



Department  
for Education

# Call for Views: Placing of Children in Sibling Groups for Adoption

## Call for Views Response Form

Closing date: 31 August 2012

Your comments must reach us by that date.

Please send responses to  
[adoption.reform@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adoption.reform@education.gsi.gov.uk)

Information provided in response to this call for views, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

**Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.**

Reason for confidentiality:

Name	Peter Sandiford
Organisation (if applicable)	PAC (formally Post-adoption Centre)
Address:	4-5 Torriano Mews Torriano Avenue London NW5 2RZ

If you have an enquiry related to this call for views please e-mail: [adoption.reform@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adoption.reform@education.gsi.gov.uk) . Please be aware we can only respond to enquiries relating to the call for views exercise from this mailbox account.

For all other enquiries please contact the Department via the 'Contact Us' page on the DfE website: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

Please mark the category which best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/> Child/ Young person	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's social worker
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted child	<input type="checkbox"/> Social worker (adoption team) (LA)
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted adult	<input type="checkbox"/> Social worker (Voluntary Adoption Agency)
<input type="checkbox"/> Birth parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Reviewing Officer
<input type="checkbox"/> Birth relative (please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's Guardian (CAFCASS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Prospective adopter	<input type="checkbox"/> Member of the judiciary
<input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Lawyer
	<input type="checkbox"/> Member of an adoption panel
<input type="checkbox"/> Member of a Voluntary Community Sector organisation (VCS)	<input type="checkbox"/> Member of an adoption support organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below)	

Please Specify:

## **PLACING CHILDREN IN SIBLING GROUPS FOR ADOPTION**

### **1. How can we find more adopters willing and able to take on sibling groups, particularly larger groups?**

Comments:

- a) Publicity for recruitment could focus on specific sibling groups to target interested families rather than trying to match a general pool of approved adopters to the particular needs of sibling groups.
- b) Early linking and the home study could be used to prepare prospective adopters to meet the needs of a specific sibling group

### **2. How can we better support those families willing to adopt sibling groups, particularly larger groups?**

Comments:

Material support should be made more readily available: housing, transport, equipment and allowances; parenting support should be built into the adoption package.

A legitimate concern for many adopters with siblings groups is the level of intra-group conflict in sibling groups. This is likely to be greater than in birth families because needy children will be strenuously competing for attention and any behavioural, emotional and attachment difficulties (due to early life traumas) can be mutually aggravating and very difficult to handle for adopters. Adopters would need to be assessed / supported for stress management and specific help for managing intensely rivalrous and discordant relationships should be developed and made more widely available in particular.

3. **Please give your views on why this is difficult to achieve at present:**

Comments:

- a) Lack of material resources for adopters
- b) lack of hands-on support in the home for adopters
- c) lack of skilled support workers for adopters re intense stress management

what might also help:

- d) Recruitment and training of experienced foster carers should be aimed specifically at creating a pool of carers able to take sibling groups.
- e) Publicity should be focused on the needs of specific sibling groups with details of available support.

3a. **What are the barriers to children in sibling groups being placed together for adoption?**

Comments:

As mentioned above, there are legitimate barriers: when the needs of the individual children are great, placing two or more siblings together would possibly be detrimental to the children as well as outweigh any family's emotional ( and other) resources. Better assessments methods of the needs of each child in a sibling group as well as the emotional resources of prospective adopters would contribute to being more confident in the decision making process re placing siblings together.

3b. **What elements of social work practice support the placement of children in sibling groups with adopters?**

Comments:

Understanding the psychology of sibling relationships, particularly in the context of an abusive birth family experience: both the mutually supportive and antagonistic aspects.

Social workers should be trained in more accurate assessment and intervention methods re the needs of all parties.

3c. **What elements of social work practice inhibit the placement of children in sibling groups with adopters?**

Comments:

Most social workers would prefer to keep brothers and sisters together, but the system does not necessarily support them: shortage of resources, good training and supervision, indifferent assessments and fear of not meeting adoption targets militates against keeping siblings together.

4. **We think that placing siblings together should be considered on the merits of the case for each individual child.**

**Should the law be made more explicit so that placing siblings together is considered on a case by case basis for each individual child?**

Yes  No x

**4a. How should legislation and guidance be revised to achieve this?**

Comments:

The needs of each child in a sibling group deserves skilled assessment, analysis and scrutiny based on the premise that siblings should remain together if possible. The current legislation and guidance adequately address the best interests of sibling groups. Practitioners and managers require better training and support to make the best use of them.

**4b. In what other ways could a case by case basis be promoted for each individual child when considering the adoption of children separately?**

Comments:

Research has shown that children 'singled out for rejection' by birth parents (among their birth sibling group) are more likely to fare poorly in adoptive placements which are then more likely to disrupt. The psychology of the singled out rejected child needs to be better understood along with ways to promote the integration of such a child into an adoptive family.

*Rushton A. and Dance C. (2003) Preferentially rejected children and their development in permanent family placements. Child and Family Social Work, 8, 4, 257-267.*

**5. Should we revise legislation and guidance to set out the features of good arrangements for contact with siblings when children are adopted separately?**

Yes  No x

**5a. How should legislation and guidance be revised to achieve this?**

Comments:

A change in regulations and guidance risks being a distraction and absorbing undue amounts of social work time and energy. Continuing to invest in improving best practice through (ongoing) training and supervision would constitute better use of available resources.

**5b. In what other ways could good contact arrangements be promoted when children are adopted separately?**

Comments:

It would be a mistake to define a general template for the best contact arrangements for separated siblings. Each child in a sibling group must have a careful and thorough assessment of their connections to each other, how their continuity needs can be met and the purpose of contact, before contact arrangements can be negotiated with - not laid down to - the prospective adopters/carers and children according to age and understanding.

Training /n best practice exchange days for social workers /professionals.

The use of social networking sites and skype and training in these means could be considered?

Monetary support to cover large travel distances.



**6. Please use the space below for any other comments you would like to make on placing children in sibling groups for adoption**

Comments:

In addition to all of the above, it is worth mentioning that foster carers who have parented sibling groups prior to their placement into (an) adoptive family/ies have a wealth of experience with these children which needs to be made more use of in a systematic manner. Their contribution to the thorough assessment of each child's needs within a sibling group needs to be seen as crucial. The children could be observed and 'measured' in the foster home by the foster carers (as well as by social workers/other professionals) by means of structured play tasks, checklist for everyday family routines, systematic observations of (potential) conflict situations and standardised psycho-diagnostic questionnaires should be considered.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply**

Completed questionnaires should be sent to the address shown below by 31 August 2012

Send by e-mail to: [adoption.reform@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adoption.reform@education.gsi.gov.uk)

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