Adoption Register for Wales
National Guidelines for Use

Contents

Introduction

The Register is funded by Welsh Government, and has been operating since June 1st 2014. Since 1st September 2015 it has been hosted by the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) and is used by all Regional Adoption Services and Voluntary Adoption Agencies in Wales. The use of the Register has statutory underpinning within the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 which requires a local authority or voluntary adoption agency to provide a child's and adopter's details to the Wales Adoption Register.

The purpose of the Register is to support the matching of children with adopters, by providing a national system so that the widest possible range of links from across Wales, and where appropriate other parts of the UK, can be explored and to ensure that a suitable placement can be found as soon as possible.

Its role is also to reduce delay for children waiting for adoption by a variety of means such as active linking through quarterly Practitioner meetings across Wales and VAA meetings with the Register, meetings with Regions, updates to Regional Adoption Managers and Register events such as Exchange Days and Adoption Activity Days. The Register also tracks children and adopters for whom family finding is inactive due to an agency decision.

The Register provides regular data and reports on children and adopters to NAS, and monthly updates of numbers of children and adopters on the Register to regions and VAA's. This helps inform recruitment based on the needs of children waiting, and media and marketing strategies.

Further funding was provided by Welsh Government to develop a more efficient and effective Register. From March 2019 the service will be renamed the Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) and will be an online register using the Link Maker service. This document sets out the national guidelines for the use of Link Maker to add children and adopters onto the Adoption Register for Wales. This document replaces all other guidance and documents (including the referral form) related to the former Wales Adoption Register (WAR). Link Maker will be referred to as ARW through the rest of this document.

Legislative Requirements

The Welsh Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information is in place to govern the sharing of information between the National Adoption Service, the 22 Local Authorities, Regional Agencies and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to ensure that personal, sensitive information regarding adopters and children is shared lawfully and appropriately. All parties to the WASPI have signed to say that they understand and accept the content.

All of the aforementioned bodies are also bound by General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and understand that the information contained within the Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) can only be shared between authorised parties, can only be shared with consent and that parties have a right to have their records deleted should they request this, with some exceptions as permitted by the legislation.

Each agency will have their own information storage and retention policies however we have attached a generic consent form attached as an Appendix 1 to this document that explains to potential adopters how their information will be managed. This must be provided to all adopters when their consent is agreed.

The Adoption Register for Wales adheres to the Welsh Language Measure and associated legislative provisions and is completely bilingual.

Detailed user guides are available from the National Adoption Service website as well as the websites of the Regions and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA).

Any queries relating to the use of ARW should be raised with the ARW Team in the National Adoption Service.

Expectations of Adoption Agencies

There is an expectation that Adoption Agencies:

- Upload children's profiles to ARW as soon as possible following the placement order being made (see Section 1)
- Upload adopter profiles as soon as possible following the ADM decision (see Section 2)
- Will ensure that relevant staff are trained and supported to use ARW
- Develop an internal process that adheres to these guidelines including how Welsh translation will be built into the timescales and how translation will be completed
- Develop an internal quality assurance process for use of ARW
- Bring to the attention of the Practice Manager of ARW any issues in relation to the use of ARW so that they can be resolved in partnership promptly.

Section 1

Developing, uploading and amending profiles for children

Regional services will have their own agreements for whose responsibility it is to develop and upload a child's profile. Sometimes this is the child's social worker and in others this may be the child's social worker and the Family Finder together.

Regional services need to ensure that whatever their arrangements with the Local Authorities they cover, there is a written process in place so staff are clear who is responsible for what and when this needs to happen.

ARW only requires sufficient information in a profile to enable it to identify possible links. Profiles **should not** be a repeat of the extensive information found in documents such as the CAR B. This information would only be shared with a potential adopter when all parties are in agreement a link should be pursued.

A profile should be a summary of the child's personality, presentation, likes and dislikes, any salient issues such as an ongoing health conditions and should be of no more than 1,000 words. Those uploading the profiles need to know that Link Maker provides links, so there only needs to be sufficient information for there to be possible links identified. It is following discussions with social workers, adoption social workers and adopters that any further information will need to be disclosed. Agencies will need to have a written process in place that demonstrates there is regular quality assurance of profiles.

Attachments can be uploaded to a child or adopter's records and do not require translation. A user guide for those uploading profiles are available to Agencies and on the National Adoption Service website.

Profiles can be updated but Agencies need to ensure that any amendments are translated into Welsh.

If a child already has an existing profile on Link Maker then you will not need to create them again.

The profile cannot go live on the Register until there are English and Welsh versions of the profile available. From 2019 the legal position is that this process needs to be completed within 1 month of the placement order date.

Section 2

Developing, uploading and amending adopter profiles

Adopter profiles are mainly uploaded by Adoption Social Workers. The ARW is designed to be a more adopter led service, the adopter/s can upload their own profiles if they wish to including in English and Welsh if they feel confident enough. Agencies will need to ensure that if an adopter chooses to upload their own profile that the information is quality assured before translation.

If the adopter chooses to upload their own profile in English, the Agency will need to ensure that this information is translated into Welsh and vice versa. **A profile cannot go live on the ARW until there are English and Welsh versions of the profile available.** If the adopter profile is uploaded by the Agency then the same will apply.

As with child profiles the information uploaded in an adopter profile should not be more than 1,000 words. It should be a summary of information, sufficient to enable ARW to identify possible links and not be a repeat of the assessment.

Adopters should be offered the opportunity to provide a DVD clip to be uploaded. This will not need to be translated but again will need to be quality assured by the Agency.

A user guide for those uploading profiles will be available to Agencies and on the National Adoption Service website.

Adopter profiles should be uploaded as soon as possible following the Adoption Decision Maker (ADM) decision being made to approve. From 2019 the legal position is that this will need to be completed within one month of the ADM decision date.

It is recommended that social workers have the permissions to make any amendments as this will ensure that any amendments adopters request are quality assured by the Agency and translated into either Welsh or English as required.

Section 3

When a local match has already been identified

If there is already a local match identified for a child then you still need to record the adopter and the child on the Register as all children and adopters must be added to the ARW.

For a child who has been matched locally, all areas will need to be completed **except the free text areas** and the profile can be hidden/restricted to a regional view only, so it is only accessible to the Adoption Agency/Service and the National Adoption Service for the purposes of performance management.

For an adopter who has been matched locally, all basic information, all drop down information and the following free text boxes will need to be completed. It has been agreed to use the standard phrases for these free text boxes:

Free Text Box:	English:	Welsh:
Description of adopter's homes	Home meets necessary requirements	Bod y cartref yn bodloni'r gofynion angenrheidiol
Support network	Support network is appropriate	Bod y rhwydwaith cymorth yn briodol
Childcare experience	Childcare experience is appropriate	Bod y profiad o ofal plant yn briodol

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Section 4

Who can see the profiles and what can they see?

Child and adopter profiles can be restricted to limit who can access them. This may be done, for example, when there is a local match already identified and therefore no need to request ARW identify links. The profiles for the child and adopter in this scenario can be hidden so that they can only be viewed by those with the relevant permissions e.g. child's social worker, family finder.

ARW enables you to restrict access to a profile to your region, to Wales only or allows you to open to all users which would include England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This applies to adopter and child profiles. The Inter Register Protocol will still be applicable (see Appendix 2).

For adopters, being on this system will enable them to see a whole range of children, however, they should always discuss a child with their social worker before they initiate a conversation with the child's social worker via ARW. Internal processes need to reflect this and be clear about who will be responsible for making any amendments.

Several people within the region may need to have access to the profiles: children's social worker; children's team manager; family finder; adoption agency manager; and adoption agency business support. This may be for different purposes, for example, business support may need access for performance management purposes whilst managers may need access in order to quality assure profiles. Internal processes need to identify who will have access and to what level.

Section 5

Welsh Translation requirements

The Adoption Register for Wales is completely bilingual in accordance with Welsh Language Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The front page of the Register will enable users to toggle between English and Welsh and all basic information fields, yes and no boxes and drop down options will be translated automatically into Welsh via this method.

However, all free text areas in the child's and adopter's profile will need to be translated into Welsh. **Profiles cannot go live until there is both an English and Welsh version available.**

Adoption is always a planned event and therefore time required for translation needs to be built into planning from the outset to ensure that the profile can go live at the earliest point possible.

You may wish to upload attachments to Link Maker and those will not require translation into Welsh. DVD clips will also not require translation.

Agencies and services will usually have in place an existing process for translation into Welsh. For the Regional Services this is usually through a Service Level Agreement with one of the Local Authorities that are part of the region. For example, all translation for the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Service is undertaken by Cardiff County Council.

Whoever you commission to undertake the translation, you will need to be assured that no confidential data is sent to the service or the service complies with the region/Agency's expectations regarding confidentiality. It is the responsibility of the Agencies to ensure that contracts reflect this appropriately. In addition, you will need to be vigilant that the accidental forwarding of emails with any detailed information about the child are not sent inadvertently to the translation service. The contract/service level agreement with the translation service should also specify an agreed timeframe for the translation of text so as not to cause delay in the profile going live.

Section 6

Performance Management

ARW will enable managers to identify cases in which there has been limited activity for a period of time, caseloads of the team, at what stage each case is etc. This is a useful management tool in relation to preparation for supervision, having an overview of the team's work, having an overview of the individual worker's caseloads and will identify areas they may need to quality assure such as with profiles that have been amended or are awaiting translation.

It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that the performance management information being collected is accurate and up to date.

It is the expectation of the National Adoption Service that the Agencies take responsibility for ensuring there are clear processes in place for there to be regular management scrutiny of the performance management information relating to Register activity. Information on the use of ARW will be collected by the NAS Central Team on a quarterly basis as it is now.

The ARW has a retention capability that is set at three years from the time the record is closed. After three years any identifying information will be removed from the record and leave only information that will be needed for data collection and reporting e.g. ethnicity.

Section 7

Quality Assurance

Each Agency will need to develop their own internal process for quality assuring the use of ARW. This process will need to include details of the manager who is expected to quality assure children's and adopter's profiles, at what point in the process this will take place and how this will be fed back to the person who has developed the profile. Quality assurance should include scrutiny of the content of the profile, timeliness and whether it adheres to these guidelines.

The Central Team in NAS will form part of the national quality assurance process for ARW by reviewing the information held on ARW at regular intervals to ensure that guidelines are adhered to and to provide further support and guidance to Agencies.

Appendix 1: Consent form for Adopters

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS
AND PRIVACY NOTICE

What is the Adoption Register Wales?

The Adoption Register for Wales is a family finding service that contains a data base of the children waiting for adoptive families and approved prospective adopters who are available. We use the information on the database to create potential matches between children and prospective adopters. We also hold a range of innovative family finding activities. These events provide opportunities for prospective adopters to be proactive in the family finding process and gives prospective adopters direct access to information about children waiting to be matched.

The Adoption Register Wales is operated by the National Adoption Service for Wales on behalf of Welsh Government.

How the Adoption Register Wales works for children

We aim to reduce the length of time children wait for an adoptive family by working closely with all Adoption Agencies across Wales. When the child's plan for adoption has been confirmed, his or her social worker will try to find an adoptive family in the child's region. However, if no family is found the social worker will make the child's profile more available in Link Maker. Regular searches of the database occur to look for potential matches with prospective adopters across Wales as well as featuring the children at family finding events.

How the Adoption Register Wales works for Prospective Adopters

Once you have been approved by an adoption agency, every effort will be made to match you with a child or children. It may be that a child has already been identified by your agency and if so your social worker will add your details to the Adoption Register Wales for statistical purposes. This is to enable the National Adoption Service to maintain an overview about the need for adoptive placements and to identify changes we may need to make to our future practice.

If a match has not been found within the region your profile on ARW your social worker can make your profile more available in Link Maker to widen the audience that can be reached.

Should you be identified as a suitable link for a child, the child's social worker will send your information and your profile on the register will be placed 'on hold' for a maximum of three weeks. If the social worker decides that the link may be suitable, discussions will take place between you and your adoption agency. If the link does not proceed your details will become available again for further links with waiting children.

Consent and Confidentiality

You will be asked to sign consent to your information being provided to the Adoption Register Wales and added to the 'Keeping in Touch' database. The 'Keeping in Touch' database will enable you to have contact with other adopters and stay informed about support.

All your information is recorded and stored in a way that is compliant with Data Protection legislation and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Your information will be kept and used for family finding purposes and will be removed from the Adoption Register Wales and securely deleted and disposed of when this is no longer required. You can also choose to withdraw your consent to having your details on the Adoption Register Wales at any time by contacting us.

Inter Register Protocol

The Adoption Register Wales is a signatory to an Inter-Register Protocol with England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, which allows for referral arrangements with the other devolved Registers if specific criteria are met in accordance with the needs of both adopters and children

Contact

We operate a helpline five days a week, Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 1.00pm.

Telephone   **029 2087 3799**

Email   adoptionregisterwales@adoptcymru.com

Website   www.adoptcymru.com/wales-adoption-register

Address   County Hall

             Atlantic Wharf

             Cardiff

             CF10 4UW

CONSENT FOR INFORMATION TO BE RECORDED ON THE ADOPTION REGISTER WALES AND THE 'KEEPING IN TOUCH' DATABASE

I / We have been given information about the Adoption Register Wales and understand the process of recording, storing and managing our information. **(Please delete as appropriate)** **Please print the following details:-**	**I / We have been given information about the 'keeping in touch database' and understand the process of recording, storing and managing our information.** **(Please delete as appropriate)** **Please print the following details:**
Name(s) **Signature**	**Name(s)** **Signature**
Address	

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Social Worker Name & Signature

Agency:

This form will be retained by the approving agency and will not be sent to the Adoption Register Wales

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Adoption Register **Wales**

Appendix 2 – Inter Register Protocol

Adoption Registers operate in Wales and Scotland and an equivalent system, ARIS (Adoption Regional Information System), operates in Northern Ireland. At the time of developing this document we were informed that there would be a gap in provision of a Register in England. The National Adoption Service will ensure Regions and VAAs are updated about these circumstances as this information becomes available.

The aim of this protocol is to outline the joint working arrangements that will ensure the Registers work effectively together in order to help reduce delay in finding families for children throughout the UK where adoption is their plan.

Protocol for working together

Most children will be placed with adopters from agencies within the country where they reside. However, in specific and agreed circumstances it will be appropriate to make referrals of both children and prospective adopters to the Register(s) of the other countries. It is not envisaged that referrals of children from one Register to another will be common place or that they will occur solely because no placement has been found for a child (or prospective adopters) through their own Register.

All Inter-Register referrals will be managed by the home Register and agencies will not be able to make referrals directly to one of the other Registers. This avoids the need for the Registers to enter into formal data sharing agreements with referring agencies in the other countries.

A referral must have been made to the home Register, and there must be evidence that no suitable match is available and no links being actively pursued through that Register, before consideration can be given to referring to one or more of the others.

The request to make a referral to one of the other Registers must be made by the child's /adopters' agency to the manager of the home Register. The manager of each Register can also suggest to the agency responsible for a child or prospective adopters that it may be beneficial to make a referral to one or more of the other Registers. The proposed referral will be discussed by the managers of the two Registers involved and both must agree that the referral is appropriate for this to be progressed.

Consideration of possible links for children or families referred under this protocol will be dealt with promptly – to the same timescales that are applied to any other referral.

All potential links arising from an inter-Register referral will be sent directly to the referring agency by the Register which has made the links.

Each Register will monitor the number of inter-Register referrals they make and receive and the extent to which these lead to matches being identified.

Any agency making a referral of a child must commit in advance to paying the inter agency fee if a placement is identified and must not rule out prospective adopters because of this.

There will be no charge for inter-Register referrals made under this protocol.

Transfer of information

In order to maintain the security of information, all data transferred as part of an inter-Register referral will be sent using the secure systems that each Register has in place.

CRITERIA TO BE MET FOR REFERRAL FROM ONE REGISTER TO ANOTHER

Children will be eligible for a referral to another Register where:

- The child has specific special needs where no appropriate adopters have been identified by the home Register **and/or**

- The child's nationality/identity is specific to one of the other 3 Registers which might make a match there more appropriate and more likely **and/or**

- The child is of a particular ethnicity where no appropriate adopters have been identified by the home Register **and/or**

- The child must be placed a significant distance from his/her home authority because of a real or perceived threat to any placement

There may be one off situations that arise where a request is made to place a child on a particular country's Register for specific reasons. In these circumstances, Register managers will agree in consultation with the agency social worker which, if any, of the three Registers it will be appropriate to refer the child to.

Children who are of an age to understand the implications of referral must give their consent to an inter Register referral.

Prospective Adopters will be eligible for a referral to another Register where:

- No appropriate children have been identified by their home Register **and**

- The adopters are of the specific nationality/identity of one of the other 3 countries, which might make a match with a child from there more appropriate **and/ or**

- The adopters have particular skills, characteristics or experience to offer a home to a child with a specific need(s) that would match the needs of children seeking placement in one of the other Registers **and/ or**

- The adopters are of a particular ethnicity that would match the ethnicity of children seeking placement in one of the other Registers

There may be one off situations that arise where a request is made to place adopters on a particular country's Register for specific reasons. In these circumstances, Register managers will agree in consultation with the agency social worker which, if any, of the three Registers it will be appropriate to refer the child to.

Adopters must give their consent before being referred to one of the other Registers.

Adopter-led Matching Events

In circumstances where a child has been referred to the Register of another country, the child's agency may be invited to feature that child at adopter led matching events such as Exchange Days, Activity Days and Film Featuring events hosted by that Register.

Prospective adopters who have been referred to the Register of another country may also be invited to participate in matching events arranged by the other Register(s).

This will remain at the discretion of the Manager of the Register holding the event.

Appendix 3 - Child Profile

Write the child's profile using the template for child profiles following ADM decision 'should be placed'

↓

Placement order made

↓

Profile sent for translation

↓

Welsh translation of profile sent back to agency

↓

Agency uploads Welsh and English versions of profile to Adoption Register Wales

Consider who needs access to the profile e.g. child's social worker

Now you have Welsh and English language versions the profile will go live. NB: Legal position will be that this process needs to be completed within 1 month of the placement order being made.
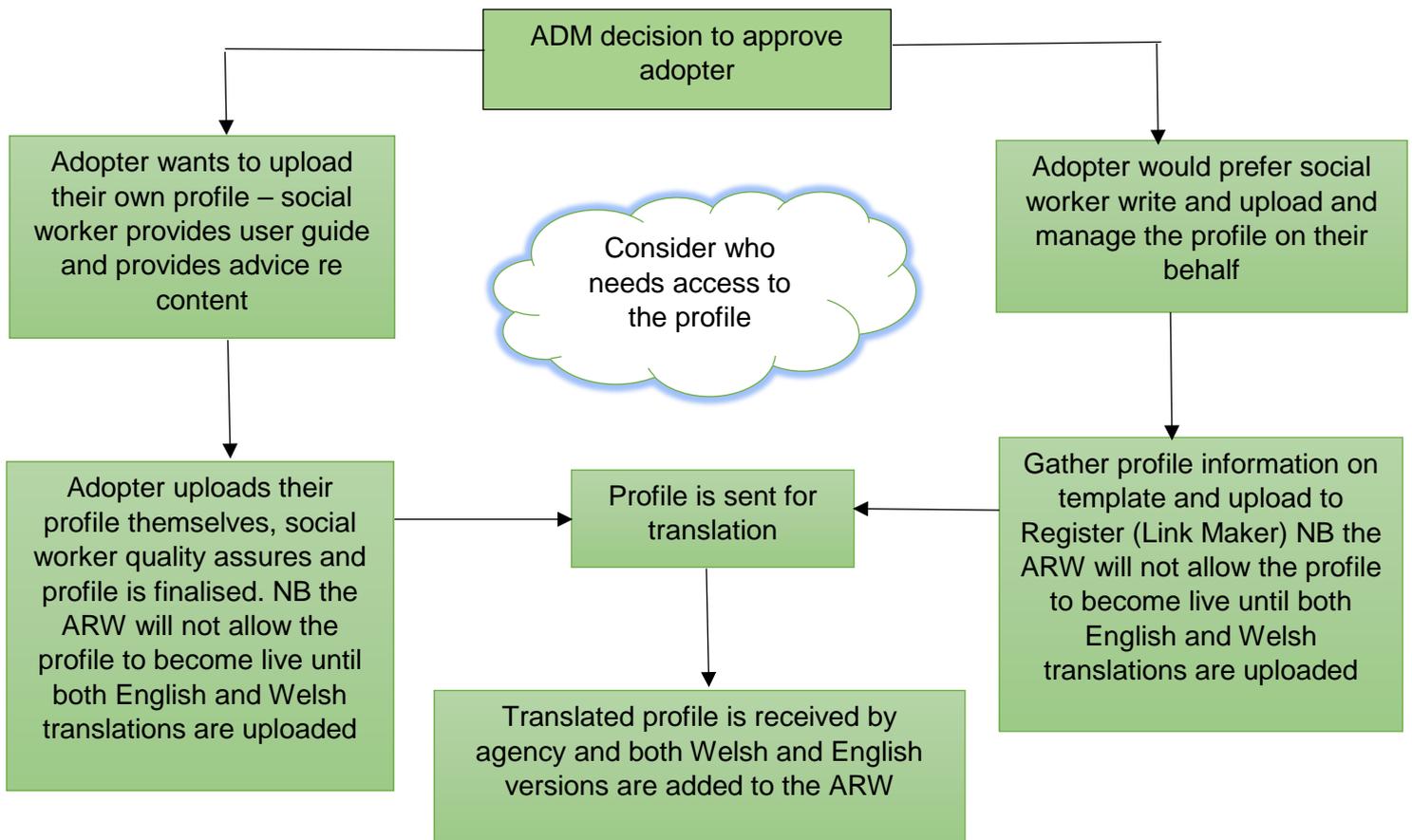
NB: If a local match has been identified see Section 3

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Appendix 4 - Adopter Profile

During assessment process:

- explain ARW – using ARW leaflet
- adopter to write their own profile with support of social worker
- drafted profile accompanies assessment to panel

Panel make recommendation to approve

ADM decision to approve adopter

Adopter wants to upload their own profile – social worker provides user guide and provides advice re content

Consider who needs access to the profile

Adopter would prefer social worker write and upload and manage the profile on their behalf

Adopter uploads their profile themselves, social worker quality assures and profile is finalised. NB the ARW will not allow the profile to become live until both English and Welsh translations are uploaded

Profile is sent for translation

Gather profile information on template and upload to Register (Link Maker) NB the ARW will not allow the profile to become live until both English and Welsh translations are uploaded

Translated profile is received by agency and both Welsh and English versions are added to the ARW

Now you have Welsh and English language versions the profile will go live. NB: legal position will be that this process needs to be completed within 1 month of the ADM decision

If local match identified please see Section 2

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