



## A Guide to Early Permanence for birth family

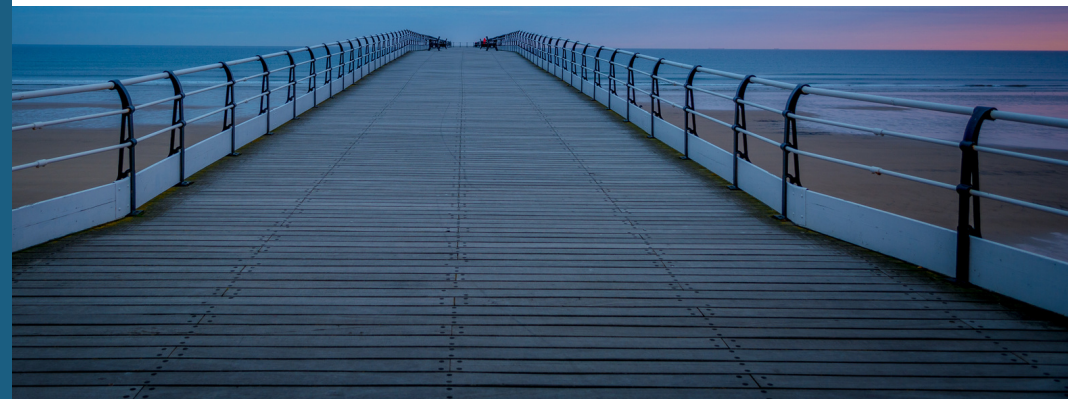
### **Dear Parent,**

If you are reading this it will probably mean that there are plans for court proceedings where decisions will be made about your child's future. We hope that this information will be helpful during what is usually a very difficult time for parents and the wider family.

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with information about the care of your child and about early permanence.

### **What is Early Permanence?**

Early Permanence carers have been trained and approved both as foster carers and adopters. These carers are committed to helping us to reunite parents with their children if this is possible. However, if the Court decides that your child cannot return home to you or to another member of your family, these carers are ready to offer the security of adoption so that your child does not face another change of carer.





As part of this process you may have the opportunity to meet the person who is caring for your child. This could be an occasion to discuss what is happening in your child's life and how she or he is developing.

### **The aims of an Early Permanence Placement are:**

- To provide the best possible care to babies and young children whilst they are away from their parents.
- To reduce the number of carers a child may live with until decisions by the court are made.
- To provide love and security to children when it is not possible for them to return to their parents, or to live with other family members.

### **What happens during an Early Permanence placement?**

The Court will be responsible for making the decision about where your child should live in the future.

It is the local authority's job to work with you to assess whether or not your child can return to your care and to support you if this happens, but it is still the Court's decision.

During this time we will provide a foster placement for your child and will also ensure that you have regular, good quality family time with your child. The frequency and length of this will be decided by the Court. We will have a written agreement with you setting out the family time arrangements, what you are expected to do and what help is available for you.

The family time will take place in an agreed venue with our Family Time Supervisor who will support you and your child, help you to get the most out of your family time and develop your parenting skills.

### **What could happen to my child in the longer term?**

The Court will decide whether your child can return to you or another member of your family. The decision will be based on the evidence from you, as well as evidence from social workers, the Children's Guardian and any other professionals who have been asked to do an assessment or give an opinion. If the Court's decision is that your child can return to you we will support you in making this happen.

If the Court decides that your child cannot return to you or a member of your extended family, then the plan would be for your child to continue to be cared for by the foster carers who would then apply to the court to become the adoptive parents. They would already have got to know you and your child and this would avoid your child having a change of carer. You would also already know the carers and we hope you would feel confident that they would give your child the love and security he or she needs.

### **Who can I discuss these arrangements with?**

Your child's social worker will be able to explain the information in this letter in more detail. You may also find it helpful to discuss this letter with your solicitor.



For further information / support:

You are bound to be worried and upset please do ask for support. You can get help or advice from:

- Your child's social worker
- Your child's court appointed Guardian
- (If court proceedings have begun)
- Your solicitor or legal representative
- Family Rights Group 0808 801 0366
- Your Social Worker or Adoption Tees Valley can offer independent support for you, where adoption is being discussed, or in the event that adoption takes place.
- Samaritans 116 123



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