

ADOPTION IN THE UK

Adoption is a way of providing a permanent home to children who cannot be brought up by their biological parents. The average age of children adopted in the UK today is 3-4 years, but many are older children, sibling groups or children with special needs. These children have all experienced some form of loss by being taken into care. Many may have experienced neglect or abuse. These early experiences can provide challenges to adoptive parents, but providing a loving, caring and stable home to an adopted child or children can be immensely rewarding.

Although we refer to 'couples' adopting, more and more single people and same sex couples are adopting every year. Therefore, the information is applicable to anyone considering adoption.

We also refer to adopting through an agency; this can be Local Authority (LA) or a charitable adoption agency.

Coram offer a concurrent fostering scheme, with babies under two years (see our useful links for details)

THINKING ABOUT ADOPTION

Thinking of adoption whilst still going through assisted conception treatment can seem, to many, like a simple solution - an alternative way to achieve the dream of family life. To others it can be a fall back plan should they be unsuccessful and for some, adoption is the only way forward.

However, you get to the decision that adoption is right for you, it is important to spend time learning more about adoption and the impact it will have on all of your lives.

MOVING ON TO ADOPTION

Having decided to end treatment, or where pursuing treatment is not an option, you will still be encouraged to take some time to readjust, to have time to accept unfulfilled dreams. This can be incredibly frustrating! You are 100% committed to providing a loving family home to a child or children in need; yet have been told by your local adoption agency or LA adoption department to go away and wait possibly six months to a year prior to applying.

It may be helpful to use this time to have a holiday, do some reading on adoption issues, and speak to other adopters in different stages of the process. You may want to attend local adoption information evenings; ask friends and family if you can spend

time with their children. Try to see this as a time to be proactive and find out as much as you can before moving on to the adoption process.

It is important to take time to really consider whether adoption is the right way forward for you. Listen to yourselves; if you don't feel ready then talk together or with close friends about your thoughts and feelings. This is good practice, not only for the adoption home study, but also for coping better when you have children placed with you.

THE ADOPTION PROCESS

To adopt a child in the UK, you will need to be approved by an adoption agency. Adoption UK have some excellent resources on their website, include 'Find an Agency' to help in this process.

Approved adopter/s are added to the Adoption Register ideally within three months of being approved at panel (www.adoptionregister.org.uk) Once accepted the agency will then try to match you with children waiting to be adopted. The National Adoption Register and Children who Wait are both tools used by agencies to help match prospective adoptive parents with children.

This process can be lengthy, and you will be assigned a social worker who will liaise with children's social workers to try to find suitable matches. Factors which will be taken into account include the needs of the children and what care a prospective family can give them. There may not be any children in your local area which are thought to be a good match. Social workers will look at other areas in the UK to find the best match for you.

Social workers acting for children looking to be adopted, as well as those acting for prospective parents, can search the adoption register to try to find suitable matches. Once a suitable match has been found, your social worker will discuss with you whether you feel you can provide the right care and support for the child or children. You can withdraw from the process at any time. It is important to discuss with each other and the social workers if you have any concerns at this stage. If you decide to proceed, a panel will decide whether they can formally approve the match.

It is also important to have support available once you have been matched with a child, and before the actual placement. This can be a difficult as well as exciting time, and friends, family and the local community can all provide much needed support.

POST PLACEMENT SUPPORT

Both yours and your child's/children's social worker will visit regularly in the early stages of placement. If you feel additional support is needed then you have a right to ask for it. Many agencies run groups as well as providing individual support, both post placement and once the adoption has been finalized.

You can gain support from Adoption UK, *who help to make adoptions work, promoting loving and supportive relationships between children and their adoptive families. Adoption UK provides independent support, information and advice on good practice and, it offers a wealth of relevant experience from generations of adoptive families*

LEGALITIES

An adoption does not become legal until a court makes an adoption order. This transfers parental responsibility to the child's adoptive parents. Once this order is made, the birth parents no longer have any legal connection with the child.

If the adoption is contested by the birth parents the adoptive parents will be advised on seeking their own legal advice. Court costs involved are usually paid, though as in a small number of contested adoptions where the fees may be higher, the adopters may be requested to seek legal aid first. If you are in doubt, ask your social worker.

CONTACT WITH BIRTH FAMILY

It is becoming more and more common for some form of contact to be maintained between the birth family and adopted child/children. What is right for every child varies, and a contact plan will be made for every child taking into account individual needs. The most common form of contact is letterbox communication - usually a letter once or twice a year as agreed with your social worker.

TELLING

It is generally agreed that the earlier a child is aware they are adopted; the easier it is for them to grow up with that knowledge. There are now many age appropriate books and resources to help in telling your child/children that they are adopted.

Who to tell that your child is adopted remains up to you. Often some knowledge can be useful for teachers when working with different parts of the national curriculum, or if behavioural problems occur.

Your GP will have your child/children's notes transferred following placement. You can return to the child/children's agency at any time if further medical information is needed though there is no guarantee new information will be available.

[Government Information on Adoption](#)

Useful Links

[Adoption Match](#)

[Adoption UK](#)

[Coram Baaf](#)

[First4Adoption](#)

[Home for Good](#)

[PACT](#)

[We are Family Adoption](#)