



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu | National
Cenedlaethol | **Adoption**
Service



WELSH EARLY PERMANENCE

Information for prospective
adoptive parents



WELSH EARLY PERMANENCE: INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS

You have applied to become an adoptive parent and are about to start Stage 2 of the assessment process. You will have already heard, during an information event, or read in some of the material provided, reference to 'Welsh Early Permanence'. This leaflet explains what 'WEP' is and invites you to consider whether you may want to know more about it.

What is Welsh Early Permanence?

With most children in Wales, when they are first removed from their birth family either just before or at the start of care proceedings, they are either placed with family members or in a short term foster placement with approved foster carers. If the local authority plan, ratified by the court, is for the child to either be reunified with birth parents or placed with family members, then the child moves from their foster placement at the end of proceedings. If the care plan for adoption is accepted by the court, then the foster carer sees the child through their transition to their adoptive placement.

With WEP, the foster carers who take the child at the start of proceedings are also approved prospective adoptive parents. They act as any foster carers, caring for the child, facilitating contact with birth family and taking part in the child's looked after reviews. If the care plan is for reunification or placement with family, then they help the child with the transition to their birth family. If the care plan is for adoption, then the child stays with the foster carers who then become their adoptive parents.

What does it mean for the child?

The huge benefit for the child is, if the care plan becomes adoption, they do not have the trauma of the transition from foster placement to adoptive placement, leaving the people with whom they have developed attachments, as they are already there.

With some children the risk of return to birth family is small; with others there is a greater chance of reunification or placement with wider family. Although the number of children who return to birth family or are placed with family members is small, there can never be a guarantee that the child will not return and WEP carers have to be clear that they are prepared to take the risk.

What does it mean for us?

So why would any prospective adopters want to take that risk? Many prospective adopters can see the benefit for the child and are prepared, with support, to take the risk on behalf of the child. With babies who are removed from birth parents shortly after birth the WEP carers have the satisfaction of caring for a new born (although you will know from your preparation training that there is risk in taking very small babies where their developmental trajectory cannot be known); with older children they have the satisfaction of providing a very high standard of care for the child at an earlier stage of their care experience, whatever the final care plan.

The experience of early permanence placements in some areas of England, where it is common practice to place children with foster carers who are also approved adoptive parents, is that adopters/carers embrace the role as foster carers. The majority of children remain in that placement and the child becomes theirs legally once the care plan for adoption is ratified by the court. The adopters find getting to meet birth parents, at handovers for contact and at review meetings, really helps in talking to the child about birth family in later years. Most importantly, they have prevented the need for a traumatic and disruptive transition from foster to adoptive placement.

The way forward

Becoming a WEP carer is not for everyone. However, if you are interested in learning more about this as an option you can sign up with your agency to a half day online (live webinar) training course 'Is Welsh Early Permanence right for you?' which will look in more detail at the role of the WEP foster carer. At the end of that course you may decide that WEP is not for you but you will at least have explored the option. Following that half day, if you are still interested, then you can take part in a one day course that prepares you for being a foster carer. All of this will be explained in detail at the half day exploratory course.

If you are interested, talk to your assessing social worker who can discuss this more fully with you and book a place on the half day course if you decide you want to know more.



How is Welsh Early Permanence different to traditional adoption?

Traditional Adoption	Welsh Early Permanence
<p>You will only hear about, and be matched with, children for whom the court has already made a decision for a plan of adoption. The court will have granted a "Placement Order" giving the Local Authority the power to place the child with approved prospective adoptive parents.</p> <p>Therefore, you have more certainty that the child placed with you will stay with you.</p>	<p>If a child is not able to remain with parents, they move in with WEP carers at a very early point whilst the court makes a decision about their future.</p> <p>The court might decide for the child to return to parents or to a wider family member and if so, a plan for reunification is agreed which the WEP carers supports.</p> <p>If the court decides on a plan for adoption, the child remains with their WEP carers and the WEP carers make a seamless transition to prospective adopters (following Matching Panel and ADM). The child is able to remain with their Secure Base caregivers with whom they have started to formed attachments.</p>
<p>The child holds the uncertainty and has to contend with the possibility of multiple moves in foster care whilst decisions are being made. As they start to settle in foster care, they also have to deal with the uncertainty of having to move again, when this will happen, and what their new family will be like.</p>	<p>The WEP carers, not the child, hold the uncertainty. Although you are first and foremost, prospective adopters, the child will be placed with you as foster carers. You will need to understand and accept that you may never be more than a foster carer for this child as they may return to their parents or wider family.</p>
<p>As the child will have spent time with foster carers and possibly wider family, you will have quite a lot of information about the child, their likes and dislikes, routines, triggers and soothers, and what they need to help them continue to recover and grow.</p> <p>There will be opportunities before you are matched to meet with and hear from a number of people who have been involved with the child and who will help you understand the impact of the child's early experiences.</p>	<p>When the child comes straight from home or from hospital after birth, there might be limited information about them, their health and development, and their early experiences. This means that you will have to be able to manage and accept this uncertainty.</p> <p>You will always be provided with as much information as the social workers and other professionals have, and will be supported to understand what this means for your child, and for you.</p>
<p>Decisions about keeping in touch with birth family are likely to have been made so you can think about whether these are arrangements you can commit to. The long term benefits of maintaining a connection with birth family is widely recognised and the child's social worker and the adoption social worker will also be thinking about the child's predicted needs and how these will change as they gets older.</p> <p>Meetings between birth parents (and other birth family members) are seen as a normative part of the adoption process in Wales unless there are clear reasons why this cannot happen.</p>	<p>Contact with parents and possibly other family members will be part of the court decision making process and is likely to be frequent. If it is safe and possible, you will be involved in contact between the child and their family, maybe at the start and end of each session or via a handover book. You will meet with parents unless there are clear reasons why this shouldn't happen and be encouraged to develop a relationship with them as we know this sets a positive foundation for future contact that is in the best interests of the child</p>

FAQS

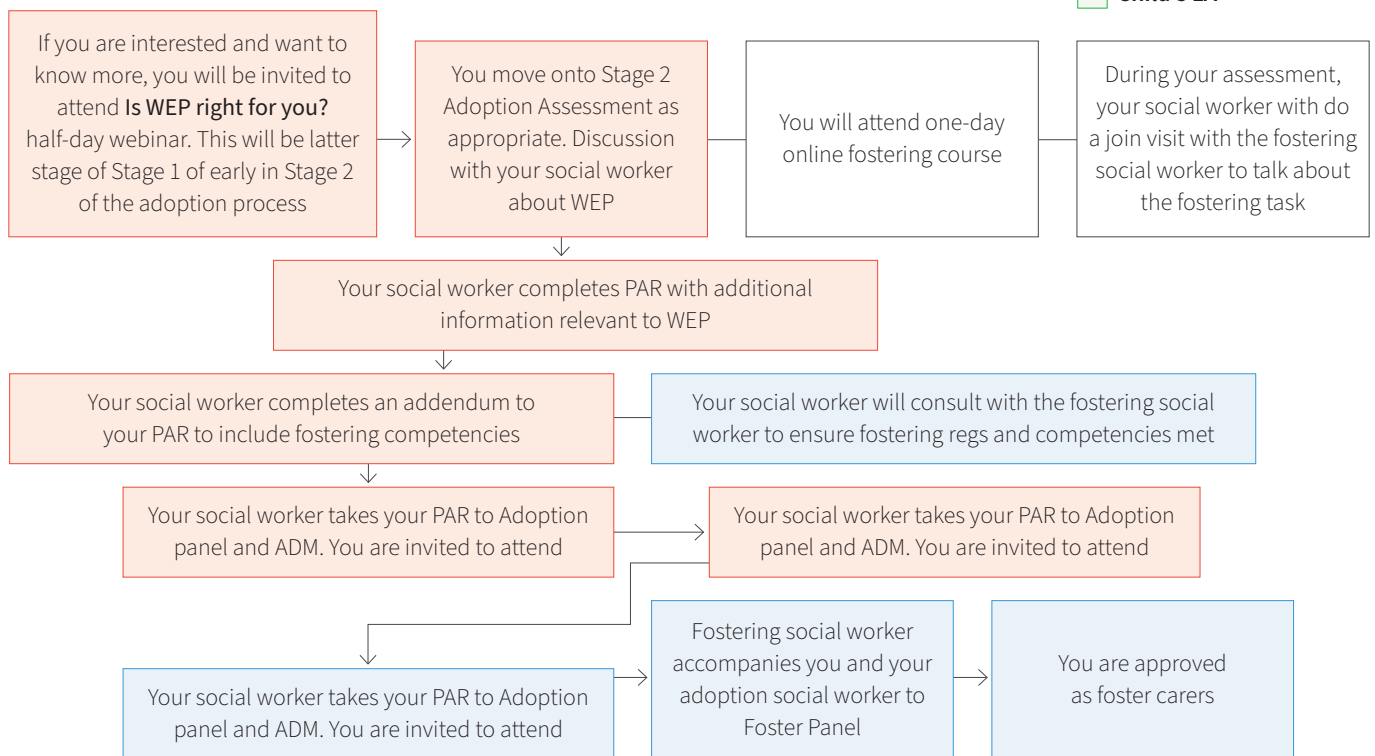
How will I be prepared to be a WEP carer?

Firstly you will attend a half day, online (live webinar) course entitled 'Is Welsh Early Permanence Right for me?' The course will provide more detail on what WEP is about and will help you make the decision to go forward or not. If you decide to go on, then there is a day long, online course, that prepares you for being a foster carer. You will also be directed to some additional reading / online material so that you are very well prepared. During Stage 2 of your assessment, your social worker will make at least one visit with a member of the fostering team who will talk with you about being a foster carer – this is part of your fostering assessment, but assessment and preparation go hand in hand.

FLOWCHART 3: APPLICANTS PREPARATION AND APPROVAL

You will have read and heard about WEP from your agency and maybe your social worker

- Adoption agency
- Fostering agency
- Child's LA



When will I meet the child's parents and will this be safe?

As a WEP foster carer you will be expected to meet the child's parents and develop a relationship with them as you hand the child over for and collect them from contact sessions. A great many carers value getting to know parents over this time, and if they do go on to adopt the child, feel that they have a lot more valuable and personal information to share with the child.

Part of the referral process for considering a child for a WEP placement is a risk assessment in relation to the parents – would they pose a risk to you as carers? If parents are liable to create a risk then a WEP placement might not be appropriate; any potential risks would be discussed thoroughly with you and support given if you decide to go ahead with the match

What will parents know about me?

Although you will be meeting the child's parents and getting to know them, the information they will have about you will be limited. They will know your first names but not surnames. They will not know of your address or any other personal information about you. Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential; for example the bag you keep for contact, containing clothes, toys, nappies etc will be kept just for that purpose so that nothing identifying will be left in the bag by mistake (for example a shop receipt).

Will I get adoption leave and pay, and if so when?

You will be eligible for statutory adoption pay and leave from the time the child is placed with you, even though this is not an adoptive placement. You will also get a fostering allowance for the time you are a foster carer. Most carers save the statutory pay to cover the period of time when the placement transfers from a foster to an adoptive placement.

What if I have children already, either birth or adopted?

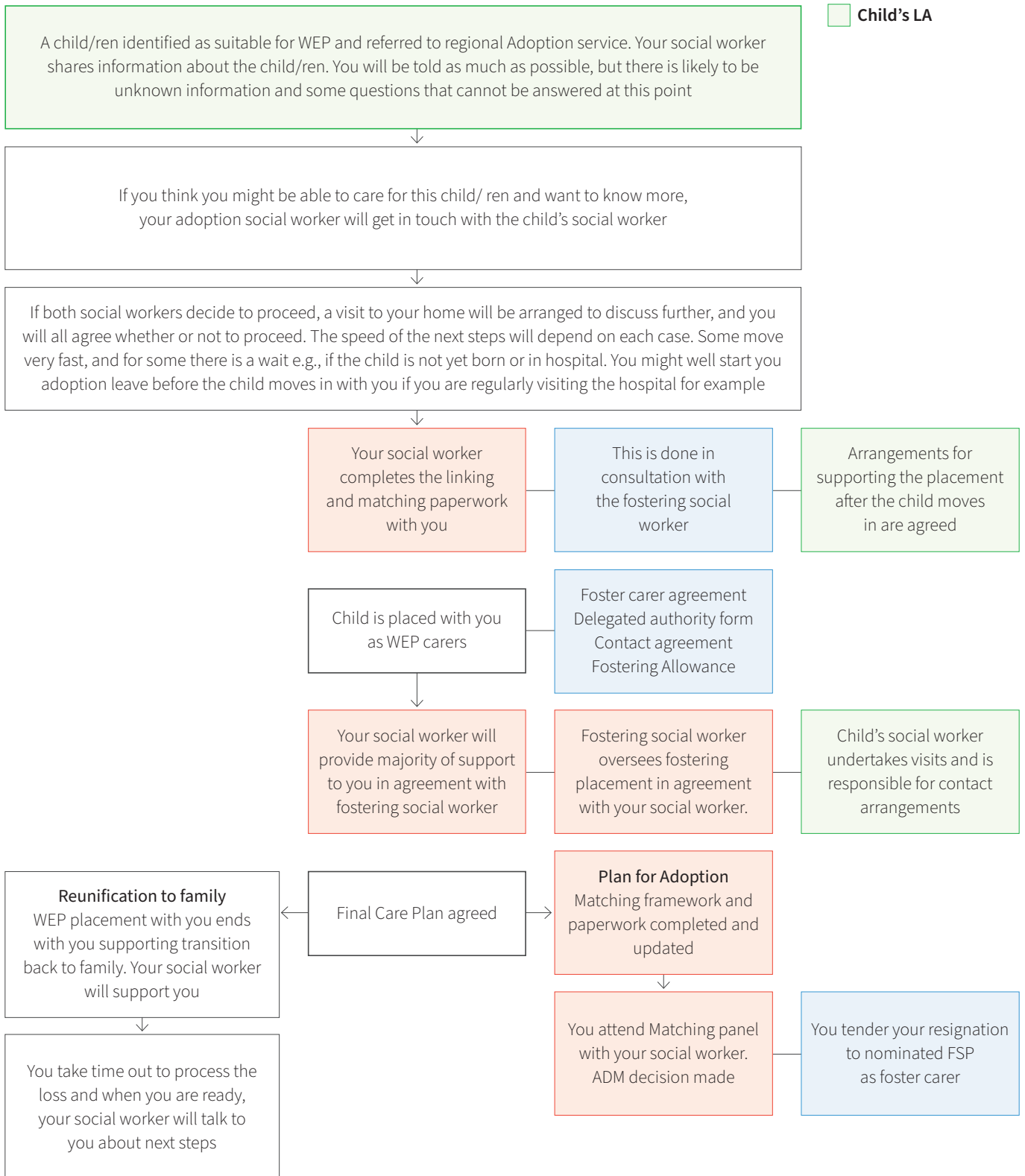
Families do become WEP carers when they have an existing family. Each family will be looked at individually. What we know from research is that children already in the family take the lead from the adults when it comes to living with the uncertainty of whether this child will eventually become a permanent member of your family and accepting that, as a family, you are providing a loving and secure home for the time that the child needs it. During your assessment, if you are considering becoming a WEP carer, you will be able to discuss your own children and the implications for them, particularly if you are thinking of taking a younger brother or sister of an adopted child within your family.

What support will I get?

Your main source of support will be from the family finding social worker and team in the adoption regional collaborative that have assessed and approved you. They will give advice and support in the same way as they would in a mainstream adoptive placement, but at the same time work with you in acknowledging the uncertainty of the placement. You will also get support from the fostering team for your specific fostering tasks, including facilitating contact arrangements with birth family.

FLOWCHART 4: LINKING, MATCHING AND PLACEMENT

- Adoption agency
- Fostering agency
- Child's LA





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