

Example form for recording an assessment for adoption support

The statutory framework for social workers' assessments of adoption support needs

The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 set out the eligibility for those people where adoption has been a part of their experience. This includes the right to request and receive an assessment of their needs for adoption support services. Regulations 13–18 set out the related steps required to:

- undertake an assessment and formulate a service plan;
- assure quality;
- make decisions about service provision;
- monitor the outcomes of assessments.

The assessment process should be driven by a co-productive approach and a spirit of partnership between the agency and the person/s being assessed.

There are six key stages to the assessment process that are determined by the regulations:

- requesting an assessment;
- determining eligibility for an assessment;
- planning an assessment;
- undertaking an assessment;
- formulating an adoption support plan;
- notifying families of proposals and decisions.

Core principles that should underpin the assessment, developed for the Assessment Framework

The relationships that are developed with the child and family during the assessment process should be therapeutic. The process should be child-centred and involve active listening by professionals.

Assessments for support should also be:

- **Supportive and sensitive:** The process of being assessed can be stressful and demanding for all those involved, and families may need all sorts of information and reassurance, and perhaps practical help and support, as they go through the process.
- **Non-blaming:** Adoptive parents should not be judged by, or pushed out of, the assessment process. Adoptive parents need assessors to recognise how hard it is to parent a child who is unhappy and/or challenging, and to show care and concern for them as well as for the child.
- **Engaging:** Assessments need to engage all family and household members, including the children and young people, to ensure that they are child- and family-centred. Consider whether family members and children necessarily need to be seen together – it may be helpful for some to be seen separately.

- **Transparent:** The assessment process itself should be transparent. There should also be transparency about services that are not available and when children do not meet the thresholds for service provision. If children's needs are extremely complex and/or difficult to understand, then parents also need honest explanations of professionals' uncertainties about what would help.
- **Adoption informed:** Assessments need to be "adoption informed". All professionals involved need to understand and acknowledge the particular issues that adopted children and their families may face that relate to adoption and childhood maltreatment.
- **Sensitive to diversity:** Assessments should be sensitive to differences within and between families. For instance, the process should recognise particular issues that may be faced by LGBTQ+ adoptive parents, and families with members from different ethnic and/or mixed ethnicity backgrounds.
- **Timely:** delays in assessments have negative impacts on adoptive families, with their difficulties escalating during the waiting periods.

Another core principle is that children and their families should only have to provide information once during the assessment process. Information should then be shared appropriately with other professionals involved in the assessment and potential service provision, unless there are good reasons why it should not be shared. Adoptive families should not find themselves being asked to repeat information they have provided earlier in the assessment process.

Referral – see Chart 1

Families can refer themselves to adoption agencies for assessments of their support needs, but there are other routes to getting help depending on the concerns of the person concerned. These routes include general practitioners, pre-school services, schools, Special Educational Needs services, or from within children's services via children in need or safeguarding teams.

If the request is for a specific service or a need that can be met by referral to a particular service, then a limited assessment can be undertaken. But if the referral indicates that services may be needed that go beyond brief counselling, advice and information, then a full assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the regulations.

Determining eligibility for an assessment for adoption support – see Chart 2

An RAA or local authority needs to determine whether it is responsible for undertaking the assessment. If a child has been placed within the local authority by another local authority or agency, then the responsibility for assessing support needs remains with the placing authority for the first three years after the making of the adoption order. The agency is therefore responsible for assessing a child who has:

- been placed and remained living within its geographical boundaries;
- been placed within the local authority by another authority and it is more than three years since the making of their adoption order; or
- moved into the area more than three years after the making of their adoption order.

Some families might therefore request an assessment for support but be ineligible for one. Those families might need support to access alternative relevant service provision.

Planning an assessment for adoption support – see Chart 3

In undertaking an assessment, there should be a plan as to what the assessment requires to be completed appropriately. Decisions need to be taken about who should be involved and their roles in the process. The timing and location of the assessment also need to be determined.

Undertaking an assessment for adoption support – see Chart 4

The assessment itself should aim to understand and explain the family's primary concerns to inform the development of an adoption support plan and service specification. Identifying primary concerns may be difficult, particularly if problems have evolved over a long period. There may also be issues that have not been recognised and different views of different family members.

Key information about the child, family and family history needs to be drawn together to answer two overarching questions. First, what is the family's story? Second, what does the story come to mean to the family?

The assessment needs to begin with a review of the main concerns raised in the referral. Clarify which areas of family life are affected, exploring what, when, how much and for how long.

The following questions can then be used on a selective basis – only those that are relevant to a specific assessment should be addressed. Some of the questions obviously build on each other, but others can be asked in any order.

- What does the child/young person say and feel about the concerns raised in the referral?
- What does the child/young person think is needed now?
- What in the child's history may be relevant?
- What in the family's history may be relevant?
- What are the family's strengths?
- What or who are the family's main sources of support? How supportive are the wider family and community?
- What has already been tried to resolve these concerns and how effective have these measures been?
- How openly does the family talk about adoption with the child? Are there any contact arrangements?

Research suggests that information about family members may not be volunteered during the assessment process, because of associated shame, guilt and stigma felt by families. It is therefore recommended that all assessments include the following questions:

- Are there concerns about the child's safety?

- Are there concerns about the safety of the adult/s in the family and/or household?
- What do the parent/s think is needed now and what are the desired outcomes?
- Does everyone agree?

Formulating an adoption support plan – see Chart 5

The formulation of the adoption support plan involves exploring and explaining the issues raised in the assessment and how they might be addressed. This will need to be set out in the assessment report, including the plan for the provision of support services. The report needs to be quality assured with the service specification agreed by the professionals involved. The report must then be shared with the family, with a specified time to provide feedback to the agency about the report, before decisions are taken by the agency on service provision.

If the child and their family’s support needs are assessed as “therapeutic”, there could then be a referral to the ASGSF. Alternatively, there could be a referral to the agency’s own therapeutic services or CAMHS.

Recommendations for further/specialist assessments

The Guidance notes that if, as a result of the initial assessment, the social worker comes to a view that the child and family’s needs are such that they require further exploration and clarification, then the outcome might be to commission a further assessment. This may be where there are concerns that require particular professional expertise from health, mental health or education specialists.

It is recommended that the details about the proposed further assessment should be recorded. This should include a note of the concerns requiring further clarification, who should undertake the further assessment, and whether an application will be made to the ASGSF to fund the further assessment. The proposal for the further assessment should be agreed by the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA).

Notification of proposals and decisions – see Chart 6

The final stage of the regulatory requirements for an assessment is to prepare an agreed written assessment of need and service provision drawing on Parts 1–5 of this form. This report must be quality assured by the ASSA before it is sent to the family.

A copy of the report must be sent to the person/s assessed with the proposal to provide services as a statutory notice. This must include the identification of the person responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the plan.

Where an application to the ASGSF has been agreed, that should be noted in the plan.

Chart 1

ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT Chart 1: Referring for an Assessment

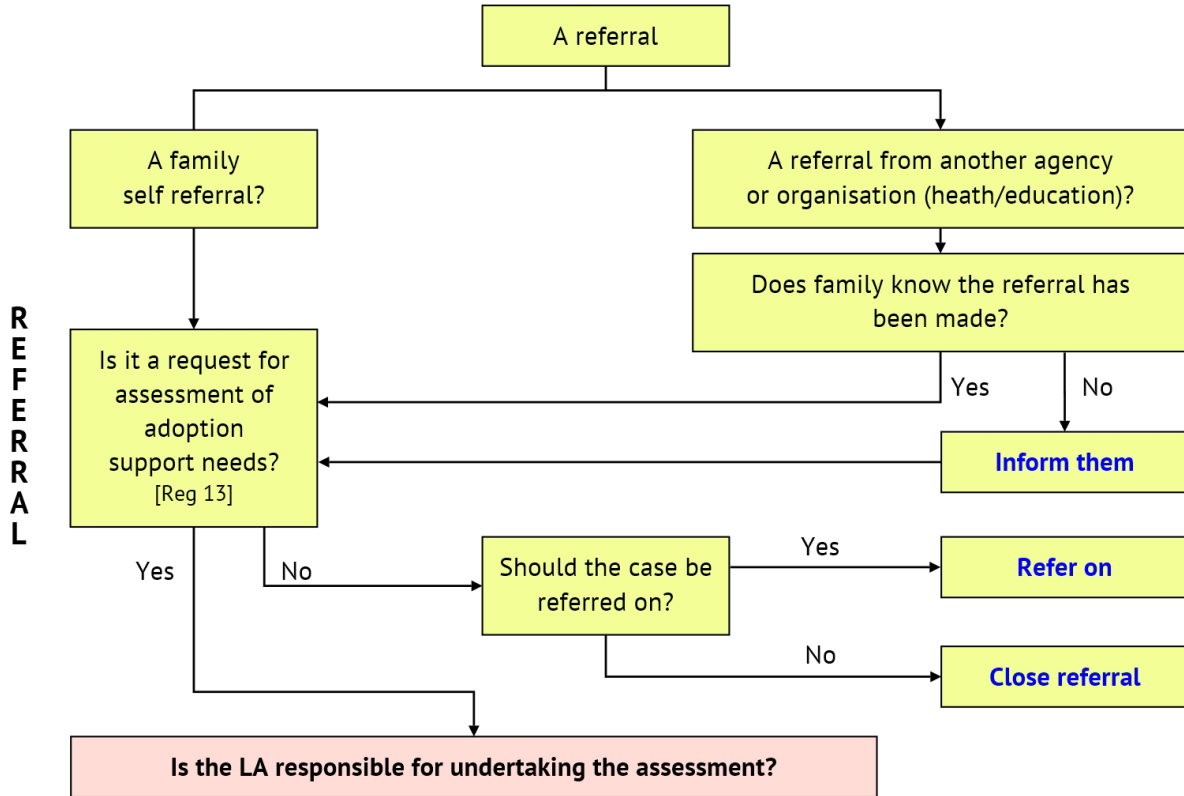


Chart 2

ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT Chart 2: Determining Eligibility for an Assessment

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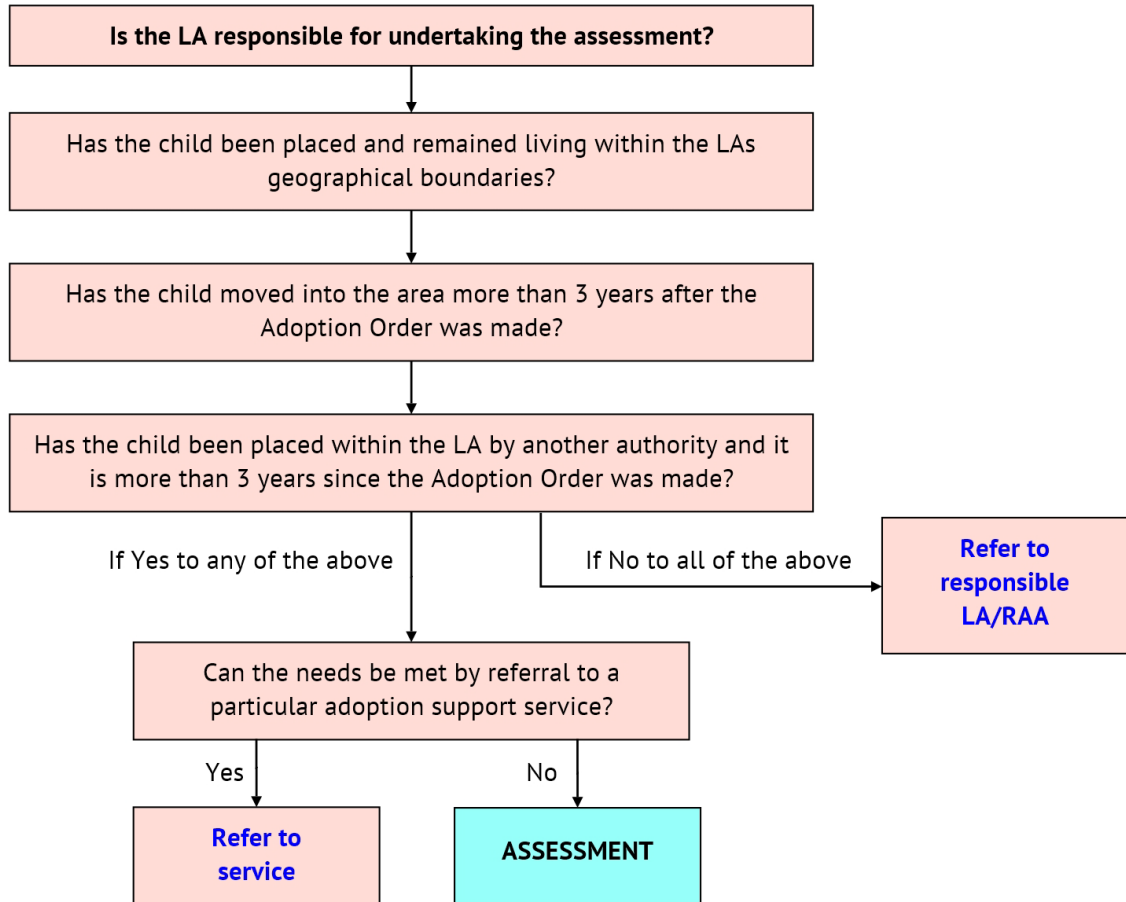


Chart 3

ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT
Chart 3: Planning an assessment for Adoption Support

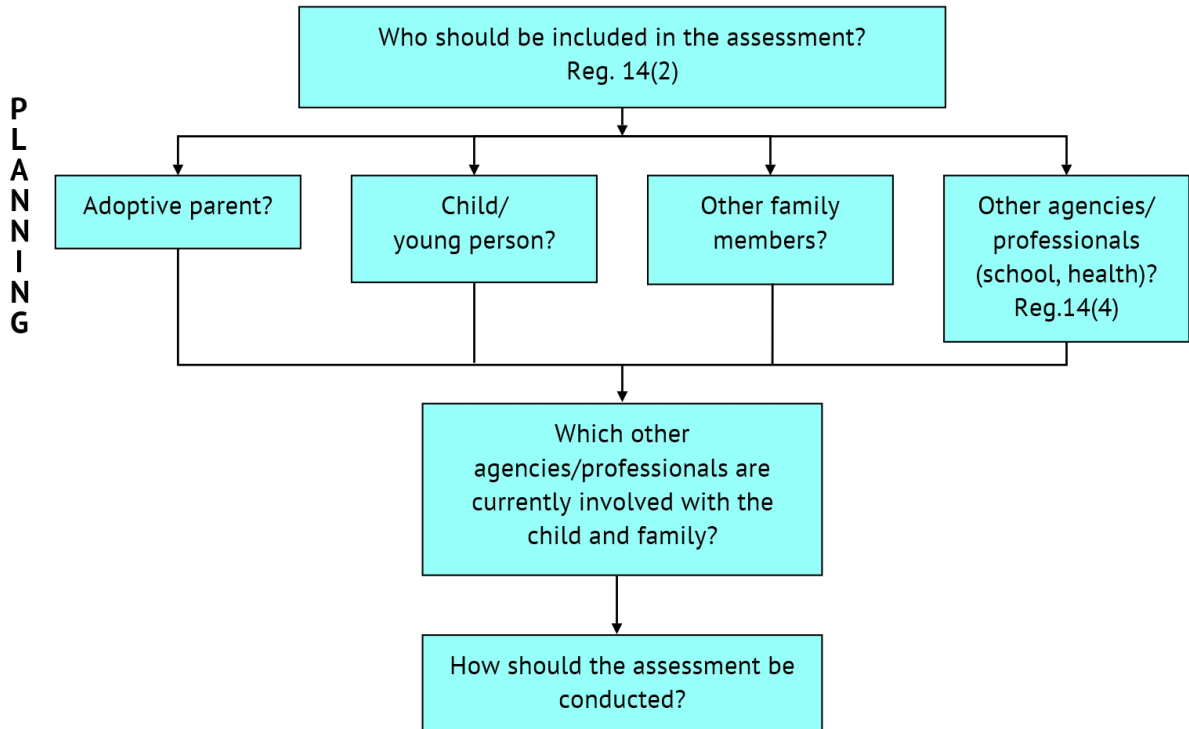


Chart 4

ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT
Chart 4: Undertaking the assessment for Adoption Support

UNDERTAKING

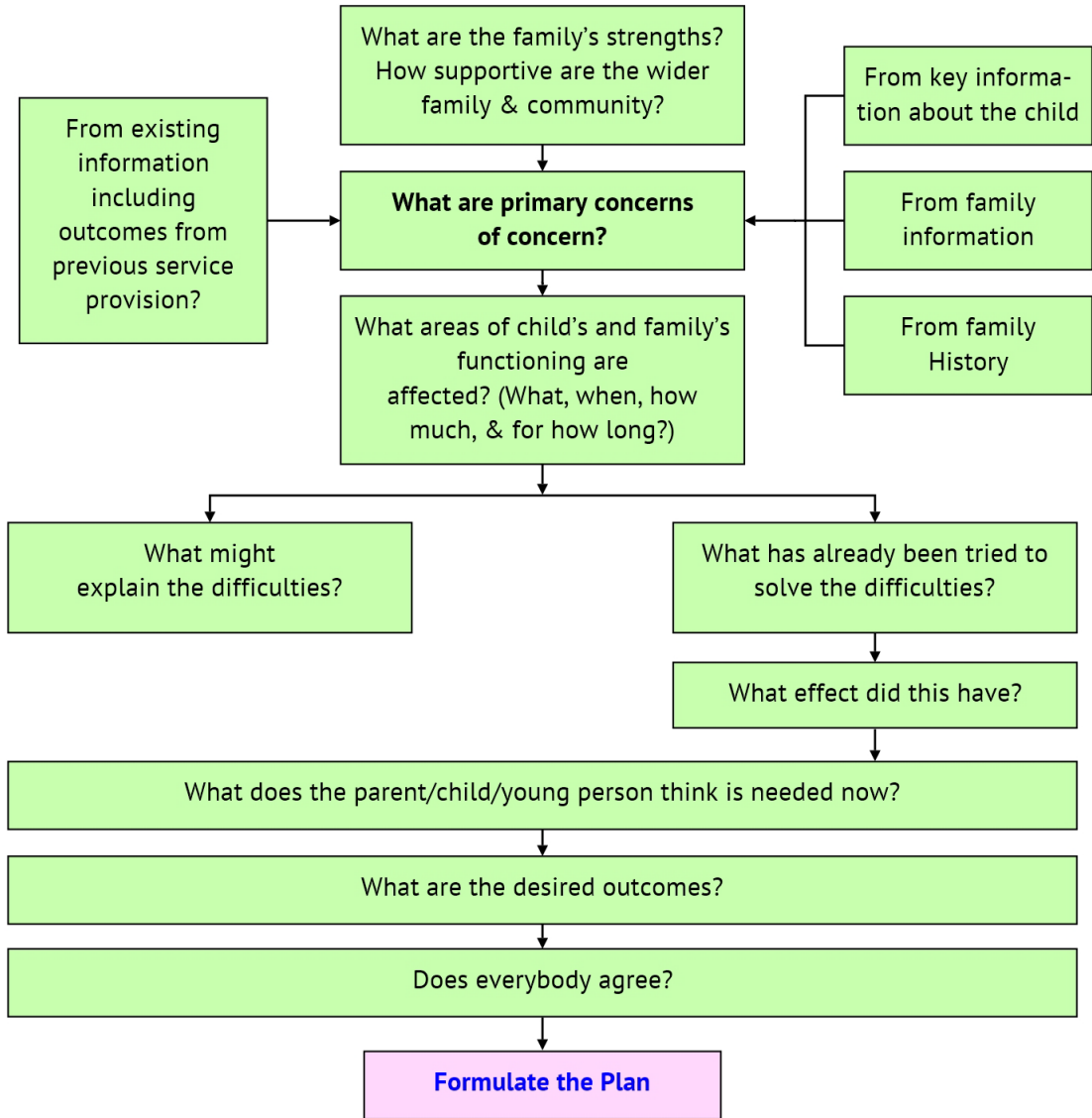


Chart 5

ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT

Chart 5: Formulation of the Adoption Support Plan and Recommendations

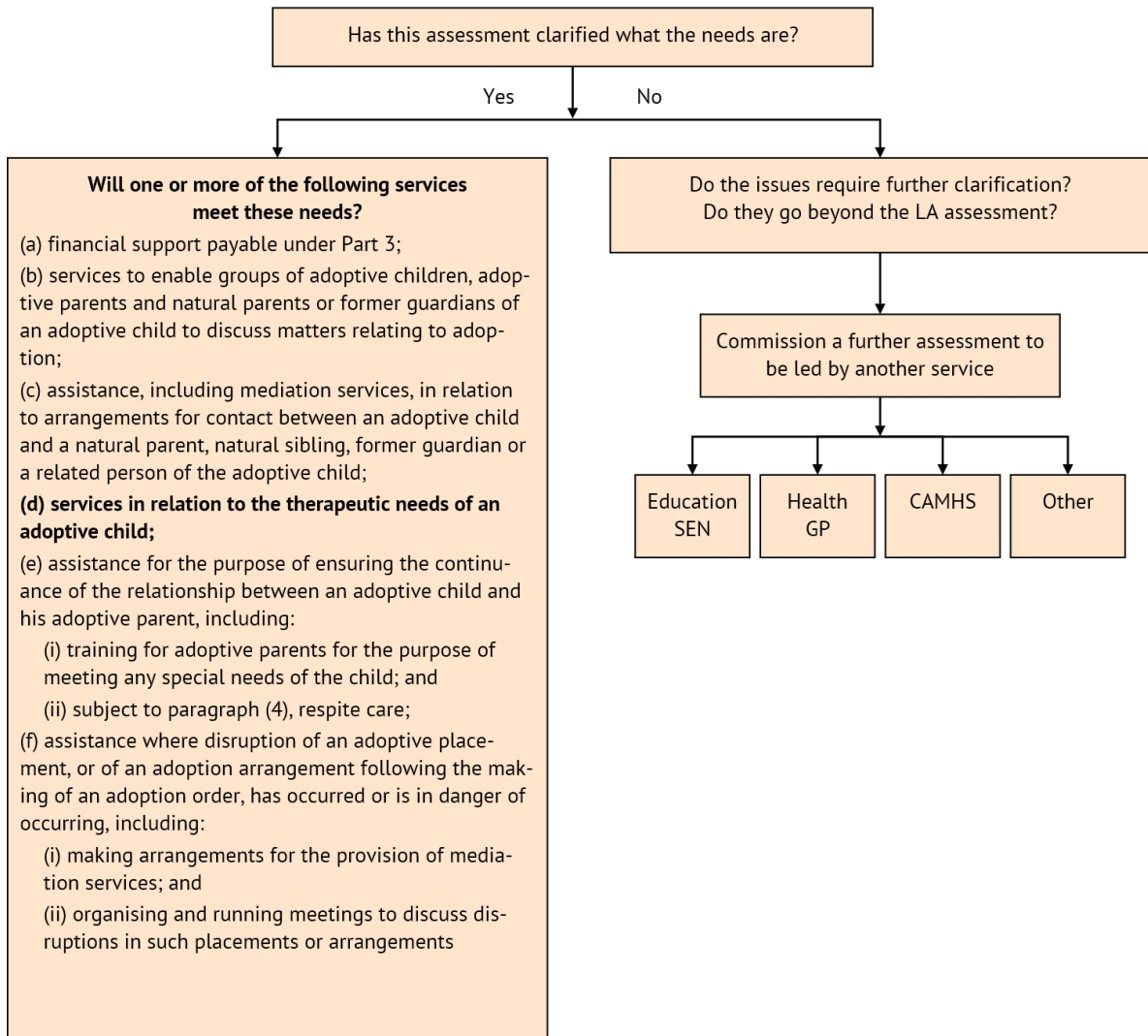
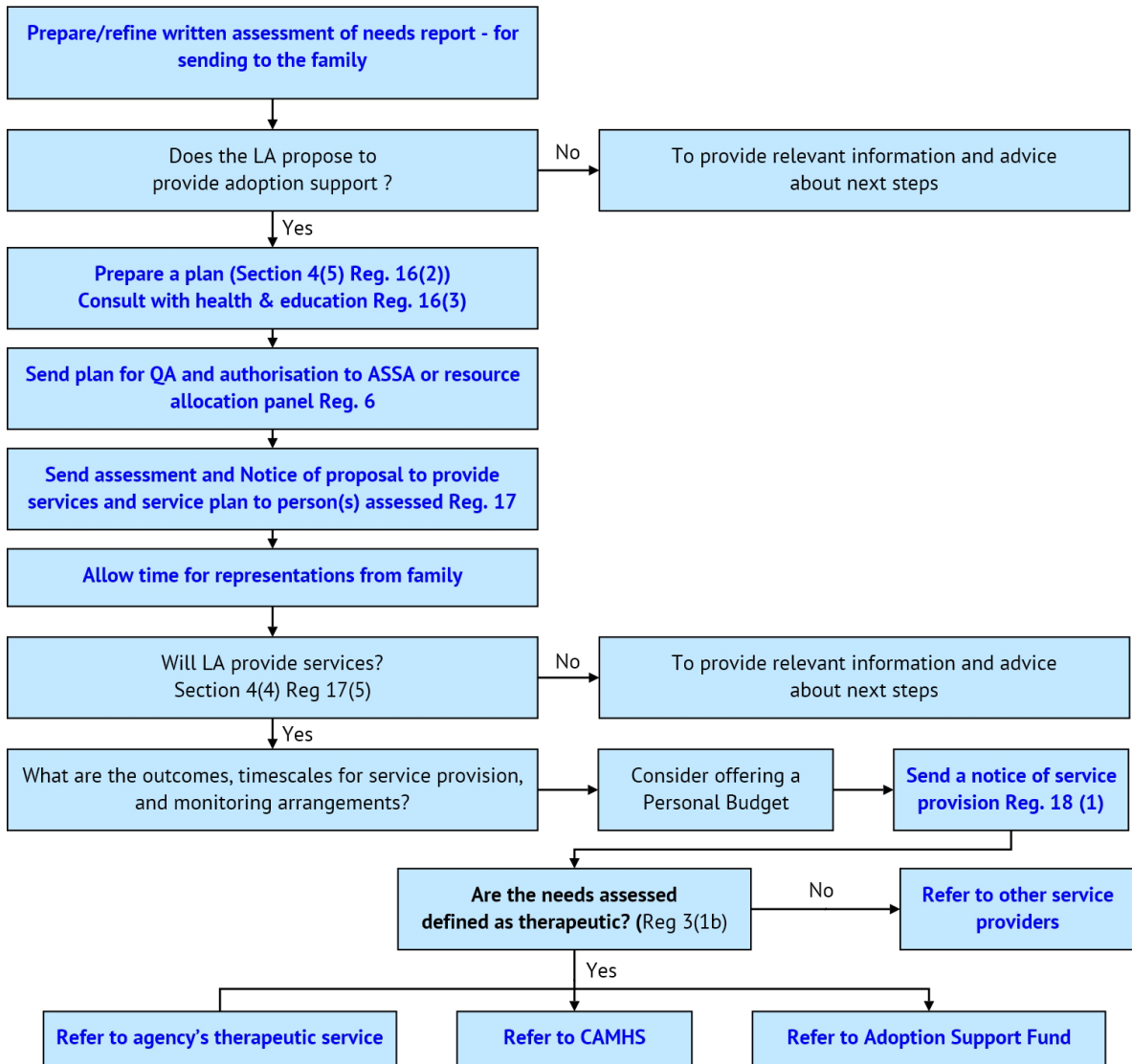


Chart 6

ASSESSMENT FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT Chart 6: Notification of proposals and decisions



THE REFERRAL (PART 1)

Adopted child/ren to whom the referral applies

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5
First name					
Family name					
Date of birth					
Age					
Gender					
Ethnicity					
Religion					
First language					
Nationality					
Date placed					
Date of order or pre-order					
Placing agency					
Agency ref no.					

Reason for referral (Brief summary of the primary concerns)

Adoptive parent/s

	Adoptive parent 1	Adoptive parent 2
First name		
Family name		
Date of birth		
Age		
Gender		
Ethnicity		
Religion		
First language		
Nationality		

Other children and adults in the household

	Other 1	Other 2	Other 3	Other 4	Other 5
First name					
Family name					
Date of birth					
Age					
Gender					
Ethnicity					
Religion					
First language					
Nationality					
Legal status in household					

Other children and adults involved in the assessment and living elsewhere

	Other 1	Other 2	Other 3	Other 4	Other 5
First name					
Family name					
Date of birth					
Age					
Gender					
Ethnicity					
Religion					
First language					
Nationality					
Relationship to child/ren to whom referral applies					

Referral for assessment made by:

Family self-referral (if applicable)	
Name	
Date of referral	

Agency or organisation referral (if applicable)	
Name	
Role	
Name of organisation	
Address	
Telephone no.	
Email	
Date of referral	
Date family informed of referral	

Referral taken by	
Name	
Role	
Telephone no.	
Email	

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR AN ASSESSMENT (PART 2)

Is the local authority/RAA responsible for undertaking an assessment?

- Has the child been placed and remains living within the local authority's/RAA's geographical boundary?
- Has the child moved into the area/region more than three years after the adoption order was made?
- Has the child been placed within the local authority by another authority/agency outwith the RAA and it is more than three years since the adoption order was made?

If 'no' to any of the above, advise the family of their ineligibility for an assessment and refer to the responsible local authority.

If 'yes' to any of the above:

- Refer the family to a service, if the family's need for support can be met by a particular adoption support service.
- Advise the family of their eligibility for an assessment for adoption support.

Date family informed of ineligibility and referral made to responsible local authority/RAA OR	
Date family referred to an adoption support service OR	
Date family informed of eligibility for an assessment	

Assessing social worker	
Name	
Telephone no.	
Email	
Assessing social worker's manager	
Name	
Telephone no.	
Email	

OTHER AGENCIES/PROFESSIONALS CURRENTLY INVOLVED WITH THE CHILD AND FAMILY (PART 3)

	Professional/service 1	Professional/service 2	Professional/service 3	Professional/service 4
Name				
Role				
Organisation				
Universal service?				
Local authority contracted service?				
Privately contracted by adopters?				
Is service Ofsted registered?				
Services provided				
Length of provision				
Will they be contacted as part of this assessment?				
Have permissions been obtained for sharing information?				
Address				
Contact telephone no.				
Email				

Consent for information sharing obtained?				
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Who from the family/household should be included in the assessment?	
Which other professionals and/or agencies should be involved in the assessment? (e.g. nursery, school, health)	
Will the child be seen separately?	
Who should lead the assessment?	
Are there specific issues that should influence the way in which the assessment interview is conducted? (e.g. a child's disabilities)	
Where should the assessment be conducted?	
How many meetings are likely to be needed with family members during the assessment period?	

THE ASSESSMENT (PART 4)

The assessment involves the gathering and analysis of key current and historical information for the development of an Adoption Support Plan.

Begin with a review of the main concerns raised in the referral, exploring whether there have been any changes. Clarify which areas of family life are affected, exploring what, when, how much and for how long. Then consider the following questions that are relevant to the assessment:

What does the child/young person say and feel about the concerns raised in the referral?
What does the child/young person think is needed now?
What in the child's history may be relevant?
What in the family's history may be relevant?
What are the family's strengths?
What or who are the family's main sources of support? How supportive are the wider family and community?
What has already been tried to resolve these concerns and how effective have these measures been?
How openly does the family talk about adoption with the child? Are there any contact arrangements?

Research suggests that information about family members' safety may not be volunteered during assessments for adoption support, because of shame, guilt and stigma felt by families about safety issues (Selwyn *et al*, 2014). It is therefore recommended that all assessments include the following questions:

Are there concerns about the child/ren's safety?

Are there concerns about the safety of the adult/s in the family and/or household?

What do the parent/s think is needed now and what are the desired outcomes?

Does everyone agree?

FORMULATION OF THE ADOPTION SUPPORT PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS (PART 5)

Assessment of Adoption Support Needs Report (ASSR 2005, Regulation 14(3)(b))

Social worker's analysis of key information

Has the assessment clarified the family's needs?

If 'yes', will one or more of the following support services meet these needs?

- (a) financial support payable under Part 3;
- (b) services to enable groups of adopted children, adoptive parents and birth parents or former guardians of an adopted child to discuss matters relating to adoption;
- (c) assistance, including mediation services, in relation to arrangements for contact between an adopted child and a birth parent, birth sibling, former guardian or a related person of the adopted child;
- (d) services in relation to the therapeutic needs of an adopted child;
- (e) assistance for the purpose of ensuring the continuance of the relationship between an adopted child and their adoptive parent, including:
 - (i) training for adoptive parents for the purpose of meeting any special needs of the child; and
 - (ii) subject to paragraph (4), respite care;
- (f) assistance where disruption of an adoptive placement, or of an adoption arrangement following the making of an adoption order, has occurred or is in danger of occurring, including:
 - (i) making arrangements for the provision of mediation services; and
 - (ii) organising and running meetings to discuss disruptions in such placements or arrangements

Social worker's recommendations

Support needs and services to meet them

Identified need	Service to meet the need	Person responsible for delivering the service	Timescale for delivery (including milestones)	Planned outcome of service

If the assessment has not clarified the needs, is a further assessment/s of need required? YES/NO

If yes:

Identify concerns that need further clarification	
Identify who should undertake the further assessment	
Will an application for funding be made to the ASGSF for this further assessment?	
Do proposed “therapeutic” services fall within the scope of the ASGSF?	
If so, will an application be made to the Fund?	

Assessment prepared by	
Name	
Signature	
Date completed	

Adoption Support Services Adviser	
Name	
Signature	
Date completed	

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSALS AND DECISIONS (PART 6)

Prepare a written assessment of needs report to be sent to the family. This can be done by reviewing and refining Parts 1–5 of this form.

Ensure (1) there has been consultation with health and education (Reg 16.3); and (2) the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA) has assured the quality of the plan and the ASSA/resource allocation panel has authorised the resources.

Send a copy of the assessment, with recommendations to provide services and the draft plan for the provision of services, to the family.

Invite the family to note their comments below.

Comments from adoptive parent/s and child on the proposed plan (Regulation 17(5a))

Comments from adoptive parent/s on the proposed plan	
Name	
Signature	
Date	

Comments from the child on the proposed plan	
Name	
Signature	
Date	

Following the receipt of the family's comments:

- Make decision about the final form of services to be provided and the plan for those services.
- Note the person to be responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the plan.
- Notify the family of the final decisions and agreed plan to provide support services (Regulation 18(1)).