

A child's guide to adoption

adoption
west



You can contact Adoption West on 03303 550 333 or at info@adoptionwest.co.uk or via our webpage www.adoptionwest.co.uk

Guidance for Social Workers

This Children's Guide to Adoption is designed to be flexible so that it can be used in different ways as appropriate for children of different ages and different levels of understanding.

- It is purposely loose leaf with no page numbers. Social workers and/or foster carers can choose the sections relevant to different children dependent on their age and also their individual circumstances. These can be put together in a folder and added to as a child grows or circumstances change. For example, younger children may not need a particular section until it becomes relevant to them
- Some sections can be photocopied for more extensive use if plans change, for example the timetable for children or the questions they want to ask
- For young children parts will have to be read to them and the emphasis may be on those parts of the guide that provide the opportunity for them to be involved e.g. through drawing. An acknowledgement of their feelings may be more important than their understanding of the concept of adoption. Older children may be happy to go through this by themselves
- Makaton or signing may be needed for children with specific disabilities. The guide can be read to children with a visual impairment or transcribed into Braille. It can also be translated into other languages
- Where there is uncertainty about a child's level of understanding, this guide may have to be used in conjunction with other resources to enable the expression of feelings and emotions
- The Adoption Team maybe able to advise on other useful tools to assist ascertaining children's wishes and feelings and further resources available

This booklet will help you understand what adoption is all about and 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 that you don't understand or tell them about how you feel.

What does adoption mean?

Adoption means you belong to and grow up in a new family when you cannot live with the family you were born into. Adoption means that you will become part of a new family forever, where you will be safe, loved and cared for. They will become your parents and any children they have will become your brothers and sisters.

Lots of children are adopted. Some are adopted as babies and some when they are older.

Sometimes brothers and sisters are adopted together and sometimes they need different families.

Why are children adopted?

All children are born into a family called the birth family. Birth families can have mummies, daddies, sisters and brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

There are a lot of different reasons why some children can't live with their birth family.

Sometimes parents find it difficult to look after children and to keep them safe. It is very important that children are looked after properly and do not get hurt.

If you can't live with your birth family then we will look for another family for you – one who will keep you safe and look after you until you are all grown up. This will be your adoptive family.



The people involved in your adoption

What is a Social Worker?

A Social Worker is someone who helps children and their families when they have serious problems. A social worker is there to make sure that children are safe in their birth families. If they are not safe, then a social worker will find the children a safe home to live in with foster carers or adopters.

What is an I.R.O.?

An IRO means Independent Reviewing Officer. IROs are people who make sure that your review meetings are run properly, they make sure that your views are listened to, and that everything being done is the best thing for you.

What is a Foster Carer?

A Foster Carer looks after you while the social worker and the judge decide where the best place is for you to live and stay safe until you are all grown up.

What is a Judge?

Your social worker will go to a court to talk to a judge if they are worried about how you are being looked after. A judge is a very wise person who will decide where the best place is for you to live.

What is a Children's Guardian?

A Children's Guardian is a person who makes sure that the judge knows how you are feeling and what you think about adoption.



What about my brothers and sisters?

If you have brothers and sisters it may be that they came to live with foster carers with you.

Although the social workers try very hard to keep brothers and sisters together that is not always possible. If you had to go to a different foster family than your brothers or sisters your social worker will have tried to keep you in touch with one another.

If you cannot go to the same new family the social worker will try to make sure that you can stay in touch with one another, though again, that is not always possible.



Families come in many shapes and sizes.

There are lots of different kinds of families who are waiting to adopt children. Some families have one parent and some have two. Some have two mummies or two daddies. Some families might already have children and want another child, like you, to join their family.

Before the family can adopt you your social worker will make sure that they are just the right family to love and care for you, and to keep you safe.

Your social worker will speak to you and the other important people in your life to find out what sort of family will be best for you.

Your social worker will always listen to you. What you say is important.

When you go to live with your new family there will be lots of changes and it can take some getting used to

- You will be living in a new house.
- You will probably have to move to a new area and start a new school.
- If there are any other children in your new family they become your brothers and sisters.
- You might even have some new grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins!
- After you've been adopted you get to have a new surname.



Where do adopters come from?

There are some families who would like to have a child to live with them and belong to them. 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 adopted before. Before they can have a child to live with them, a lot of time is spent by social workers getting to know them and making sure that they can look after children properly and keep them safe.

Social workers will try to find the right family for you. Your social worker will talk to you about how they are looking for a family and you can talk to them about what is important for you about a family. When they think that they have found the right family for you, your social worker will tell you all about them and maybe show you some pictures. 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.

Your social worker will visit you and 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 enough and are happy to take the next step, you will go and live with them. If you don't feel happy about the new family, or you feel confused or worried, you should tell your social worker or your foster carer. Sometimes children feel a bit muddled with all that is going on and talking to someone makes you feel better. It is important that you try and say what you feel.



Your birth mummy or daddy couldn't keep you safe so you're being looked after by foster carers

You cannot go back to your birth family

Your social worker will talk to you about what has happened and about finding a new family to look after you forever

Your social worker will go to the court to see a judge who has to decide if adoption is right for you

If it is, your social worker will look for just the right forever family for you to live with until you are grown-up

When your social worker thinks they have found the right family for you, they will go to see an adoption panel who make sure it is the right one for you

Before you meet your new family your social worker and foster carer will tell you all about them and show you photographs

You will spend some time getting to know your adoptive family before you move in with them

After you have moved in, your social worker will still visit you until you feel settled

Your adoption journey

When you and your family are ready you will all go to the court to see the judge for your Adoption Order.

An Adoption Order is very special because it means that you are part of your new family forever.

With your worker, you can complete the plan below to show when each stage will take place for you. (Depending on the age of the child, it may be easier to reference certain dates in the year e.g. *you may have your birthday, Christmas and summer with you foster carer before your new family is found.*)

Description of event

Dates/Time Taken

's

adoption journey

Adoption Order

What will happen to my birth family if I am adopted?

After you are adopted, you won't forget your birth family and they won't forget you.

If it was not possible for you to carry on living with your brothers or sisters, the social workers will try to make sure you stay in touch with each other, maybe by visits or maybe by letters.

Although you may not see your birth family, your new family may write to them and get news from them to share with you.

You can ask your new family or your social worker questions about your birth family. They want to know how you are feeling and they will try to answer any questions that you have.

Your social worker will give you a special book with photographs all about you, your new family, your birth family and your fosters carers. This is called your life story book.



Will I still go to the same school?

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

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

Can I still see my friends?

Again, it depends on where your new family lives.

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



Your chance to give your views

These are things that I would like in my new family

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

Here are some of my questions



**This is what I think about
adoption**



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

When you are getting adopted there are lots of changes to get used to and you might feel a bit sad or worried or scared. You might have feelings that you don't understand. It will help if you talk to someone about how you are feeling.

You can talk to your social worker or your foster carers or your IRO or your Children's Guardian. They will be able to help you.

Things that we promise to you...

- * To make sure that you grow up in a safe and loving family.
- * Help you to understand about adoption.
- * Listen to what you tell us about what you want and how you feel.
- * Do our best to make sure you do not wait too long for a new family.
- * Do our best to make sure that you can live with your brothers or sisters if it is best for you, and if not, for you to keep in touch with them.
- * Remember that your birth family and religion are important.
- * Help you settle into your new family.
- * Make sure that you and your adoptive family have the help and support that you need.



People who can help

Adoption West Service
Director: Alison Lewis

01225 716510
Alison.lewis@adoptionwest.co.uk

The Adoption West Complaints Service

01454 863853 (To be updated Sept 18)
feedback@adoptionwest.co.uk

Adoption West, Old County Hall,
Bythesea Rd, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

My Social Worker

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
E-mail: _____

My Social Worker in the Adoption Team:

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
E-mail: _____

IF you want to contact the IRO in your area, they are:

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
E-mail: _____
Address: _____



People who can help

The following organisations are independent, which means they do not work for the Local Authority or Agency that is making the decisions for you. They will help make sure that your views are heard, if you don't think your views are being listened to by your social worker.

Coram's Children's Legal Centre

Telephone: 020 7713 0089

Address : 1 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ

Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Coram Children's Legal Centre, part of the Coram group of charities, promotes and protects the rights of children in the UK and internationally in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Telephone: 0808 808 1001

Website: www.nyas.net

The NYAS advocacy service gives children and young people information about their rights. They can help you make complaints if you are not happy and they can also help you to have a voice and be heard when decisions are made about you.

Office of the Children's Commissioner

Telephone: 0800 528 0731

Email: advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Address: The Office of the Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

The Children's Commissioner's role is to protect the rights of all children in England, and to make sure that children and young people have a say and are listened to when adults are making big decisions about things that affect them.

ChildLine

Freephone: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.co.uk

ChildLine counsellors are trained staff and volunteers who all have experience of listening and talking to children and young people about their worries or problems.

A useful website about adoption and your rights: www.cafcass.gov.uk

Ofsted can be contacted via email at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or by telephone on 0300 123 1231