

Welsh Early Permanence Newsletter

Spring 2024



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Introduction

Since the launch of the Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) Framework in June 2022 positive progress has been made across Wales, all our regional collaboratives have been actively recruiting and assessing WEP carers and it has been exciting to see some of the first WEP approvals and matches being made.

As services have begun to integrate WEP into their processes and practice, it has been a unique learning experience seeing adoption, fostering and childcare practitioners come together to achieve positive outcomes for the children and families involved, through the provision of secure predictable care at the earliest opportunity and limiting placement moves and disruption for the children involved.

In this newsletter we will share some of the learning that has arisen from these care planning opportunities and the good practice that is going on throughout Wales.

Progress

The launch of the WEP training in January 2023, provided the opportunity for adoption services across Wales to begin to embed WEP into their front door information provided to potential carers.

The two-day preparation training facilitated by AFKA Cymru has since seen **44** households attend the training. The first approval under the framework was subsequently made in April 2023.

On the **25th June 2024 AFKA Cymru plan to facilitate a train the trainer session** which will see the WEP preparation materials shared with adoption services across Wales, to support the next stage for the training program regionally. Booking information for this session will be sent out via AFKA Cymru in the coming weeks.

Over the last two years there has been lots of work undertaken to raise awareness of WEP across adoption, fostering and childcare services. Including training and information sessions for panel members, CAFCASS, adoption, fostering and childcare teams. The on-going need for this work is clear as the number of carers increases it is important that services are able to identify appropriate childcare referrals.

Several events are planned for this year. Details and booking information can be found on the following page.

June 2022
NAS Launch
the WEP
Framework

January 2023
AFKA facilitate 1st
WEP preparation
training course

January 2023
WEP Co-
Ordinator in
post.

April 2023
1st WEP
Carers dually
approved
under the
framework.

Summer 2023
AFKA run
webinars for
panel
members.

Autumn 2023
WEP
assessors
practice
development
group held.

Winter 2024
CAFCAS
Information
Webinar held.

Number of
households
attended WEP
training:
44

WEP
Placements
made:
6

WEP Information Sessions 2024

all events are free to sign up to and will take place online via teams.

to book a place please email: contact@adoptcymru.com, providing your name, role, service area and details of the event you would like to attend. A teams links will be sent out 1 week before the event.

Information session for IRO's.

15th May 2024

9:30 to 11:00am

This session will provide an overview of WEP since the launch of the national framework. The sessions will aim to bring together reviewing officers from across Wales to discuss their role in care planning and early identification of child referrals.



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

WEP Information Sessions 2024

Information session for childcare social workers

These sessions cover:

- An overview of the WEP framework and its key principals.
- Explore the positives of WEP care planning and some of the practice learning from case experience, including complexities around sibling placements.
- Information and advice on identifying and making a WEP referral and how to integrate WEP into the care planning process.
- Information on how carers are being recruited and the training they have access to.

Childcare Webinar Dates

5th June

26th June

10th July

31st July

21st August

11th September



Feedback from Practice

With several placements now having been made under the WEP framework it is great to be able to share some of the practice learning from these first experiences.

Within VVC Adoption Service it has been great to see several placements having been undertaken. Central to their learning has been the unique opportunity WEP provides to place a child alongside their older sibling, who has already been adopted.

Speaking with Greg Lewis, VVC Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager, it has been great to hear his perspective about the positives of using WEP in this way and also some of the distinctive challenges that can present within the planning and matching process.

'Being able to place a child under a WEP care plan, alongside an older adopted sibling has come with many positives, mainly in allowing the siblings to begin to form their bond at a much earlier stage and share many first experiences together, that other adopted sibling groups may not get to experience. But also, in a longer-term sense as their adoptive parents have been able to meet birth parents via the contact process and share information and experiences that would not be possible under other care plans. This shared experience will undoubtedly bring a strength to the WEP carers understanding and ability to the children's life journey as they grow.

However there have been challenges that were often unique to WEP sibling placements that we could not have predicted beforehand. Managing risk becomes more complex as the WEP carers have their older child to think about and protect and this is paramount in the planning process. It becomes really important during the WEP assessment to look at the contact that had taken place between birth family and adoptive family to date and whether this could progress safely to allow carers to support direct contact during the fostering phase. During the WEP matching process it is important to be clear about what information can be shared and how this would be managed by all involved from social workers, reviewing officers and contact centre staff. We have found that a pre-placement meeting between parents and WEP carers work well to support information sharing and discuss how contact will be managed safely.

Central to being able to work through these challenges is ensuring we have enough pre-placement planning time, which can often be a challenge if we have late notification from the Local Authority. This can be for many reasons including; in pre-birth cases a pregnancy being concealed or even just because WEP is new to everyone it may not be considered early enough the process.'

Placing siblings

The challenge highlighted by Greg, regarding early notification can often mean there is limited time to assess and approve carers under the WEP Framework. However, there is the option to consider a temporary approval under regulation.26 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 which allows temporary connected approval as foster carers. Common practice in England, the regulation allows for a temporary approval for up to 16 weeks whilst a full dual approval under the WEP framework is worked towards. The connection is between the siblings and the WEP carers are connected with the child as carers of the older sibling. Whilst considering this measure should remain a last resort it can allow a child to be placed in a timely manner and prevent unnecessary placement moves in the right circumstances where we have an on-going positive assessment of prospective WEP carers.

Reg.26: Connected person's temporary approval as foster carers under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015.

Can be used for sibling placements where planning time has not allowed for dual approval of WEP carers, under the framework.

Upon placement, reg.26 provides a temporary approval for 16 weeks as an interim measure whilst dual approval under the WEP framework is achieved.

The connection is between the siblings and the WEP carers are connected with the child as they are caring for his/her sibling.

Routinely used in England, not yet established practice in Wales.

Can allow a child to be placed in a timely manner and prevent placement moves.

Feedback from Practice

Having undertaken their first WEP placement earlier this year, Western Bay Adoption Service have kindly shared their insight into the process of managing the transition into a WEP placement. Jodi-Farley Morris: Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager for the Region shared:

'WEP offered us a unique opportunity to think creatively about how to manage the transition process. The child we placed was in a parent and child placement, with mother which was coming to an end and we were fortunate that mother was supportive of the WEP plan. We also had incredibly open carers who were committed to ensuring a child centered approach to transitioning the child into their care. All parties were open from the on-set to meeting each other and so we put in place a plan where Mum and carers spent time over a weekend getting to know each other. This started with a Microsoft teams call and ended with the carers travelling to the parent and baby placement to spend the day with Mum, child and foster carers.

This meant that both the carers and mother were able to spend time together with the child. This offered all sort of benefits we would not normally experience in adoption transitions. Namely for Mum, it meant she could share all the things she felt were important about her little one and have her input sharing aspects of their routine and care whilst hopefully taking some reassurance that her child would be well cared for, having gotten to know the WEP carers herself.

For the carers it also gave them an opportunity to get to know more about Mum, her personality, and interests that you wouldn't get from a report, whilst also learning about her wishes for the child's future. As a professional supporting the transition, it was clear to see the positives this would bring to the weekly supervised contact and the communication that was then put in place, between the carers and mother.

Feedback from Practice

The carers also got to meet with the child's father which they found incredibly positive. They spoke of fathers hopes and wishes for the child's future and felt their conversations helped to enhance the ongoing relationship they will have as the child grows.

As a region, we are still working through the WEP process and it has been a positive learning opportunity which we look forward to building on in the future. There are unique opportunities that present around contact, relationship building and life journey that have the potential to improve post adoption contact and allow adopters to better support a child's understanding and identity as they grow.'

For the carers in this case it has been great to hear how they have embraced the WEP fostering role and explore some of their thoughts and feelings at this stage in the process.

'When we first heard about Welsh early permanence, we instantly knew this was something we wanted to do. We loved the idea of shaping a child's life as soon as possible and having the opportunity to build the initial foundations as soon as we could. Although there is uncertainty with WEP we were prepared to take the risk as we could see the benefit for the child.

We have had the opportunity to meet Mum initially on a Teams call which was an opportunity to get to know a little bit about the child and for Mum to ask us questions. It was then arranged for us to meet Mum and little one in person and spend time together before he came to our care. We found out his favourite animal and slept with it for a few nights for it to have our scent on. We also bought mum a keepsakes box with the child's name and date of birth on and explained we would like to bring picture for her to keep when we meet at contact, so she can see what he has been doing.

Feedback from Practice

We also had the opportunity to also meet Dad, we gave him pictures of little one which he was grateful for. We spent time chatting about the child and what they were like when first born, we talked about the birth, and how they are doing now.

We have asked parents if we prepared a book for them would they complete this. The idea of the book is to have those questions that all children ask, what's your favourite colour, what music do you like, what's your favourite food. This is a book that will be positive to share with the child as they grow hopefully help answer some of the things they would like to know about their parents. We are fortunate to have this opportunity to get to know parents and gather this important information through the WEP process, as important decisions are still being made.

When we initially thought about adopting, the main aim was to extend our family. However throughout the process it became apparent very quickly that the little one has a family, a Mum and Dad who love him very much but at this stage in their lives are unable to care for them. If adoption becomes this child's plan then as parents, we are fully committed to helping him understand his early life and that his parents and adoptive parents loved and cared for him and wanted the best for his future.'

If you want to learn more about WEP and hear feedback from other carers and professionals please visit our Welsh Early Permanence Page on our Website. [National Adoption Service - Welsh Early Permanence \(adoptcymru.com\)](https://www.adoptcymru.com) Here you will find video's and online training resources alongside the framework guidance and supporting documents.

Most recently added is an article from WEP carers Louise and Adam who undertook a WEP placement hoping to grow their family as second time adopters. The couple have kindly shared their in-sights into the WEP process in the hope that it will help professionals and carers when thinking about WEP. [National Adoption Service - Family Story Articles \(adoptcymru.com\)](https://www.adoptcymru.com)