

Adoption- What's that then?

A guide to Adoption and Adoption Support
for young people



What is adoption?

Adoption means being part of a new family when you can't live with the one you were born into. The people who adopt you become your legal parents and you live with them permanently.

Why are children adopted?

There are lots of reasons why children can't live at home. All families have their ups and downs. But some have real problems that they can't sort out.

Maybe your parents find it hard to look after you properly and keep you safe.

Sometimes that means adoption might be the best option for you. Remember, though, that your opinions and feelings will always be taken into account. You have a right to have your views listened to and acted upon if this is possible. After all, it's your future.

You will be involved in making decisions about it every step of the way.

If there is anything in this leaflet you don't understand or want to talk to someone about, ask an adult you trust, like a teacher or your social worker.



What's it like being adopted?

It can make you feel all sorts of emotions at first. Maybe happy, sad, relieved, confused, it's different for everyone, you're unique. But you're not alone. Hundreds of children and young people are adopted every year.

Gradually things settle down. It's worth bearing in mind though, that your new family will be trying to get used to you too. It won't be perfect all the time life just isn't like that for anyone. But everyone will do the best they can to help you settle.

I'm worried because I won't know anyone

You are moving on into a new life, with a new family. That may sound scary but it doesn't have to mean leaving behind the people and things that are important to you. There will be people around to support you through this time, like your Children's Guardian. They will listen to your worries and be able to reassure you. And they will help sort out any problems you may have.

One thing you can be sure of is that everyone will want the best for you and want to help you feel settled.



What are adopters like?

Families come in all shapes and sizes - there may be one parent or two, perhaps other children. They may live in the town or the country, in a big house or a small flat.

Whoever they are, they will have been checked out by social workers to make sure that they know how to look after children. They will all want to adopt someone like you and make them a permanent part of their family.

Will my real parents know I am OK?

When you belong to a new family, it doesn't mean that you forget the family you were born into. You may still see your birth mum or dad, brothers and sisters or other people who are important to you. If meeting up is not possible, you will be able to have contact through letters and cards, which will be arranged by the Adoption Team.

What is a social worker?

A social worker is someone who helps children and their families when they have serious problems. They also find new parents for children who need them.



Who can I talk to about adoption?

It is really important that you can talk about adoption to an adult you trust. And that you have all the help you need.

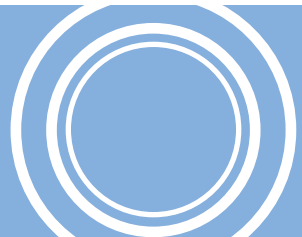
Everyone recognises this, so there are services especially for you:

You can talk to your social worker or Children's Guardian, who will make sure:

- ➔ you know what's going on and what it's going to mean for you in the future
- ➔ you have someone to talk to about what's happening
- ➔ you keep in touch with your mum and dad if you want and anyone else who's important to you

There are national and local support groups for you to talk to other people your age about what's going on.

Some adoptions mean that a birth parent and a step-parent adopt a child or young person who already lives with them. The step-parent then becomes a legal parent.



What if my mum and dad don't want me to be adopted?

Sometimes children's birth parents are against their child being adopted. If that happens, your Children's Guardian speaks to you, your parents and the people who want to adopt you. They may also talk to your teacher, doctor or social worker. Then they write a report to the court explaining what everyone wants and whether they think adoption is right for you.

Your family has to go to the family court to find out whether the adoption will happen. You may be able to speak to the judge too. The adoption agency has to show the court that you can't safely return home and that adoption is the best plan for you. Then the court makes a placement order so you can go and live with your new family.

If everyone else thinks adoption is the best plan and the judge agrees the adoption still goes ahead.

What is a Children's Guardian?

A Children's Guardian makes sure you understand what's going on and finds out your feelings about it. They make sure the court knows what you think about adoption and what you would like to happen. You can trust them and talk to them.



What if I do not want to be adopted?

You should make your feelings known to either your Children's Guardian or your social worker. The Children's Guardian or social worker will listen carefully to your reasons and explain how you feel to the judge.

The judge may not always make the decision you want. But they will try to decide what is in your best long term interests. If they agree that you should not be adopted, they will not make a placement order.

What happens next?

1. Your social worker and your Children's Guardian listen carefully to your views and feelings about being adopted.
2. Then they write a report with everyone's views about it.
3. The adoption panel considers all the details and advises on whether adoption would be the best thing for you.
4. An adoption plan is made, with a timetable of what needs to be done by everyone to make the adoption happen.



5. If your parents don't agree that you should be adopted the court makes a placement order so that the adoption agency can go ahead.
6. The adoption agency knows people who want to adopt, so they talk to you and carefully match you with the right family for you where you will be happiest and feel settled and safe.
7. You meet the adoptive family and get to know each other.
8. Then you go and live with them in their home and get to know them well.
9. If you are happy and settled and want to stay with your new family for good, the adoption agency asks for an adoption hearing in front of a special family court.
10. The judge listens to everyone involved and makes a decision. If they think adoption is best for you they make an adoption order. That means your adoptive parents become yours by law and they will be your family for the rest of your life.



What happens at the court?

A judge or magistrate decides what happens in a family court. They may ask a Children's Guardian to talk to you about how you feel and what you want to happen. If you have a social worker the judge will also ask them what they think.

Once they have listened to what everyone has to say (that's called an 'adoption hearing'), the judge makes a decision on what they think is best for you. Remember they will always put your interests first.

What is family court like?

Family courts are where the judge or magistrates help sort out family problems. It's not to do with people breaking the law. Your safety and welfare are most important to them.

Because these decisions are so important, it can take the court a long time for it to make a final decision about who should look after a young person. But they will let you know as soon as they can.



Adoption Support

Sometimes even after the Judge has made the adoption order, you may need our help. This is called Adoption support. You can ask for adoption support by talking to your parents or a teacher or someone else and they or you can ring the numbers at the end of this booklet.

Lots of children may feel confused about things to do with adoption.

You may have questions about whether you should tell people, or questions about how you are feeling such as 'why am I feeling angry or sad?'

You may have questions about how your birth family are and if you can see or hear from them.

Talking about adoption

Children who are placed with their adoptive families will have a life story book, which helps them to understand about their life before they were adopted. Sometimes you may have questions, which you can ask your parents about or you may like us to help you talk to your parents.

It is ok to talk to your parents about any questions you may have, it is also ok to feel sad or to miss people and it is ok to talk about this. Sometimes a social worker or therapist can help you make sense of how you are feeling. They can also help your family understand how you are feeling.



Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions or worries about adoption or what's going to happen, talk to an adult you trust, like your Children's Guardian. They will understand.

Everyone wants to help you and make sure you live with a family who loves and cares for you. You will be part of that family for the rest of your life.

Important phone numbers and addresses

My Social Worker:

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Post Adoption Service,
Swann House, Boothen Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 4SY
Tel: 01782 235020

Childline 0800 1111

Childline for looked after children 0800 88 4444

Director of Children and Young People's Services
Stoke-on-Trent City Council Civic Centre
01782 234567

Children's Social Care Complaints
Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1HH
01782 232061



TALK Adoption - tel: 0808 8081234

A free national helpline for young people who want to talk about adoption

NORCAP

(National Organisation for the Counselling of Adoptees & Parents)
112 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1LU
Tel: 01865 875000 Email: enquiries@norcap.org

Children's Commissioner for England

Al Aynsley-Green

Email: support@childrenscommissioner.org

OFSTED

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 08456 404040 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Rights Director Dr Roger Morgan

Ofsted, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE
Freephone: 0800 528 0731
Website: www.rights4me.gov.uk

NYAS - National Youth Advocacy Service

Freephone 0800 616 101
Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm Saturday 10am to 4pm
Email: help@nyas.net Website: www.nyas.net
Write to FREEPOST NYAS



**Stoke-on-Trent City Council Post
Adoption Service**

Swann House
Boothem Road
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 4SY
Tel: 01782 235020
stoke.gov.uk/adoption

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