



To: Directors of Children's Services
Lead Members responsible for adoption services
CEOs of Voluntary Adoption Agencies
Adoption Agency Decision Makers
Adoption Agency Managers

5 August 2015

ADOPTION: INTER-AGENCY FEE FUNDING

The Minister for Children and Families, Edward Timpson, wrote to you on 8th July to inform you that a further £30m has been made available for the adoption reform programme. The letter set out that this money is for central payment of the inter-agency fee, for targeted groups of children. He promised that the Department would write again to confirm the arrangements for accessing this funding. I am writing to you now to set out the purpose of the funding, eligibility, and how to claim.

Central payment of the inter-agency fee will help to improve the chances and timeliness of adoption for children. The Department will reimburse LAs with the cost of the fee to ensure that there are no financial barriers to finding the right adoptive parents.

The scheme is designed to enable placements that would otherwise not be made, and to speed up placements by removing sequential decision making. This new money means that local authorities will be freed up to consider all possible matches for harder to place children immediately, across the whole country.

Which children will be eligible for central funding?

Any inter-agency placements made for 'harder to place' children (defined below) during the period from 8th July 2015 until 31 July 2016, will qualify for reimbursement.

This scheme is targeted specifically at 'harder to place' children, who we know need access to the biggest possible pool of adopters. These are the children

who will benefit most from national searching. Therefore, the new funding will cover placements of children in the following groups:

- **Children who have been waiting for 18 months** or more since entry to care by the time of placement;
- **Children who are aged five or over** at the time of placement;
- **Children who are in a sibling group** of two or more and placed as siblings at the time of placement;
- **Children who are from a Black and Minority Ethnic background** (using the same definition as per the Adoption Leadership Board data collection, SSDA903 and Children in Need census guidance¹); and
- **Children who are disabled** (using the same definition as for the Adoption Leadership Board data collection, SSDA903 and Children in Need census guidance¹).

Monitoring and evaluation

The Department will be monitoring patterns in receiving and placing LA agencies and VAAs to make sure that the inter-agency fee funding claimed is valid. We are also developing plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme. Our aim will be to understand the most effective approaches to family finding for harder to place children, and to understand the extent to which removing the financial barrier that the inter-agency fee can create has changed behaviours. We will share details with you when these plans have been finalised. We would expect any fieldwork required to commence in the autumn.

How agencies might use the new funding

The central payment of the inter-agency fee provides agencies with an exciting opportunity to think widely about the kind of adopters who may be available anywhere in the country, approved by any agency, for harder to place children, without financial considerations playing a part. It also offers an opportunity to use the funding to offset some of the cost of a bespoke package of support. We would particularly like to see agencies using the inter-agency fee funding in conjunction with the Adoption Support Fund to facilitate matches and offer support packages at the point of match, which can become active once the Adoption Order is made. We know that a clear offer of support and defined package can give some adopters the confidence to look after a child with additional needs, so we hope agencies will use the two schemes to complement each other in this way.

There are many examples of innovative practice among VAAs in helping to find and support a placement, and this scheme is an opportunity for

¹ Further guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/children-in-need-census>

authorities who have perhaps not traditionally used VAAs to do so more, at no cost. For example:

- Caritas Care recently matched adopters with two children with complex needs, providing ongoing therapeutic support and sessions with their trauma specialist.
- PACT recently supported the placement of a sibling group with complex needs by providing adopters with training in Theraplay techniques, a 12 week parenting course, and partnership with the Great Ormond Street Hospital.
- Adoption Matters provides potential adopters with extensive support including Theraplay techniques and life story work.
- The “It’s All About Me” (IAAM) service works with VAAs and LAs to find families for harder to place children and provides intensive assessments and expert support to make this work.

A contact list for all VAAs is attached at Annex A.

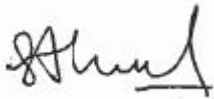
How to take part in the scheme and claim the funding

Local authorities will be able to claim money spent on inter-agency fees in arrears. This letter contains the following annexes to enable agencies to reclaim inter-agency fees:

- **Grant Funding Letter** - In order to confirm that agencies would like to take part in the grant funding scheme, **all agencies should sign and return page 3 of the accompanying grant letter to the Department at:** Inter-agency Fee Grant Claims, Department for Education, Level 1, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.
- The information required to claim funding should be submitted on a quarterly basis, at the same time as the Adoption Leadership Board statistics. LAs should complete the **Grant Claim form template** on p4 of the accompanying grant funding letter and also complete the **separate evidence template** and send these to: Inter-Agency Fee Grant Claims in Adoption Policy, Department for Education, Level 1, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.
- **Frequently Asked Questions** - We have also attached a Frequently Asked Questions Briefing. Any further questions should also be sent to: Inter-Agency.FEE@education.gsi.gov.uk

As a result of the reform programme and the hard work of agencies across the country, the average time it takes to place a child with a new family has been falling. This is important progress. However, adopted children still take an average of 18 months to find a loving home, so there is clearly more improvement to be made.

There are almost 3,000 children who are currently waiting for an adoptive family to be found for them. Every one of these children waiting to be adopted deserves to have the same opportunity to be move into a loving home as quickly as possible. As research has shown us, unnecessary delay is detrimental to the child's wellbeing and can lead to a greater chance of later placement breakdown. Therefore, I hope that all agencies use the opportunity presented by this funding to ensure that family finding is not constrained by local boundaries, and all of the children waiting are found families as quickly as possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Whitehead". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

EMILY WHITEHEAD
Deputy Director, Adoption and Family Law
Department for Education

Contact details for VAAs

- **Action for Children** (Nationwide) - 01923 361 500
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/adoption/>
- **Adopters for Adoption** (Nationwide) - 0800 5877 791
<http://www.adoptersforadoption.com/>
- **Adoption Focus** (West Midlands) - 0845 519 0539
<http://www.adoption-focus.org.uk/>
- **Adoption Matters** (North West) - 01244 390 938
<http://www.adoptionmattersnw.org/>
- **Adoption Plus** (based in Buckinghamshire) - 01908 218 251
<http://www.adoptionplus.co.uk/>
- **After Adoption** (Nationwide) - 0161 830 1974
<http://www.afteradoption.org.uk/>
- **ARC Adoption** (North East) - 0191 516 6466
<http://www.arcadoptionne.org.uk/services-for-las/>
- **Barnardo's** (Nationwide) - 07920 286 660
<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/fosteringandadoption.htm>
- **Caritas Care** (North West) - 01772 732313
<http://www.caritascare-iadopt.org.uk/>
- **CCS Adoption** (South West) - 0845 122 0077
<http://www.ccsadoption.org/>
- **Coram** (Cambridgeshire, London and Kent) - 020 7520 0300
<http://www.coram.org.uk/>
- **DFW Adoption** (North East) - 0191 386 3719
<http://www.dfw.org.uk/>
- **Faith in Families** (East Midlands and South Yorkshire) - 0115 955 8811
<http://www.faithinfamilies.org/>

- **Families for Children** (South West) - 01364 645 480
<http://familiesforchildren.org.uk/>
- **Family Care** (East Midlands) - 0115 960 3010
<http://www.familycare-nottingham.org.uk/>
- **Family Futures** (London) - 020 7354 4161
<http://www.familyfutures.co.uk/>
- **It's All About Me** (Nationwide) - 01480 409309
<http://iaamadoption.org/>
- **Inter-country Adoption Centre** (London) - 020 8449 2562
<http://www.icacentre.org.uk/>
- **New Leaf Adoption** (Yorkshire and Humberside) - 0800 096 0410
<http://www.newleafadoption.co.uk/>
- **Nugent Care** (North West) - 0845 270 3531
<http://www.nugentcare.org/adoption>
- **PACT – Parents & Children Together** (South East and London) - 0118 938 7600 - <http://pactcharity.org/>
- **SSAFA** (London) - 020 7463 9326
<http://www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you/currently-serving/adoption-military-families>
- **St Francis' Children's Society** (based in Buckinghamshire) - 01908 572 700 - <http://www.sfcs.org.uk/>
- **TACT** (Nationwide) - 0208 695 8111
<http://tactcare.org.uk/>
- **Yorkshire Adoption Agency** (Yorkshire, Humberside and East Midlands) - 01302 638337 - <http://www.yorkshireadoptionagency.org.uk/>