

ASF Transitional Funding – 2021-22

The Adoption Support Fund was launched in May 2015 with a government commitment to fund therapeutic support for families whose children left care through adoption or special guardianship until March 2022. Funding has increased significantly with the 2021-22 budget being more than double that in the first year of operation.

The government recognises that children leaving care into adoptive and special guardianship families are likely to have experienced trauma prior to coming into care and will need therapeutic support to help them thrive.

We understand that the absence of certainty around funding is a concern for families and those supporting them. As we did in previous years, we have committed some funding for the 2022-23 financial year in advance of the spending review settlement.

In cases where therapy packages have been agreed and started in the 2021-22 financial year, families will be able to access support beyond March 2022. Like previous years, packages of support will be limited to a maximum of 9 months from July 2021 until the Spending Review settlement is known.

We anticipate that the outcome of the spending review will be known by the end of November 2021. Funding will be on a reducing number of months from April 2021, with therapy that starts in July-November 2021 receiving a maximum of nine months funding. This is explained in the FAQs below.

Q – If 9-month packages will apply between July and November, what does that mean for April, May and June?

A – Applications with a start date of therapy in April 2021 could cover up to 12 months support, to the end of March 2022; applications with therapy starting in May could cover 11 months of support; applications with therapy starting in June could cover 10 months of support. See diagram below, with a number 1 indicating the month that therapy starts:

Transitional Funding Calculator											
											Indicates months of services duration transitional funding will cover
	2021	April	1								
		May	2	1							
		June	3	2	1						
		July	4	3	2	1					
		August	5	4	3	2	1				
		September	6	5	4	3	2	1			
		October	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		
EXPECTED SR OUTCOME		November	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
		December	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	2022	January	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
		February	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
		March	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR		April					9	8	7	6	
		May						9	8	7	
		June							9	8	
		July								9	
		August									Subject to outcome of spending review 2021
		September									
		October									
		November									

Q – Why is funding only been guaranteed for 9 months?

A – The decision to guarantee at least nine months of funding allows us to offer packages of support during 2021-22 until the outcome of the spending review is announced. We have assumed this will happen by the end of November for the purpose of our funding calculations.

Normally the Government does not commit any funding for a future financial year before a spending review settlement is known. However, the government is mindful that the ASF has been a great support to children and families and wanted to reassure families that where therapy has started, they could continue to access this therapeutic support as we transition from one spending review period to another.

We appreciate that the absence of certainty about future ASF funding is difficult. The future of the ASF will be considered as part of the spending review and decisions will be announced as soon as possible after the spending review process has concluded.

Q – What if my child is assessed as needing more therapy than the ASF will fund?

A – During this transitional period, the ASF will only approve applications for funding according to when the therapy starts during 2021-22, as set out in the table above. We would expect you to work with your local authority/regional adoption agency to determine what support will be needed beyond the funded period and, if the ASF continues in the next spending review period, to make an application to the Fund for another package of support beyond the funded activity.

Q – Will I be able to submit another application in 2021-22 to extend the package of support to 12 months?

A – If the spending review (which we expect to be concluded by November) confirms funding for the ASF beyond March 2022, further applications of up to 12 months support could be submitted depending on the assessed needs of the child/family.

Q – Can we continue to apply for 9 months therapy between December 2021 and March 2022?

A – We are currently working on the basis that the outcome of the spending review will be known by the end of November 2021 so will fund packages for 9 months where therapy commences between July and November 2021. Further guidance will be provided once the outcome of the spending review is known about applications after this date.

Q – What is a Spending Review (SR) and why is the future of the ASF dependent on it?

A - HM Treasury carries out spending reviews to determine how to spend public money – usually over a multi-year period - in line with the government's priorities. The overall amount of spending available is informed by the wider fiscal position. The last two spending reviews have been single year ones. The money the government spends is reviewed to ensure future funding continues to be efficient and cost-effective. The 2021 spending review will consider whether the Adoption Support Fund should continue and, if so, what an appropriate level of funding will be. It will look at the evidence around the impact it has had and whether it is cost effective. Until the review has been concluded we are unable to say whether it will continue.

Q – When will the outcome of the SR be known?

A – Our assumption is that the outcome of the spending review will be known by the end of November 2021.

Q – What will happen if ASF is not funded in the SR?

A – Applications made to ASF from December 2021 onwards would only be funded for activity taking place between December 2021 and March 2022. See diagram above. Whatever the outcome of the spending review, local authorities and regional adoption agencies will still have a general duty to provide an adoption support service.

Q - Will this affect how children and families will access the Fund?

A – No, the process for accessing the Fund remains the same i.e. local authorities and regional adoption agencies should continue to carry out assessments of need, determine the support needs, make any decisions on match funding and submit applications for eligible therapies to the ASF.

Q – Does this affect the Fair Access Limits (FALs)?

A – No. The FALs will remain at £2,500 per child for a specialist assessment and £5,000 per child for therapy. The limits will apply to the 2021-22 financial year so anything committed before the outcome of the spending review is known would be deducted from the FAL amount for that year.

Q – How does this affect match-funding?

A – It doesn't. Where applications are above the Fair Access Limits (£5k for therapy and £2.5k for specialist assessment) and meet the match-funding criteria local authorities will still be asked to share the cost of the therapeutic support for the child/family.

Q – Will scope and eligibility criteria change during this period?

A – No. These criteria will be considered as part of the spending review work.

Q - Will applications take longer to process?

A - We currently expect all valid applications to continue to be processed within a maximum of 20 working days. Our aim is to keep processing times as short as possible and we will endeavour to keep them to a minimum. Any changes to these processing times will be communicated to local authorities and regional adoption agencies.

Q – Will exceptions be made for children with complex needs?

A – The same exceptions that are made now i.e. more expensive packages of support can be provided where local authorities or regional adoption agencies match-fund. The transitional funding rules will not change the criteria or rules for match-funding.