

## **Case studies – the comparison of 2 adoption cases**

Jill and Emily are two children of a similar age who have recently been placed for adoption, but their wider family circumstances meant that their journeys were very different. These examples help to demonstrate why data can indicate a perceived delay in permanence being achieved, but that the complexity of individual circumstances is a vital context to understand when analysing performance.

Jill is 4 years old and is part of a sibling group of 5 ranging from 1-15 years old, whereas Emily is an only child aged 3. Jill and her siblings all remained at home for the duration of the care proceedings. This is sometimes the case with chronic risk factors that do not always satisfy the court of a need for interim removal from parents' care. This of course produces complexity in terms of transitions at the end of care proceedings. We needed to allow Jill to recover from the trauma of being removed from her mother's care before commencing the transition work to prospective adopters.

There was also a significant amount of detailed consideration as to whether Jill and her siblings should be placed together or apart. This was alongside many different family members coming forward to care for some of the children but not all of them; all of this required careful assessment. It is also the case that we cannot be certain how long a child's permanence plan will take to progress, until we are able to see them living outside of their parents' care, see how they settle etc. This scenario highlights how challenging it can be to permanence plan through care proceedings whilst children remain living with parents. In Jill's case we applied for interim separation; for the children to move into foster care but the court did not grant this (this threshold for interim removal is very high in law).

Emily was removed from her parents care at the beginning of proceedings due to concerns that she suffered a drug overdose (acute risk factor). Being in foster care throughout proceedings meant that the social worker had a good understanding of Emily's needs at the point of her final hearing. While Emily's parents contested the adoption plan, they understood that in the event that the court was in agreement with the plan, that the frequency of their family time would start to reduce until a final session. In addition, preparation with Emily about what adoption was and what it would mean for her could start when final orders were made. At that time for Jill, she was coping with the trauma of being removed from her mother and so the complexities of planning support around finding and being part of a new family, was difficult to plan and manage.

It took a year from the decision being made that Jill should be adopted to her being placed with her prospective adopters and 6 months for Emily. Jill and Emily are both now settled in their placements but their timescales to this outcome are very different and this is because of the differing nature of their family circumstances and the impact this had on their journey to adoption.