

21st century linking in adoption: adopter-led matching events

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Aims

- Explore the difficulties faced in the existing matching process
- Why adoption exchange days were attempted?
- Values, Beliefs and Barrier's to participation
- How to make the adoption exchange day a success for your agency or Local Authority
- Benefits for Practitioners and Children

Aims

- What it meant for the children featured?
- What can it mean for the future of children in Local Authority care?
- What it has meant for me as a practitioner?

Difficulties in Matching

- Limited number of approved adopters in the Local Authority
- Increasing number of children in need of permanence
- Demands on approved adopters was great
- Adoption being agreed as a more suitable long term plan for children as opposed to long term foster care

Difficulties in Matching

- Children where there is a plan for adoption 'need a lot more'
- One size fits all for matching does not meet the needs of the child
- Children have much more complex needs and therefore a less restrictive pool of adopters was required

Difficulties in Matching

- Paper exchange – just sharing the Form E does not bring a child to life
- Children lose out on adopters as to how ‘they read’
- Passion and personal information about the child can be lost in how children are written about

Difficulties in Matching

- Prospective adopters are dismissed on how they 'read' and therefore we further reduce the existing pool of potential adopters
- Professionals make decisions on what they think are the 'best' matches
- Existing forums for identifying prospective adopters were rigid – age, geography specific

Why adoption exchange days?

- Matching processes were not conducive in generating prospective adopters
- More children were having a plan for long term foster care as opposed to adoption
- Matching process was restrictive and static
- Views of those who did not know the child determined the available resources to be considered

Why adoption exchange days?

- What we had for matching was not working
- This was something new and dynamic which needed to be embraced
- A venue that allowed me as the social worker to bring my child to life, share a balance and mixture of information about the child

Why adoption exchange days?

- I made the plan for permanence and therefore had a responsibility where possible to secure this for the child
- Permanence is about securing a forever family that meets the child's holistic current and long term needs
- Permanence is about securing a family for a child not just a legal order

**“We all need to think more creatively
in order to maximise the outcomes for
children who have a plan for
permanence”**



Views, Beliefs and Barriers

- Something additional to do in what social workers already see as a lengthy process
- Matching is the role of someone else
- ‘Marketing’ of children
- “It just does not sit right with me” was the view of some workers

Views, Beliefs and Barriers

- Change – whilst social workers are agents of social change, participation in the adoption exchange day was unfamiliar
- Something which had to be tried before knowing what to expect,
- Daunting
- View was it was a lot of work for something that would not or may not work



**IT DOES WORK & CAN BE A
SUCCESS**

How to make the adoption exchange day a success?

- Motivation, enthusiasm and determination
- Researched the events so we knew what to expect
- Preparation – attended the workshops facilitated by BAAF
- Social Workers were passionate about securing a family for their child

How to make the adoption exchange day a success?

- What had been tried had not been fruitful for our children – existing matching processes had not identified any prospective adopters, so something new might!
- Open minded
- Confidence that we knew our child well – not just to feature on a display but could talk about the children

How to make the adoption exchange day a success?

- What we have is not working for children who are older, who have complex care needs or who are staying together as a sibling group
- Let's make this work

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Practitioners

- Richness of experience and knowledge that is shared through discussion
- Networking with other Local Authorities & Third Sector Organisations
- Informal matching between professionals
- Greater understanding of what is happening in the field of permanence across Scotland

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Practitioners

- Established links with workers in agencies that would have not been possible if participation in these events had not happened
- Ability to discuss prospective matches for other children in between adoption exchange days. Less delay in matching children. Time is always of the essence

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Practitioners

- My own knowledge base in permanence has increased in relation to direct work with children and thinking more creatively about transitions and co-ordinations
- Practice development through sharing of knowledge between the practitioners involved in matching
- Energy and drive that is created through a like mindedness between the practitioners

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Children

- Benefits are significant
- The adopter is the lead in discussing potential matches with discussions being led by the adopters
- Link workers unable to intercept discussion between the child's social worker and prospective adopters

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Children

- There is a range of assessed and approved families
- Families are all able to offer something different for the child
- A significant level of agency support offered to adopters
- Openness by adopters to discuss children and see them as children first and foremost

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Children

- Thorough discussion about the child's past, present and future needs
- Child is brought to life and not immediately dismissed
- Why? The child's journey is discussed, where they started, what change has occurred and what they need for the future
- Complexity is accepted and understood within a context

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Children

- Everyone gets a sense of the other, the social workers compatibility to work together, the adopters, the foster carers and the adopters create a link
- Be true to say as the child's social worker you get a 'sense' of something going to work
- The face to face interaction between all parties means no ones dismissed by how they are interpreted from written information

Adoption Exchange Days Benefits for Children

- Restores hope and faith that children can have a forever family, that permanence is open to all children despite their age, needs and impact of past trauma
- Forever families are needs led for children and not resource led = greater long term success in adoption

What has it meant for my children?

- Has meant both of my children have a forever family that would not have been possible without the adoption exchange day
- The children have stability, security and a sense of identity in a forever family – truly achieving permanence
- The children have less uncertainty in their future

What has it meant for my children?

- Children have been claimed by parents who are willing to embrace challenge, work with professionals and give children permanence
- No uncertain future in temporary foster care
- There has been a significant change in presenting difficulties of the children by being placed with adopters

What does it mean for the future?

- Reduced number of children in temporary placements
- Has the potential to prevent children from having multiple placements
- Can improve the long term outcomes for children looked after and accommodated away from home

What does it mean for the future?

- Adoption is not exclusive to children of a certain age with certain attributes and behaviours
- Permanence through adoption can be made available as the first plan for all children
- All children can have a sense of identity in a family – whatever that family looks like

For Me!

- Restored hope that we can achieve the optimal plan for all the children we work with
- That children can have stability and security in a family
- Should not just accept that there is nothing
- Stay loyal to the child's plan and assessment of need

For Me

- That determination to achieve a plan can be achieved through openness, innovation and effort to trying new ideas, participating in new events and being passionate about getting what children need with the plan you have set
- Adoption Exchange Days work for children and we all need to participate and encourage others to do so