption will need to be happy to be approved as foster carers as well as adopters as they will be fostering the child for the first phase of the placement when care/court proceedings and assessments of birth family are ongoing. The carers will need to be able to accept the uncertainty associated with this and be prepared to return the child to birth family if the court decides that this is the best plan for the child's future.

Important points for consideration

The child will be placed to live with the carers as early as possible often from birth so he/she will be able to experience stability from a much earlier age. The child will also be able to form secure relationships and attachments without disrupting and frightening moves of placement even though uncertainty regarding their long term placement remains and is being considered by the courts. It provides consistency for the child and avoids delays for their future, whether that is to remain with their Early Permanency Carer or to return to their birth family.

For a number of these children the court will decide that a return to their birth family is not possible. If that is the decision the child will remain with the carers and will be adopted by them. The carers will have the advantage of having cared for the child from a very young age. They may have also been in a special position where they have met the birth parents, possibly also through contact.

However, if the court decides that the birth parents or other members of the birth family are able to meet the needs of the child, the carers will be involved in helping the child to return to their birth family. This would of course be sad and upsetting for you but you can take some solace in the fact that you have given the child the love and security that they needed as well as helping them settle back with their family. The carers will then continue to receive support until they decide what they want to do next.

What this means for adoptive parents

In order to help you achieve becoming a carer you will receive preparation training on adoption and specialised Early Permanency training. Your adoption assessment will concentrate on your motivation, resilience, support networks and ability to manage this specialised task. It will be a two way process in deciding whether this is the right choice for you.

Following your approval and placement of a child you will receive intensive support from your social worker and the child's social worker this will involve a lot of social work visits as well as visits from other professionals. You will be entitled to a fostering allowance until the child is adopted or returned to the birth family and will need to attend several meetings about the child and his/her current and future care.

It is possible that carers will be involved in taking the child for contact while decisions about the child's future are being made. Carers need to work cooperatively with the child's family and the other professionals involved with the child during this time.

Carers are approved as adoptive carers who can undertake the temporary fostering task. You would need to be able to take time off work, be able to put the child's needs first, be emotionally resilient, live with and manage uncertainty and work with the child's birth parents.

Adoptive parents will have had the advantage of being involved in the child's life from a very early age, sometimes from birth. This will lead to the adopters being more connected to the child's early life and pre-birth experiences and to have some knowledge of and/or relationship with birth family. All this leads to an increased ability to share the child's life story and birth identify with the child as they grow.

Quotes from carers

"We decided to be Early Permanency carers because we wanted the chance to be part of the baby's life from as early as possible. We knew the risks and that we may not be able to keep her but we felt it was worth it."

"It has been an amazing process but not an easy one."

"We're helping to get the best outcome for the child."

"We got to meet the birth parents before she was born and while it was a bit awkward for us all we liked them and could see they really wanted to keep the baby."

"We're glad we met them as she needs to know there are other people out there later in her life."

"The only way we could manage at first was to think that the baby was theirs and we were looking after her for them. It was hard though because we really loved her and got attached to her. But that was the point of her being with us, so she could feel safe and loved and could build attachments.

"It was harder to live with the risk than we thought as we were at the mercy of the court's decision. By this time we loved her dearly and would have been devastated if she had gone back to birth parents.

"However we really felt for them as well as they tried hard. Whatever the outcome from the courts, one of us would suffer a great loss.

"In the end she stayed with us and her parents had to say goodbye to her. It was very sad and we had a lot of mixed emotions of feeling glad she was with us but seeing them so upset was hard.

"The good thing for us is that we got to know her parents. We can tell her all about them when she is growing up, who she looks like, what they are interested in and how much they loved and tried all they could to keep her. We feel that this means we will be more beneficial to her (and us) than if we had gone through mainstream adoption. She will grow up to know where she comes from and that two sets of people really loved and wanted her.

"We are coming back a second time for another placement through Early Permanency so for us it was worth the risk and it hadn't prevented us from coming back again."

If you are interested in becoming an Early Permanency Carer please contact the North East Lincolnshire Council's Adoption Service on **(01472) 326292 option 2** or email **fosteringandadoption@nelincs.gov.uk**