

Children's guide to adoption



**Adoption
Central
England**

How to use this guide

The Children's Guide to Adoption is designed to be used in a number of ways so that it can be relevant for children of different ages and different levels of understanding.

You can read this with your Foster Carer or Social Worker, or share it with people who are special to you.



What can I find in this book?

This booklet is to help you understand what adoption is all about and to answer some of the questions you may have. You can read this with your Foster Carers or your Social Worker and ask them about anything you don't understand, or tell them about how you feel.



What is adoption?

We were all babies once and we all have a family, or a person that we were born to. We call this our 'birth family' and this might include mum, dad, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins.

Sometimes the families that children are born into cannot look after them. Some parents find it difficult to look after children properly and give them a safe home.

Some birth families might understand that they can't look after their child properly and

agree that it would be better for their child not to live with them. Some birth families don't want their children to stop living with them even though they can't look after them properly or keep them safe.

A Social Worker will then go to see the Judge who will decide whether the child can still live with their birth family.



What is a Social Worker?



A Social Worker is someone who helps people when they have problems.

Sometimes they have to help families if they are worried about a child or think that a family needs help to keep a child safe. They may find a foster family for a child to live with, just like the family you are living with now, until they decide the best plan for a child.

What is a Judge and what happens at court?

He or she is the person who makes decisions. Courts can also help to try and solve problems, within the families. They can make decisions about children to make sure that they are looked after and safe.

One of the decisions made in a court, by a Judge, is whether or not you should live with your birth family. The court process should usually take no more than 26 weeks. Sometimes the Judge will need more information before he/she can make a decision about what should happen, but your Social Worker will tell you if it is going to take longer in court.

If it is decided that you cannot live with your birth family, it is sometimes agreed that a child should have a chance to belong to a new family - and this is what adoption is. Adoption means that you will go to live with a family that will look after you and who you will belong to. They will become your parents and any children in the family will become your brother or your sister.

This doesn't mean that you have to forget about your birth family. Sometimes it is okay for children to keep in touch with some members of their birth family, if it is safe, and if that's what the children want.



This might mean that they can see them now and then, or it might mean that they can send letters.

Sometimes the grown-ups will make the decision that it is better for you not to stay in touch with your birth family. They will talk to you about this and explain the reasons.

Even if it is decided that you should not stay in touch with your birth family, you can always ask questions about them.

Birth parents can still love their child/ children even if they can't look after them properly or keep them safe.



What about my brothers and sisters?

Sometimes your brothers and sisters may be in foster care with you.

Although the Social Workers try very hard to keep brothers and sisters together, this is not always possible. If you have to go to a different foster family than your brothers or sisters, your Social Worker will try to keep you in touch with one another, though sometimes this is not always possible.



Where do adopters come from?

There are some families who would like to have a child to come to live with them and become part of their family.

Some of these families might not have had any children born to them; some may have children; some may have grown up children; some may have already adopted a child.

If they are going to have a child come to live with them, a lot of time is spent by Social Workers getting to know them and they have to show that they can look after children properly and keep them safe.

Your Social Worker and an Adoption Social Worker will try to find the right family for you. Your Social Workers will talk to you about how they are looking for a family for you. You can talk to them about what is important to you about a new family.

When they think that they have found the right family for you, and a group of people called a panel also agree with your Social Workers, your Social Workers will tell you all about your new family and may show you some pictures or a DVD.

They will then arrange for the family to come and visit you so you can start to get to know them and they can start to get to know you. You will have the chance to spend some time with them, perhaps having some days out and doing things together, so that you can get to know them more and more.



When can I live with my new family?

Your Social Worker will visit you during introductions, to see how you are getting on and how you feel about what's happening. When you and everyone else feel that you know each other well enough, and are happy to take the next step, you will go and live with your new family. You will have already said goodbye to people who are important to you.

On the day that you move your Foster Carer and your Social Worker will be there to help you. If you feel unhappy you should talk to your Social Worker, Foster Carer, Teacher or someone special to you. Sometimes children can feel a bit confused or muddled with all that is going on and talking to someone can make them feel better. It is important that you try and say, or draw, what you feel.



Once I go and live with my new family am I adopted?

No. Not straight away. Your Social Worker will visit you in your new family, talk to you about how you are settling in and see if you have any worries. They also check to see if your new parents are doing their parent jobs well. When you have lived with your new family for a while, and everyone feels that it is right to take the next step, your new parents will ask a court if they can adopt you.

A Judge at the court will set a date when you, your new family and your Social Worker can go and meet him or her to talk about how things have been going.

If everything seems fine, the Judge will make something called an Adoption Order and that is when you legally (by law) become a part of your new family.

This means that you belong to them and they belong to you, but it still doesn't mean that you have to forget about your birth family or that they have to forget about you. You can ask questions and talk about them with your new family.



Will I still go to school?

It really depends on how far away from school your new family lives.

You may have to change schools but everyone will try to help you and make sure that you have settled in well.



Can I still see my friends?



Again, it depends on where you live.

But they will do all they can to help you to stay in touch with your friends and to help you make new ones.


What if I don't feel happy about what is happening?

Sometimes children, when they are first told about being adopted, can feel a bit sad or a bit worried.

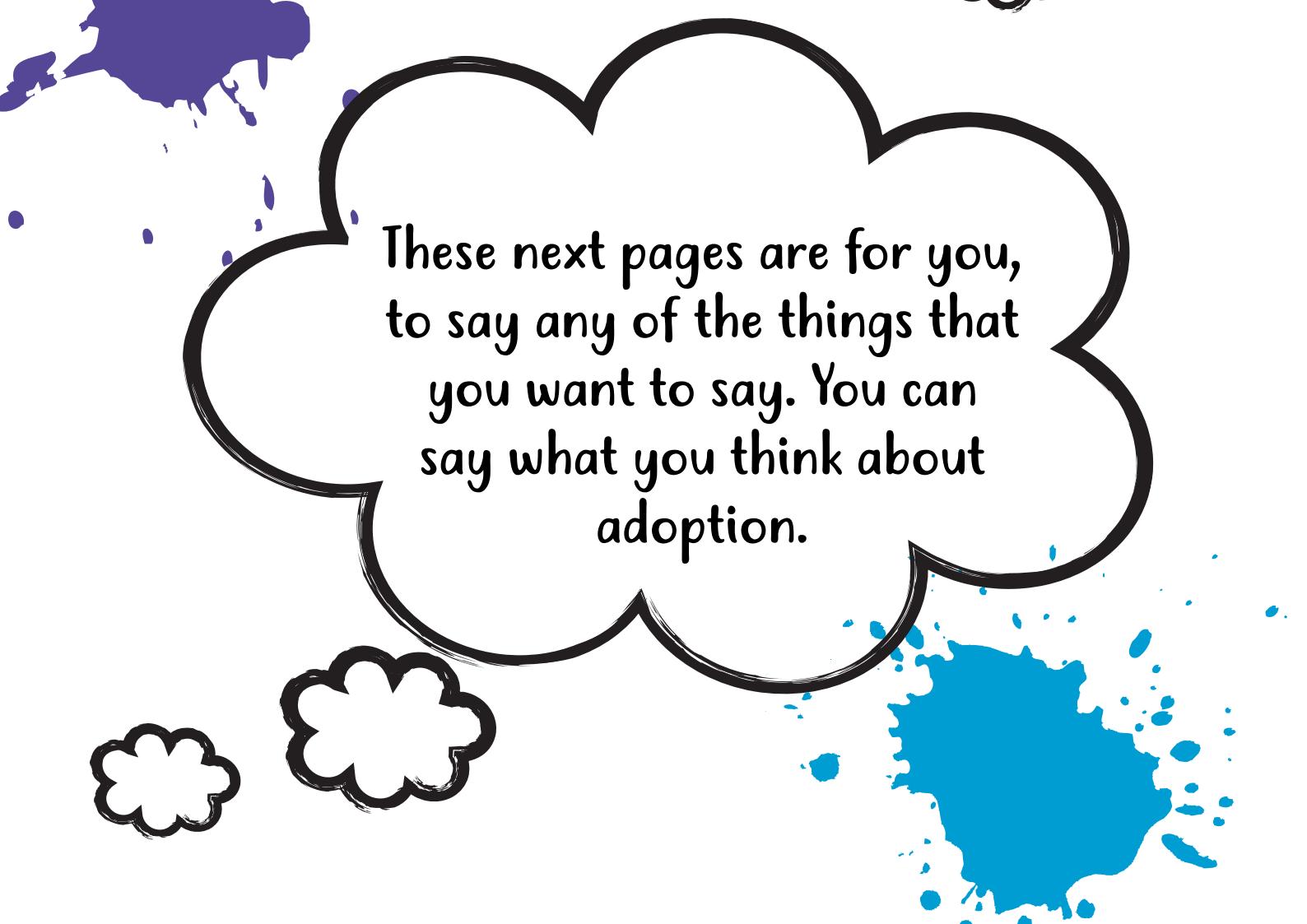
You might feel like that; you might feel quite happy and settled with your foster carers and don't want to move or you might feel you are losing your birth family.

If you feel unhappy you should, in the first place, talk to your Social Worker. You can also talk to your Foster Carers. If you feel unhappy after you have moved to your new family you might feel able to talk to them about how you feel.





My thoughts on
what's happening



These next pages are for you,
to say any of the things that
you want to say. You can
say what you think about
adoption.



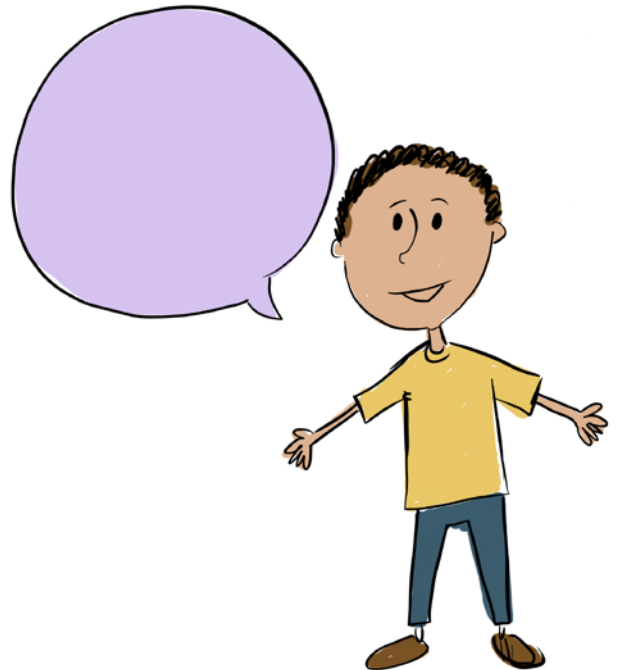
You can write any questions that you have; draw pictures and say the things that you would and wouldn't like in your new family. You can say the things that you would like your new family to know about you.



This is what I think about adoption



Here are some of my questions



These are the people I would like to stay in touch with



About me

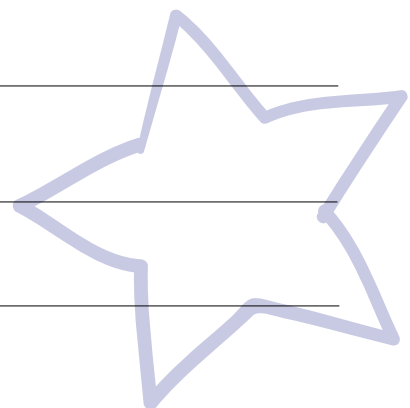


I like to go to bed with my door: **closed** **open**

I like to sleep with my light: **on** **off**

Here are some things
that I like to do





These are some things
I like to eat

These are foods that I
don't like

Other things that I want my
new family to know

Names and contact details of people I can talk to

My Social Worker:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

If you are not happy about something your Social Worker has said or done you can contact their manager who is:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

The Social Worker at Adoption Central England is:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

If you are not happy about something the Social Worker at Adoption Central England has said or done you can contact their manager who is:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:



Useful information

The following organisations are independent. They will help to make sure that your views are heard, if you don't think that you are being listened to.

Childline

ChildLine will listen to you about anything and particularly help children who are being hurt.

Freephone: 0800 1111
childline.org.uk

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Telephone: 02077 130089
childrenslegalcentre.com



Children - be heard and find out about your rights

The Children's Commissioner for England listens to what children and young people have to say about how they are looked after. The team are responsible for the rights of all children and young people until they are 18 years old, or 25 years if they have been in care, are care leavers or have a disability

Telephone number: 08005 280731

childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

childlawadvice.org.uk

lawstuff.org.uk



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