

Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

Inter-agency fee levels and guidance

Inter-agency fee levels 2018-19 – for introduction from 1 June 2018

The inter-agency fee levels from 1 June 2018 – 31 March 2019 are as follows:

| Number of children | Fee level |
|-------------------------------|---|
| For 1 child | £31,000 |
| For 2 children | £50,000 |
| For 3 children | £68,000 |
| For 4 children | £78,000 |
| For 5 or more children | To be negotiated on an individual basis |
| Ongoing supervision per child | £860 per month |

An additional weighting of 10% applies for agencies based in the Greater London area.

The timing of introduction of these new arrangements will vary in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Fees are payable in a single amount at the point of placement.

The inter-agency fee levels above, and the single payment, come into effect for all placements that take place on or after 1st June 2018. This is defined by the date that the child(ren) move in with the prospective adopters. Any placements that take place before this date will operate on the old fee structure with payment in two parts and part 3 will be payable at the previous rate.

Fee levels will be updated on the 1st April each year on the basis of the Consumer Prices Index including owner-occupier's Housing costs (CPIH) measure of inflation for the preceding calendar year as published by the Office for National Statistics.

In addition, from 1st April 2019, a new fee structure for sibling groups will come into effect. The first 1/3 of the fee (part 1: adopter recruitment) will remain a fixed amount, while parts 2 and 3 (matching and support) will be charged per child placed.

Inter-agency fee terms and conditions

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This note provides guidance on the financial arrangements for inter-agency adoption placements in the UK.
- 1.2. “Inter-agency placements” refer to any instance where a child or children are placed for adoption with prospective adopter(s) not approved by the local authority or regional adoption agency responsible for the placement of that child.
- 1.3. The term “agency” refers to any adoption agency registered with Ofsted, the Scottish Care Inspectorate, or the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland. This includes local authority adoption agencies, voluntary adoption agencies, and regional adoption agencies in England.
- 1.4. The basic mechanism for funding inter-agency placements is the inter-agency fee. This is paid by the agency responsible for placing the child(ren) in question to the agency that approved the prospective adopter(s) with which the child(ren) are being placed.
- 1.5. The inter-agency fee acts as a minimum price; agencies may charge more, but not less, than this amount.
- 1.6. The inter-agency fee is based on two core principles:
 - That agencies providing adoption placements should receive payment to cover the costs involved in carrying out the necessary work;
 - That the arrangements for this should prevent the need for negotiations over price or considerations relating to costs potentially creating delay in placing children.

2. When the inter-agency fee should be paid

- 2.1. The inter-agency fee is payable in any case involving a child being placed for adoption with adopters approved by a different agency, as outlined in section 1.2 above.
- 2.2. The inter-agency fee applies to domestic adoption only, including placements between the constituent nations of the UK and the Isle of Man. Inter-country adoption placements are not covered by the inter-agency fee arrangements.
- 2.3. The inter-agency fee applies to placements provided through ‘block purchase’ arrangements, as well as placements delivered on a ‘spot purchase’ basis.
- 2.4. Concurrent planning, fostering to adopt, or any other such placement involving individuals approved as foster carers and prospective adopters are governed by particular arrangements, but still require the fee to be paid (see section 5 below).

2.5. Children placed together with the same adoptive family are counted as a sibling group only when they are placed at a similar time. If the time elapsed between one placement and another is such that the family have to undergo a separate assessment, then the subsequent placement should be treated separately to the first.

3. Work covered by the inter-agency fee

3.1. The inter-agency fee covers the following aspects of adoption work:

- **Part 1:** Recruiting, preparing, assessing and approving the prospective adopter(s);
- **Part 2:** Meetings with the child's agency, preparing and supporting the family during the matching process, placement planning and introductions, including:
 - preparation for, and attendance at, the Matching Panel;
 - access to the child's record;
 - access to the medical advisor responsible for the child if appropriate;
 - the additional work that goes into preparing adoption support plans.
- **Part 3:** Post placement supervision for the first twelve months following placement, or until the point at which the adoption order is made, whichever is sooner. This payment covers the support and core services provided during this period as set out below:
 - Support visits to the adoptive family;
 - Attendance at looked after child reviews;
 - Contributions to court reports;
 - Support to the prospective adoptive family during the court process.

3.2. The following aspects of work are not covered by the inter-agency fee:

- Financial support and support in relation to contact arrangements are the responsibility of the child's local authority, or regional adoption agency in England where the relevant functions have been delegated to them.
- Additional support services linked to the needs identified in the adoption support plan can be purchased from the approving agency or elsewhere and should be detailed in the agreement.

4. Payment

4.1. The inter-agency fee is charged in full at placement, defined as the point at which the child(ren) in question move in to live with their prospective adoptive family – the “placement date”.

- 4.2. "Ongoing supervision" is charged where an Adoption Order has not been granted after 12 months and ongoing placement supervision is being provided by the agency. This is calculated on a per-child basis.
- 4.3. Should the IA form not be signed before the placement takes place then the placement will proceed on the basis that the IA form has been signed and all parties are bound by the form and this document.

5. Early permanency placements

- 5.1. Adoption agencies across the UK provide various forms of early permanency, fostering to adopt and concurrent planning placements. Each kind of placement involves different elements of work, and individual agencies have their own arrangements for charging for the work involved.
- 5.2. Agencies may reach their own agreements and divisions of responsibility for these placements, provided that the inter-agency fee is paid in full for the work relating to the adoption placement.
- 5.3. Where a period of foster care is required prior to the adoption match being recommended by Panel, placing agencies will charge a fostering fee and carers will be paid a fostering allowance (details to be set by placing agencies) in addition to the interagency adoption fee.

6. Arrangements when a placement disrupts

- 6.1. Financial arrangements when a placement disrupts before the adoption order is granted need to be considered on an individual case basis.
- 6.2. A disruption to an adoption placement is an unplanned return of the child(ren) to care before the adoption order is granted. Placements which result in a Court decision for rehabilitation to parents or connected people rather than adoption (for instance, concurrent planning placements) are not to be treated as having been disrupted. The full fee is payable as normal in these circumstances.
- 6.3. A disruption meeting should be held within 3 months of the disruption, chaired by an independent chairperson, with minutes being provided to both agencies. The agencies party to this agreement agree to share the costs equally and to fully engage in the process.
- 6.4. The first two-thirds of the fee is non-refundable. Many adopters do not go on to take another placement after a breakdown and those that do will need to be re-assessed.

6.5. The final third of the fee should be part-refunded, based on the length of time between placement and breakdown, plus one month. The price of the work should be calculated on the basis of the ongoing supervision rate.