



Adoption
East Midlands

DERBY NOTTINGHAM DERBYSHIRE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

EXAMPLE - Adoption Support Plan

Name of child:	Rayleigh	Child's Social Worker & Contact number:	
DOB:		Adoption Social Worker & Contact Number:	
Date of placement order:		Foster Carer & Contact Number:	
Length of time in care:		Other Contact	
Date of Adoption Support Planning meeting:		Date of plan:	

Children adopted from care are likely to have ongoing needs, and you and your child(ren) are likely to benefit from support now or in the future. At AEM we want to ensure you get the right support at the right time and that you know how you can access that support when you need it.

Prior to an Adoption Order being granted, your assessing social worker and child's social worker are your first point of contact should you require any support however you can also access useful information at www.adoptioneastmidlands.org.uk/adopters.

Once an Adoption Order has been granted any ongoing guidance or support will come from AEM's Adoption Support Team (adoptionssupport@adoptioneastmidlands.nottscc.gov.uk). Adoption East Midlands is the Regional Adoption Agency that provides all adoption services on behalf of Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire children and families.

This form is designed to enable the child's voice to be heard and to bring their experiences to life. Where requested, parts of this plan will be written from the child's point of view. It is acknowledged that we don't know exactly what a child is thinking or feeling, especially when they are very young or unable to articulate their emotions, however we can use messages from research around the impact of trauma upon brain development to inform us about a child's lived experience, the development of their understanding and experience of the world and their emotions. We are asking adults completing this form to do so using an attitude of wondering and curiosity about a child's experiences, to begin to label thoughts and feelings resulting from their experiences, in order to support the development of adopters and enable their understanding of the impact of trauma on a child's feelings and emotions. We want them to begin to understand the child's experience through the eyes of the child.

Child's Voice My Story

Please write from the child's perspective - the facts of my story, the impact of this and how I experienced this emotionally, and what this means for me now.

My name is Rayleigh, and I am 18 months old. My birth mummy is called Jodie. Jodie has a boyfriend called Charlie. He is my stepdad. But he is the birth daddy of my older brother Joe who was taken into foster care at the age of 18 months old.

Jodie and Charlie met in a children's home. At the time Jodie felt very unhappy and lonely because she struggled to fit in at her large new school with no one she knew. Charlie and Jodie became friends and Charlie began drug dealing and encouraged Jodie to take drugs with him. Jodie became pregnant with my brother Joe and moved into Charlies council flat. Jodie and Charlie loved Joe very much and tried hard to care for him. When Joe was 9 months old Charlie went into prison leaving Jodie to cope on her own which was very difficult for her. Things were difficult when Charlie came out of prison. They had money worries and were arguing a lot. Jodie and Charlie were so stressed about their problems and worries that they didn't care for Joe properly and he went into foster care.

After Joe left the family home Jodie and Charlie stayed together but Charlie was drug dealing again to make money. He went to prison again and Jodie found things hard on her own. She enjoyed the attention from men who offered to buy her presents and alcohol. Jodie became pregnant with me and when Charlie came out of prison he and Jodie got back together. Before I was born, I was exposed to Jodie's drug abuse and her lifestyle was very chaotic. Charlie was angry he wasn't my daddy and he and Jodie had no money because they spent it on drugs and alcohol. Jodie and Charlie used to fight a lot because of this, and I could hear them shouting from inside Jodie's tummy. I could feel her heart beating fast. It made my heart beat fast too. When she was scared, I felt scared. When she drank, I drank. When she took drugs, I took drugs. I was still growing and developing my senses and these experiences connected feelings of fear to how I feel things in my body. It is because of this that I was born feeling scared. My brain has been hard wired to see the world through this lens. My body remembers these experiences, but my brain doesn't. This is called "sensory memory" and it means that as I grow older I will experience feelings of fear that I can't understand.

When I was born, I returned home with Charlie and Jodie. I spent most of my time lying in a baby bouncer. This was because Jodie and Charlie left me on my own in the house. Jodie was often high on drugs and Charlie was often out of the house selling drugs. My home was very smelly and dirty. My nappy wasn't changed, and I was sick on myself. I don't trust men yet. This is because Charlie used to shout in my face. This made me feel very scared and he used to burst in through the door which made me jump. Sometimes I watch the door because I'm wondering if he will come back and scare me again. Men have loud voices and are much bigger than me.

Jodie and Charlie hated cleaning me and they used to call me names. I came to believe that the things they said were true. I felt ashamed and worthless. They also got cross with me for being hungry and crying. I learnt that crying because I was cold or hungry didn't mean that someone would come and pick me up or feed me. Instead, I learnt that crying made people mad at me, so I kept it all in. I learnt that Mummies can be kind, but I never knew when or how long it would last before the shouting started again. I began to think that this was my fault because I made them cross. Maybe if I had cried less or not made a mess then they would have loved me?

Now I have trouble with bonding. I've learnt that mummies can't be trusted. I've learnt that men are scary. All this will impact on my ability to form relationships as I grow up. I've learnt that this is how people are. I am hardwired to respond to an unsafe and unpredictable world, not knowing about who to trust. I want to trust but now I can't, it just feels too scary. I'm self-reliant and independent. I've learnt that the only person I can trust is myself.

Child's Voice What do I understand about my plan of adoption?

Please write from the child's perspective and talk about how I am being helped to get ready for my move. Please include information about any worries I might have if any, as well as positive progress. Please record my views directly if I have been able to give them and include dates of when I was spoken to. If I haven't been able to do this please talk about my engagement in this process, my behaviour, moods and responses and think about what this might mean for me emotionally.

I'm 18 months old and my foster family have been the first grown ups who have been predictably kind to me. I felt really scared when I went to my foster home, and it has taken me time to understand that my foster carer will provide a home for me that is warm, loving and where there is food. I really care about my foster carer. She helps me explore my world so that it feels manageable and not so frightening. There is still a part of me that could trust her a lot more. I want to trust her, but my feeling of fear and self-reliance are strong. I need my foster carer to keep repeating what she does to help me put these feelings further behind me.

I'm getting to know my male foster carer better now and sometimes he makes me laugh. I understand that he can be kind but somehow, I'm just still a bit scared of him. He reminds

me of my stepdad because he has a man's voice and sometimes this triggers me into feelings of fear.

I will have lots of big feelings when I move to my new family and my feelings of fear and mistrust of adults will come back and I'll start relying on myself again, holding my feelings in and relying on myself to stay safe. The arrangements for my transition plan will need to help me with this.

Child's Voice - My transition plan

Please write from the child's perspective – What are my transition arrangements, and the impact of me during this time. Please talk about my needs, and any thoughts and/or predictions about my feelings and behaviour during this time and the support I may need. Please think about my strengths and how this will support my transition

I'm 18 months old and too young to understand that I'm going to move into a new family, so I'll need my foster carers to show me that it'll be ok. It will be important that I get to know my new family first and spend time with them alongside my foster carers. I'll need to stay in my routine so that I know what's happening and have familiarity around me where possible. Familiar toys and smells can help me with this. I won't be able to trust my new family straightaway and not within two weeks, but I will be able to begin to build new relationships, they'll just take time, and I'll need to keep seeing my foster carers so that I know that I'm ok and they're ok.

I'm likely to feel scared and frightened away from my foster carer. I might not show this on the outside as I have learnt to keep my feelings and emotions inside. This is how I will survive the change, so I'll need my new families and other adults around me to be curious about what I'm feeling, to predict my feelings and emotions, and be alongside me. Sometimes I might want to be very independent and in control and I might not always want to accept nurture and comfort. Please be patient and persistent and keep nurturing me. I need this to be on repeat.

When I'm not feeling safe, I'll become more sensitive to the world around me. I might begin to struggle with my big feelings and emotions and then my behaviour. I don't understand all the feelings and emotions that flood my body, and I might respond with feelings of fear - fight, flight, freeze. This is my lens on the world.

Although I may not seem to be struggling on the outside, on the inside, coping with change can take a lot of working out - this means I might have hidden needs that I need you to understand. My brain is working extra hard because I have an underdeveloped sensory system because of my early trauma experiences. This means that I might struggle with situations like transitions and changes. I might communicate this through my behaviour. I can easily become dysregulated because I am working so hard to complete the basic tasks that are expected of me both physically and emotionally. I really need emotional connection, I can enjoy relating with others, even though this causes me anxiety too. You can help me with this by parenting me therapeutically. I can be supported through relational play and co regulation and sensory activities to help my body calm down.

Child's Voice How will I keep in touch with people that are meaningful to me?

Please write from the child's perspective – think about the importance of maintaining my birth family connections, the value of different relationships in my birth family and how these might change and develop as I grow older.

I want the adults who are making decisions for me to think about who might be meaningful for me to keep in touch with now and in the future. I would like Jodie to know how I am doing as a grow up and I hope that one day I will see her again with my new family. I would really like to hear back from Jodie, but if I don't, I would like my new parents to talk to me about the reasons for this so that I can understand and share decisions about how we can stay in touch. I know that Jodie feels sad a lot of the time. Maybe this would be a reason? Will she be sad about not seeing me? I have so many mixed feelings about her that sometimes I don't know what I feel or think. I'll need support as a I grow older to be able find a way to understand and explain this.

My older brother lives somewhere else. Why doesn't he live with me and who does he live with? Can I get to know him and his family please and have visits and telephone calls? Is his story the same as mine? I want to learn and understand about this, and I want him to be in my life as I grow older.

I will miss my foster family when I leave. They are the only people I know who have always been kind to me and kept me safe. I will feel sad and I will be grieving. It'll take me time to settle and learn that I can feel happy and safe again in a family. I need my new family to be patient with me and know that I can learn to begin to trust other people. My foster family know Jodie too and they can tell me about this when I'm older. I hope that we can see each other regularly for visits as well as telephone calls so that they can share my story with me.

Child's Voice How will I be supported to understand who I am?

Please write from the child's perspective – please talk about my identity and how this can be supported as I grow and develop

I'm a little girl with black skin, dark brown eyes and black hair. Jodie has white skin and my foster family and everyone else I see around me has white skin too. Where does my black skin come from? I don't know who my birth daddy or my paternal grandparents are, but they form part of my identity too. Maybe they know where my black skin comes from? I need to have people around me who look like me, who can teach me to love and appreciate everything that I am and what I look like. I need to be immersed in a community that looks like me so that I can understand where I come from. I might find some answers about my birth daddy in that community too.

I have a brother, he has white skin, he doesn't look like me. Can someone tell me about the reason for this? I need time and support to understand our connection as well as our differences.

Jodie chose my name; she told my social worker that I was named after her maternal grandmother who she always enjoyed visiting as a child. I want to keep my name as this is a meaningful link between me and Jodie.

I hope my new family will be able to meet all the people who have known me so far. The people who have cared for me but also the professional grown-ups who have made me safe. They can tell them my story so that when I grow up, they can tell me too. I hope that my new family can meet with Jodie so that they can tell me about her. I want to feel comfortable and safe knowing I can talk about Jodie and why I couldn't live with her and I think meeting Jodie would help with this.

Professional Voice - What support will we all need when we become a Family and from whom?

This section should be written from the perspective of the social worker. Please detail the support needed, who will deliver it and explain why this support will be important. Both the Assessing and the Permanence Worker should contribute to this section detailing which tasks they will take the lead on in supporting the adopters and the child

When Rayleigh and her adopters become a family, they will need to understand the impact of early trauma on brain development and how to therapeutically parent her. Rayleigh's adopters will be supported in the initial stages of placement through regular visits from their assessing social worker and Rayleigh's Permanence Social Worker. A Therapeutic Parenting plan will be started at the Adoption Support Planning meeting. The Therapeutic Parenting Plan draws on the practical therapeutic toolkit that adopters learn about in their pre-approval training and is facilitated via discussion and support by the AEM social worker and the Permanence social worker during home visits post placement. By providing a combination of co-regulation and relationship support, Rayleigh's adopters will be able to support her attachment and bonding and her emotional safety.

Rayleigh's adopters support network will be very important. Rayleigh's adopters need to feel confident to share their parenting approach with their wider family and be supported in its delivery. The AEM social worker will be able to support the wider family with their understanding of therapeutic parenting if this is needed, either through the Friends and Family workshop or through more direct 1:1 support.

Consideration will need to be given to the potential impact of alcohol upon Rayleigh's brain architecture. The consequences of this are that there will be known unknowns regarding the trajectory for her development, and her adopters will need to have a theoretical understanding of FASD and its implications. This support could be drawn from support groups led by organisations such as NOFAS, and the NATP, as well as more factual support via the NHS.

Peer support regarding the challenges around the first year of adoption could be identified informally via the assessing social worker with another adoptive family within the AEM region or could be sought more formally through peer mentor schemes run by the NATP or Adoption UK.

It will be important that Rayleigh's adopters are able to draw on regular support from the foster carers. It is hoped that the relationship between the adopters and foster carers can be well established before, during and after introductions, not only so that Rayleigh can recognise that her foster carers are actively supporting her move to her adopters, but also so that she can be supported in grieving the change in their role and the loss of them as a primary relationship (see contact section for more details).

Rayleigh is now 18 months old and may attend nursery in the future. It is important that Rayleigh is enabled to feel emotionally safe in her primary relationships before further relational challenges are presented to her. This will support her emotional development and develop her resilience to manage the challenges that come with nursery and school attendance.

Rayleigh has experienced neglect. This has impacted her physical and emotional development, such as her speech and language, and her development of primary and social relationships. These adverse childhood experiences (ACES) set the scene for potential difficulties in access to learning for Rayleigh. It is important that her adopters understand what they can expect in terms of resources to support Rayleigh in education, but also their own role as advocates for Rayleigh. They can be supported to develop these skills and understanding through accessing AEM education workshops and information provided through their local virtual school.

Professional Voice - How may my needs change as I grow and what support is available to me and my family to help us grow and develop together?

Please discuss this from the social workers point of view. Please consider the child's ACES and consider the impact on these for the child's future development and needs

Rayleigh's needs will change as she grows and develops. Her adopters will need to continuously deepen their knowledge and understanding of brain development and early trauma so that as Rayleigh moves through her development, they will be equipped to meet the challenges that this will bring. They will be able to develop this knowledge through accessing resources through the NATP or CATCH, accessing the AEM Portal and accessing courses with AEM adoption support or via other adoption charities such as Adoption UK. This will also offer them opportunities to meet with other families who can offer peer support to them as a family and vice versa.

Due to the exposure that Rayleigh has experienced in utero to alcohol, this could have longer term implications for her learning and development. As discussed above, support for learning and education can be accessed via the local virtual school.

We know that teenagers who have experienced early adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as neglect and emotional abuse are more likely to engage in risk taking behaviour and challenge their primary relationships through this developmental phase, therefore Rayleigh may be vulnerable to experiencing issues such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), poor mental health, and challenging behaviour both physically and emotionally. If Rayleigh's family need support at this time they can access social work support via the adoption support team. It might be appropriate at this time to access some therapeutic support which would be available via the Adoption Support Fund.

Rayleigh may also begin to think more deeply about her identity at this stage and need additional support to think through her life story and about her contact arrangements (see identity section). It is important that identity issues are an open conversation with Rayleigh (as identified below) however this can feel very challenging for adoptive parents for a variety of reasons. Her adopters can access ongoing training and support via AEM courses covering identity needs and keeping in touch.

My adoptive family's support plan:

This plan is written in the professional voice and captures all the immediate actions and support that will take place when you become a family. The plan will be reviewed by the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer at future Looked After Reviews that will take place until an adoption order is granted. Any additional needs highlighted will be agreed and added to the plan.

Please tailor the needs to be addressed to each individual child and add additional boxes if needed.

The Need to be addressed	What will we do	Who will do this	When will we review this
<p><u>Emotional needs</u> We need to strengthen Rayleigh's adopters understanding of and ability to parent therapeutically –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for regression and providing intense nurture • 4th move/caregiver since birth – support with transitions • Promoting communication verbal and non-verbal 	<p>Support to be offered via the Therapeutic Parenting Plan.</p> <p>The AEM Social Worker will support parents to use the tools from the therapeutic toolkit to develop their understanding of therapeutic parenting and how to deliver this on a practical level day to day.</p>	<p>AEM SW supported by Permanence SW</p> <p>Children's Social Worker will visit within the statutory timescales and will offer advice and support when necessary.</p> <p>Adoption Social Worker to support the adopters through the Introductions and placement. Initially weekly contact and then fortnightly/ monthly and as required.</p>	<p>The Therapeutic Parenting Plan to be reviewed during support visits by the Adoption Social Worker</p> <p>Also to be discussed at each CIC Meeting and reviewed ahead of the meeting by the adopters and the AEM SW.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing primary relationships through play • Sensory support for dysregulation • Consideration of support for adoptive Dad due to Rayleigh's wariness of males – support for Dad to develop attachment 			
Parents to develop overall adoption knowledge	Become a member of the NATP and/or CATCH Access the AEM Portal Universal Offer Adoptive parents to attend AEM Therapeutic Realities Workshop	Adoptive Parents	Ongoing
Develop Peer relationships with other adopters	Link up with other adopters	Adoption Social Worker	Adoption Social Worker to review on visits to family
<u>Identity/Attachment/Loss</u> Support ongoing connection with Foster Carer	Detail contact plan with foster carer post placement.	Adopters and Foster Carers	Adoption Social Worker and Child's Social Workers to review on visits to family 1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review 1st LAC review and then 2 nd LAC review
Rayleigh needs her heritage is authentically promoted	Rayleigh's heritage will be promoted in her adoptive family as her ethnicity is reflected in her immediate and	Adopters	Adoption Social Worker and Child's Social Workers to review on visits to family

	wider family and the family community.		1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
Rayleigh need to have a clear adoption narrative	Provision of life story work and life story book	Child's Social Worker	1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
<u>Keeping in Touch</u>			
For Rayleigh to know and feel connected to her past and have her birth identity and positively promoted.	A meeting between birth parents and adopters to take place planned to take place on 1 st May 2023	Adopters/ birth parents/ Child's Social Worker / Adoption Social Worker	N/A
	A settling in letter to be written by adopters in July 2023	Adopters with support of Adoption Social Worker	1st LAC review
	Annual two-way exchange of letters	Adopters / Birth parents	1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
<u>Health</u>			
Speech and Language development	SALT intervention will be transferred to local area where placed.	Child's Social Worker	1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
Toilet training	Specialist Public Health practitioner will be identified, and advice sought.	Child's Social Worker and Adopters	Adoption Social Worker and Child's Social Workers to review on visits to family 1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
Dental and sight tests	To be arranged at due date	Adopters	1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
<u>Education</u>			
For Rayleigh to feel emotionally safe in her primary relationships before attending nursery and school	Adopters to focus on relational play	Adopters with support from Adoption Social Worker and Child's Social Worker	Adoption Social Worker and Child's Social Workers to review on visits to family 1st LAC review and then 2nd LAC review
For adopters to prepare themselves for supporting an adopted child in school	Adopters to attend the AEM Education Seminar	Adopters / Adoption Social Worker	Adoption Social Worker to review on visits to family

Date the family will attend the Adoption Support Welcome Seminar?	12 th May 2023
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Detail any financial support agreed Please state the purpose, how funding will be sourced and, if already agreed, by whom.	<p>AEM will reimburse the adopter's court fees for the adoption application currently £183</p> <p>Adoption social worker will ensure that the adopters are reimbursed for the cost of the adoption application.</p> <p>The adopters will need to make any relevant claims, but advice can be sought in respect of what they may be entitled to, via the Benefits Agency www.gov.uk.</p> <p>Once the adoption order is granted the adopters will be made aware of the information of the junior ISA for adopted children if necessary.</p>
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