

EM IFA Pilot – IFA Guidance

Purpose

This document is intended to provide a guide for IFA providers on the operation of the regional IFA pilot, based upon the regional IFA pilot process map, so it can be clearly understood how IFA providers can engage with the pilot and achieve the expected benefits.

Introduction

The regional IFA pilot will run for a period of 9 months, and it is expected that the following benefits will be achieved:

- To decrease the average transfer time for UASC under 16 years of age through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).
- To increase the proportion of UASC placed within the region.
- To develop a more strategic relationship between IFA providers and LA's.

The pilot is expected to achieve these benefits by enabling IFA providers to provide vacancies for use with the NTS by proactively informing the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (EM SMP) when providers are first aware that they are likely to have an upcoming vacancy.

Having a placement identified prior to children being transferred will help reduce transfer times.

IFA providers will be asked to only identify carers who reside within the East Midlands for use within the pilot, so that the number of children placed within the region will increase.

IFA providers will also be asked to identify vacancies with carers who are either already looking after UASC, who have significant experience looking after UASC, who have expressed an interest in caring for UASC, or who the provider believes are suitable to be utilised for this pilot.

By working together on the delivery of this pilot we hope to form new relationships between IFA providers and Local Authorities, as we look to further address sufficiency issues going forward. See the Pilot Operation section for an understanding of the pilot mechanics.

Participation in this pilot is voluntary and providers can withdraw from the pilot at any time, providers will be encouraged through the use of a pilot participation survey to feedback their experience of the pilot and suggestions for further development towards the end of the 9-month pilot period to inform our learning.

Expectations & Clarifications

In order to support the delivery of the IFA pilot, IFA providers will be expected to do the following:

1. IFA providers are expected to notify EM SMP, via the following email address: RegionallFAPilot@emcouncils.gov.uk, at the earliest opportunity when they are aware that a vacancy with a carer may become available, it is expected that IFA providers will be able to provide this early warning at least two weeks before a prospective vacancy is able to take a child.
2. IFA providers when notifying EM SMP of a prospective vacancy, via the following email address: RegionallFAPilot@emcouncils.gov.uk, will attach a completed vacancy offer form, this will include information about the type of child the carers will accept, whether they are willing to accommodate an age disputed child, how the vacancy arose (i.e. Were carers able to release a further bedroom, did previous child move out after turning 18, did previous child move out due to placement breakdown? Etc.) and if the vacancy was the result of a previous child leaving the care of that carer, provide information about the profile of the previous child and the local authority with parental responsibility.

3. If at the point of the IFA provider notifying EM SMP of a prospective vacancy there are fewer than 2 weeks before the vacancy is ready to accept a child (or indeed at the point of notification already being able to accept a child) an accelerated process may be run to nominate a Local Authority partner, this is dependent upon EM SMP capacity, and if there is insufficient capacity EM SMP will refuse the vacancy offer.
4. When IFA providers receive notification of Local Authority contact details from the EM SMP, they should contact the Local Authority within 24 hours of receiving the contact details from EM SMP unless they expect the vacancy to be available to accept a child in fewer than 2 weeks then IFA providers are expected to make contact immediately with the Local Authority.
5. IFA providers will be expected to use existing framework agreements, where they exist, for offering vacancies to Local Authorities as part of the pilot.
6. Where there isn't an existing relationship between an IFA provider and a Local Authority, IFA providers will be expected to offer vacancies for use in the pilot by using the existing published spot purchasing terms and conditions for the relevant Local Authority, which will be provided by the Local Authority upon initial contact.
7. IFA Providers will be expected to confirm whether they will accept the spot purchase T&C's, if these are being used, to the local authority concerned and the EM SMP before the vacancy is ready to accommodate a child.
8. Once the date on which the vacancy will be available to accept a child is finalised the IFA provider will be expected to inform the EM SMP and the LA at the earliest opportunity via email.
9. From the date that the vacancy is available to accept a child the IFA provider is expected to hold the vacancy free of charge for up to three working days to enable the matching process to be concluded and a child transferred into the placement.
10. During quiet periods, where fewer children are referred into the NTS, it may not be possible for EM SMP to guarantee a transfer within three working days of the vacancy being ready to accommodate a child.

Pilot Operation

1. When you become aware of an upcoming vacancy with a carer, residing within the East Midlands, who already cares for UASC, who has expressed an interest in caring for UASC or who you believe are suitable for the pilot, you will need to inform EM SMP, via RegionallFAPilot@emcouncils.gov.uk, with information included within a completed vacancy form about when the vacancy is likely to be available, the child profile, whether carers would be willing to accept an age disputed child, information about how the vacancy came about and if the vacancy was the result of a previous child moving out the profile of the previous child and Local Authority with parental responsibility, and a point of contact with contact details.
2. If this information is not provided to the EM SMP via RegionallFAPilot@emcouncils.gov.uk when making the vacancy offer their will not be possible for EM SMP to accept the vacancy offer.
3. Following an internal process between the EM SMP and East Midlands Local Authorities, EM SMP will provide contact details for the East Midlands Authority that you will contract with.
4. You are required to contact the Local Authority within 24 hours of receiving the Local Authority contact details to start the matching process, via email or telephone, provided the vacancy will not be ready to accept a child for at least 2 weeks. However, if the vacancy is ready sooner (or is already available) then you will need to contact the authority immediately.
5. Upon notifying EM SMP of an upcoming vacancy, if there are fewer than 2 weeks before the vacancy will be ready to accept a child, EM SMP may either run an accelerated matching process to find a local authority to take up the vacancy or may refuse the vacancy if there isn't sufficient resource to run an accelerated process.
6. Once you know the exact date that the vacancy will become available, you will communicate this to EM SMP and the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity.

7. The Local Authority will then contact IFA providers to finalise the matching process, Local Authorities if they have an outstanding transfer will be in touch within the working day. If an out of Rota transfer is requested from the Home Office, the Local Authority will be in contact once the child profile is received, most likely within 24 hours.
8. During quiet periods, where fewer children are referred into the NTS, EM SMP may not be able to guarantee a timeframe for receiving an advanced referral from the Home Office where one is required, and as such we cannot guarantee at the point the vacancy is ready to accept a child that a transfer can be completed within the three working day period. Where this is the case, at the point EM SMP are notified of the date that a vacancy will become available we will arrange a call with your contact to discuss the situation, provided you and the LA are happy to proceed, we can do so on the understanding that providers can continue to seek other ways to fill a vacancy and will notify EM SMP at the earliest opportunity if the vacancy is filled so that the LA and Home Office can be informed.
9. Where a request for an out of Rota referral from the Home Office is required, this can only be raised once the vacancy is ready to accept a child. Therefore, at the point of the vacancy becoming available to accept a child the IFA provider will be required to hold the vacancy, free of charge, for a period of three working days to enable a child to be matched to the vacancy and transferred into placement.
10. Where referrals are requested from the Home Office a matching decision will be required within 24 hours and ideally within the same working day as the referral being received.
11. It may be the case that a referral is found to be inappropriate during the matching process, and the three working day window gives an opportunity for an appropriate match to be found, but decisions about whether a child is appropriate for a vacancy should be made as soon as possible, since this introduces delay for the child.
12. If a child cannot be matched in this time the Local Authority and IFA provider can come to an agreement to extend the hold period if there is a child available to transfer, in the event that a child is not available to transfer, as a result of failed matching following a Home Office transfer offer, and it is not possible to agree an extension of the matching period then the vacancy offer will be turned down.
13. Upon completion of the matching process the local authority will notify the EM SMP of the outcome who will then make arrangements with the Home Office to transfer the child into placement.
14. Once the child is in placement the local authority will notify the EM SMP that the placement has officially commenced.
15. Through the pilot a maximum of two vacancies will be utilised per Local Authority area, in the event that a provider offers a vacancy where the carer resides in an area which has already accepted two vacancies, EM SMP will offer the vacancy to the Local Authority concerned outside of the formal pilot, if that authority does not wish to accept the vacancy, then the offer will be refused.

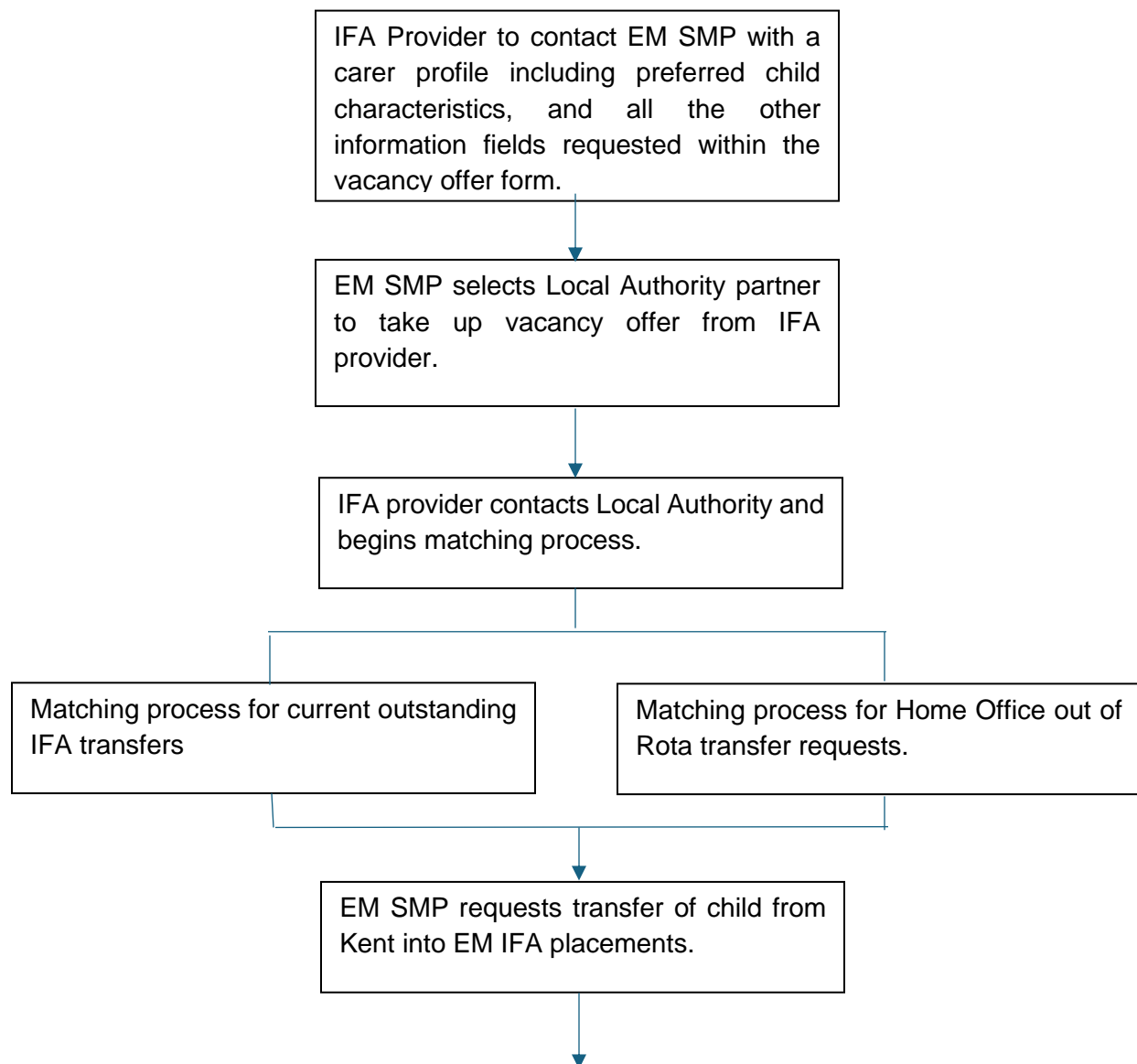
Risks

As a voluntary pilot the model has been designed to minimise risks to IFA providers as far as possible, but there are still a couple of areas of risk associated with this pilot which are highlighted below:

- While an accelerated allocation process for vacancy offers has been put in place, there is still the risk due to resourcing, that vacancy offers where there are fewer than 2 weeks between EM SMP being notified and the vacancy being able to accept a child will be refused.
- Due to the short turnaround time required for out of Rota requests to the Home Office, child profiles will be refused if matching cannot be concluded within 24 hours by EM SMP unless instructed otherwise by Local Authorities to reduce the risk of Local Authorities being required to accommodate a child even if the matching process is unsuccessful. The risk to IFA providers as a result of the Home Office timescales is that multiple matches may be attempted in the three-day matching period thus impacting on resource and vacancy offers may be refused at this stage if a matching process cannot successfully be concluded.

Based on the design of the pilot the likelihood of these risks occurring is low, but IFA providers should be aware of these risks when participating.

High-Level Process Map



End

[IFA NTS Pilot Process Map Final.pdf](#)