The best chance for every child

As the adoption register in England closes, how does Link Maker work around the UK to ensure no child is forgotten?

March 2019

Background

Link Maker was created by adopters 5 years ago and is responsible for the majority of inter-agency adoptive placements across the UK. It has provided the online platform for Scotland's Adoption Register since 2016 and began providing the same for the Adoption Register Wales in March this year. In England, nearly every agency has used Link Maker for several years, and the statutory register there has recently closed.

Can Link Maker fill the gap left by the Register in England?

The following figures suggest that Link Maker has been relied on far more heavily that the Register:

- During 2018, 846 children in England were matched via Link Maker, around 8 times more than were found using the Register database. These children had a similar 'harder to place' profile.

- In March 2019, Link Maker held active profiles of over 1,500 approved adopters in England, compared to less than 400 on the statutory register. This breadth of choice is essential to help match children with more complex needs.

- In March 2019, Link Maker held active profiles of over 2,500 children compared to just over 1,000 on the statutory register, suggesting that the statutory basis for the Register had little effect in practice.

Local authorities' views on this seem the most relevant as they have a duty to find families for children. On their behalf, the ADCS has advised that they understand the change. Read the ADCS's comment here

Does Link Maker proactively match children?

Link Maker itself doesn't look for matches; we believe this is best done by children's social workers (who know children best and have a statutory duty to try to match them) and by adopters themselves. We make it easy for everyone to find the information they need, and to communicate safely and efficiently.

What if children's agencies aren't proactive?

We closely monitor the progress of every child from the moment they are added to Link Maker. If a child has been on the system for long without any links being progressed, we send an automatic email to the social workers suggesting ways to get better results. In Scotland and Wales, Register staff also monitor the progress of children via their Link Maker accounts and intervene where needed.

In England, where progress for any child appears to be slow, a support ticket is automatically raised for Link Maker's support team. Staff then review the child's case for the number of adopters approached, how widely the profile has been made available, and whether photos and videos have been added to the profile. We then contact the child's agency directly to discuss the case, and to make specific suggestions. All of this activity is logged against the child's case on the system.

Management oversight is also provided at an agency or regional level, with a range of dashboards and reports ensuring accountability for all children's cases. This gives regional adoption agencies in England the same oversight potential as the national registers in Scotland and Wales.

What about the 'hardest to place' children?

Proactive discussion with adopters found on Link Maker is our suggested approach but is not always enough. Where appropriate, after discussion with the agency, a child may also be featured prominently on the homepage of all adopters that are family-finding. This additional visibility can help some children who wait longest, along with the activity days and other face-to-face events that continue to run around the UK.

For further information, or for help using Link Maker, please contact our support team at:
- Email: support@linkmaker.co.uk
- Phone: 0843 886 0040