



Edward Timpson MP
Minister of State for Children and Families

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

Dear Directors,

8 July 2015

I am delighted to be able to confirm that the Chancellor has today allocated a further £30m funding to support the adoption reform programme.

This money will be available for a specific purpose: to reimburse local authorities for the cost of the adoption inter-agency fee. This fee is paid when placing children with adopters who have been assessed and approved by another local authority, or by a voluntary adoption agency. Government will be paying for this fee centrally for a twelve month period, to ensure that children with particular needs (defined below), as well as any other child who has been waiting longer than 18 months for adoption, have access to the widest pool of potential adopters. A total of £30m over this and the next financial year has been made available to support this scheme.

Government will pay the inter-agency fee for this targeted group of children to remove the financial barrier to matching and facilitate more adoptions across agencies. By levelling the playing field in this way, local authorities will be freed up to consider all possible matches for a hard to place child immediately, across the whole country.

I urge you to ensure that family finding in your area is now broadened to its utmost. There are almost 3,000 children who are, today, waiting for an adoptive family to be found for them. I know adoption teams across the country do excellent work to find families for those children whose plan is for adoption, and have seen this for myself in many areas. However, we have heard from local authorities, adopters, and from research that the inter-agency fee can and does act as a barrier on too many occasions, preventing potential matches from being explored and causing delay as local authorities pragmatically seek to make the most of their own adopters. We want agencies to focus on finding the right adoptive parents for the children waiting, and this should not be limited to an agency's own approved adopters. In particular, I expect to see local adoption

teams make the most of the excellent service offered by Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

This scheme is targeted specifically at 'harder to place' children, who we know need access to the biggest possible pool of adopters so the right parents can be found for them. That means looking nationally. Therefore the new measure will cover adoptions of children in the following groups:

- Children who have been waiting for 18 months or more at 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 BME background
- Children who are disabled

Any inter-agency matches made for children eligible for this scheme from today (Wednesday 8th July 2015) for the next 12 months will qualify for reimbursement. I would ask you to begin pursuing matches for children under this scheme immediately, as part of a concerted national effort to find homes for all children who have been waiting too long for their forever families. Local authorities will be able to claim money spent on fees in arrears. Full details of how to claim back the cost of the fees will be published by the Department before the end of July.

I urge all local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to immediately begin to make the most of this exciting new development.

You will also be aware that my Department recently announced a new £4.5m fund to support the development of Regional Adoption Agencies. I hope you are also working with partners to bid for support from this fund, and I look forward to seeing your proposals. If you have not already, I urge you to read *Regionalising Adoption*, the short paper we have published, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-adoption-agencies-programme>.

I want every child waiting to be adopted to have the same opportunity to be matched with the right parent and move into a loving home as quickly as possible. Our children deserve no less.

Yours sincerely,



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