



adopters
for adoption

Adoption Overview



Introduction

Adoption is a lifelong commitment and, while bringing many challenges, it is hugely rewarding. If you believe you are able to help a child waiting for a new family, Adopters for Adoption will help you decide whether adoption is for you. Please take the time to find our further information on our website, including Frequently Asked Questions, Statement of Purpose and a Reading and Resources List. If you would like to ask any questions or request a Registration of Interest form, please contact Adopters for Adoption on 01527 573678 or email contactus@adoptersforadoption.com.



Why Adopters for Adoption?

What is the difference between a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) and a Local Authority (LA)?

Adopters for Adoption is a national Voluntary Adoption Agency not a Local Authority. The main difference between a local authority and voluntary adoption agency is that local authorities have a responsibility to recruit families for the specific children in their care who are waiting to be adopted. Voluntary Adoption Agencies recruit, train, assess and support a diverse range of adopters from across the UK. They then work in partnership with local authorities Nationally to widen the choice of families available to their children.

What can you expect from the team at Adopters for Adoption?

As a team we have lots of adoption experience, including those with personal experience. We make good use of the latest research and best practice guidance. We help and guide adopters from the outset of their journey to help achieve successful outcomes for children and their adoptive families.



“ It’s crucial that you feel comfortable with your adoption agency and that you choose the agency which feels right for you. ”

Head of Service,
Adopters for Adoption

Overview of the Adoption Process

Applying to adopt

There are just three criteria that must be met in order to be considered for adoption:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Be living in the British Islands
- Do not have a conviction or cautioned for certain criminal offences (Please contact us for us any advice on this matter.)

At Adopters for Adoption, we believe that all adopted children deserve to have a spare bedroom of their own, therefore we would be unlikely to accept your application if you do not have a spare bedroom.

To apply, you will need to complete a Registration of Interest (ROI) form. When we receive your ROI form, we will decide whether or not we can accept your application and we will let you know within 5 working days. Your ROI form will be reviewed by a Team Manager, and they may contact you to ask for more information prior to making a decision. If for any reason we are unable to accept your application, the reasons for this will be discussed with you.

If we accept your application, you will then move in to Stage 1 of the assessment process.



where life
begins and
love never ends



Stage 1

Once you have been accepted on to the process you will receive our Stage 1 Pack for Prospective Adopters.

We will also start the process of allocating a social worker to undertake your Stage 1 assessment. Your social worker will then contact you to introduce themselves and arrange their first visit. Your social worker will visit you two or three times in Stage 1, to find out more about who you are, and to tell you more about the types of children that need an adoptive family. There will be a number of tasks for you to complete within Stage 1.

The focus of Stage 1 is on gathering factual information about you. As an agency that finds families for children, we have a legal duty to obtain checks and references to ascertain that there are no safeguarding concerns. The checks and references we will need to complete in Stage 1 are outlined on the next page. We aim to complete Stage 1 within two months, and therefore checks and reference requests are sent at the very beginning of the process, once we have accepted your Registration of Interest (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

Checks and References

- » A UK DBS Check – We ask that you have copies of your ID documents available for your first visit of your assessor. The cost of the DBS is covered by Adopters for Adoption.
- » Other Household Member Checks – Any other adult resident of your property will be required to undertake a DBS and Local Authority Checks. As an example: Adult children, other family members, lodgers.
- » Local Authority Checks – We will require your address history for the last 10 years to be checked.
- » Medical Examination with your GP – We require you to undertake a medical examination with your GP. The cost of these appointments vary across each Local Authority and is at the discretion of the GP, and will be payable by yourselves.
- » Employment Checks – We will send reference requests to your current employer and any previous employer where you worked with children or vulnerable adults. Any voluntary work with children or vulnerable adults you have undertaken will also require a reference to be obtained.
- » Previous Partner References – We will need to request references from any significant previous partners that you may have had, especially if children were involved in the relationship. We understand that this can be uncomfortable, but it is necessary. If you no longer have contact, we will ask you to make every effort to obtain contact information in order for a reference request to be sent. If for any reason requesting a reference would put you at risk from a previous partner, we would not make contact. This should be highlighted on the ROI form and would be discussed with you further in Stage 1.
- » Personal and Family References – We ask you to provide contact information for two personal and one family referee each. If you are a single applicant we ask for four personal and two family referees. Ideally, these are people that know you really well and can comment on you in relation to looking after children.
- » Overseas DBS Check – If you have lived or worked abroad for 12 months or more since you were the age of 18 you will be required to obtain an overseas DBS check. Any costs involved would be payable by yourselves.
- » School/Nursery Checks – If you have a child currently living with you, we will ask you to provide details of their school or nursery for a reference to be obtained regarding their education, well-being, and relationship with others.
- » SSAFA Checks – if you have ever been employed by the military/RAF/British Forces we will ask you to provide ID documentation and complete a separate application for a check to be obtained, ID documentation will also be required.
- Emotional Support and Mental Health services - if you have accessed any emotional support or mental health services since the age of 18, we will ask you to provide details in order for references to be obtained. For example: CBT, therapists, counsellors, fertility/miscarriage therapies, etc.

There may be other checks and references required, however these are decided on a case by case basis by your assessing social worker.



Preparation to Adopt Training Course

In Stage 1 you will be invited to attend a three day Preparation to Adopt training course, which will give you a greater insight into the needs of children that require an adoptive family, about children that have experienced abuse or neglect, and how therapeutic parenting can help.

These training dates are held virtually. If applying as a couple, you will both be required to attend together. If applying as a single applicant, you are welcome to invite someone to attend and support you.

Completion of Stage 1

At the end of Stage 1 your social worker will submit a report to the agency. A decision will be made as to whether you can proceed to Stage 2. If for any reason you are not able to proceed, the reasons for this will be explained to you.

If you are able to proceed, you will be sent a Stage 1 completion letter. You have an opportunity to decide if you wish to proceed, and if you wish to, you will need to sign and return this letter to begin Stage 2.

Taking a Break

If you feel that you need a break prior to starting Stage 2 of the process, you are able to take a break for up to six months without needing to restart the process again.

As checks and references need to be kept up to date, taking a break for longer than 6 months will result in having to start the process again.





Stage 2

You will be sent our Stage 2 Pack for Prospective Adopters which includes an in depth guide as to what to expect throughout Stage 2.

- » We will do our best to ensure that you have the same social worker throughout your entire assessment, however, if for any reason this isn't possible, we will inform you and find a replacement.
- » Your social worker will arrange between 5-7 visits with you in your home during Stage 2.
- » Stage 2 aims to be completed within four months and you and your social worker

will have a target date that you will be working towards.

- » This part of the process requires a lot of your time and attention, and your social worker is likely to set homework tasks for you to complete. It aims to draw out the strengths, skills and relevant experiences that you can bring to adoption.

We ask that you have nothing major going on at this time, such as house extensions, moving home and weddings. If you are unlikely to be fully available, we might suggest you consider taking a break before beginning Stage 2.

Areas of Exploration in the Stage 2 Assessment

- » Existing Children - If you have existing children, they will need to be fully involved in your assessment. Depending on their age, your assessor will ask to meet with them on their at least one occasion and will explore their thoughts and feelings with them.
- » Your own childhood - Your social worker will explore your childhood, your relationship with your parents, their parenting methods and how this has shaped you and has influenced your own parenting style.
- » Your Identity - Your own identity, sexuality, heritage and culture will be explored in order to ascertain how you could support a child placed with you, and to ensure that you can meet their cultural needs and identity.
- » If applying as a couple – Your social worker will explore how you support each other, and also look at the strengths and weaknesses in your relationship.
- » Support Network – A good support network is critical for adoption so your friends and family network will be explored and we will look into whether they can support you practically or emotionally, and the importance of a support network will be explained.
- » Your Learning – Your learning from the three day Preparation to Adopt training course will be explored and expanded on, as well as any additional training or research you have completed.
- » Your childcare experience – Your experience of looking after children, whether in the family, or in a voluntary setting will be evaluated, to demonstrate on your skills and parenting approach.
- » Your community – Your social worker will ask you to provide information about

your community and local, child-centred facilities.

Preparation to Adopt Training Course

In Stage 2 you will be invited to attend a two day Preparation to Adopt training course, which will give you a greater insight into the family finding, introductions and placement process.

These training dates are held in our Bromsgrove office. If you have to travel more than 50 miles each way we will pay for accommodation for you.

You will not be able to complete your assessment without having completed both Stage 1 and Stage 2 Preparation to Adopt training courses.

At the end of the assessment, your social worker will write a report called a Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) which will be shared with you so that you are able to add your views. The PAR is made up of two sections:

1. A summary of the information gathered during your Stage 2 assessment
2. Your social worker's recommendation about your suitability to adopt ready for the Adoption Panel.

Did you know

If you have adopted before, you are welcome to apply again, even if your previous adoption was not through Adopters for Adoption. Your assessment will be fast tracked, with Stage 1 and Stage 2 running concurrently. We will aim to complete your assessment within 4 months.

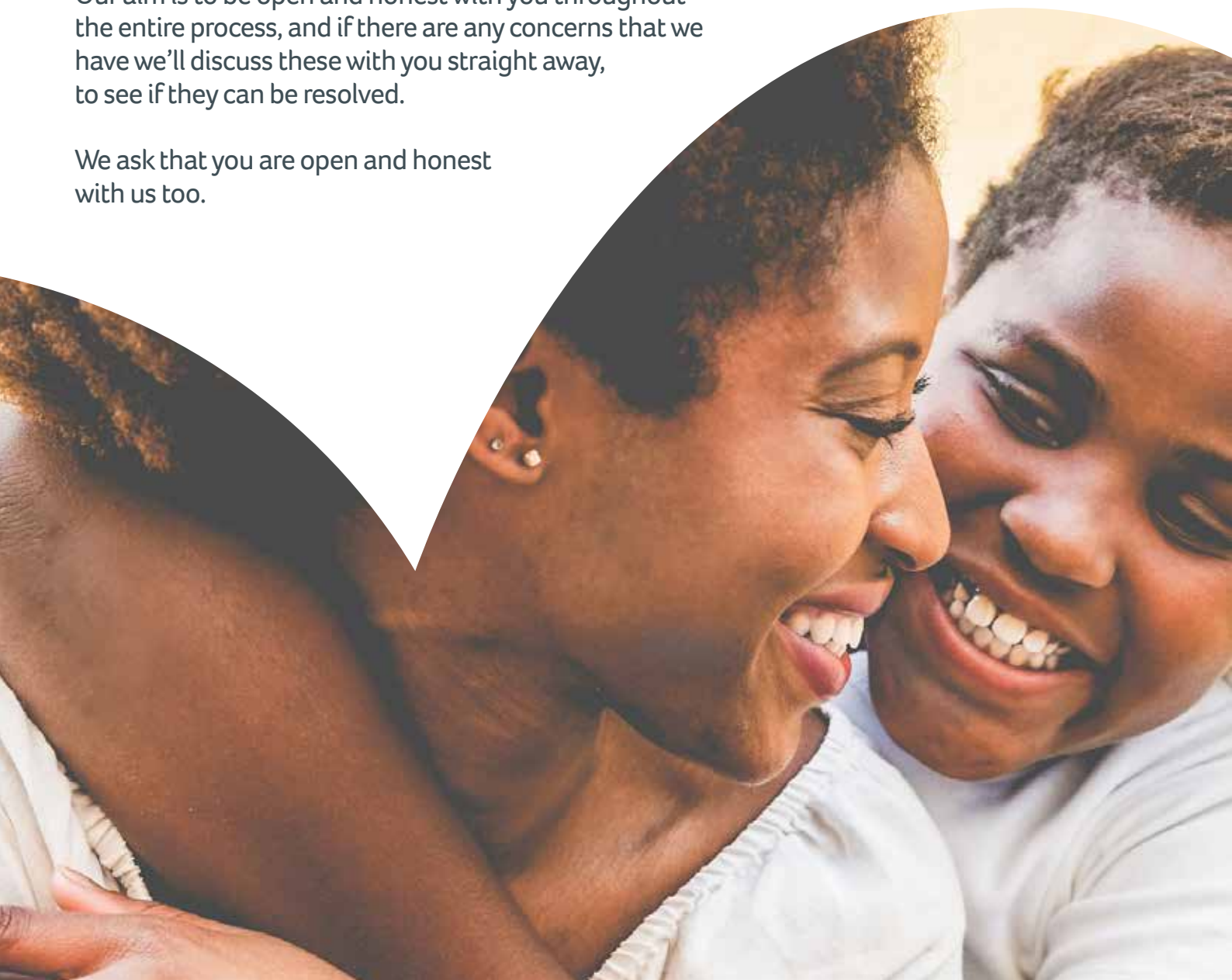
Adoption Panel

Your PAR will be presented to the Adopters for Adoption panel for consideration. The panel is made up of at least five people, each of whom are experienced in adoption, either personally or professionally. The role of the panel is to make a recommendation on whether you are suitable to adopt. They do not make the final decision. The final decision lies with the Agency Decision Maker and you will hear soon after panel about whether you have been approved to adopt.

The panel is held virtually and you and your social worker will be invited to attend. You will be invited to answer any questions our panel members have for you, it's also a great opportunity for the panel members to meet you in person after having read your PAR.

Our aim is to be open and honest with you throughout the entire process, and if there are any concerns that we have we'll discuss these with you straight away, to see if they can be resolved.

We ask that you are open and honest with us too.



Family Finding

If you are recommended to be approved, we arrange for you to speak to our dedicated Adoption Placements Manager, whose role it is to coordinate family finding. She will work with you and your social worker throughout the family finding and “matching” process. At Adopters for Adoption, we have excellent links with local authorities across the UK and have been successful in bringing children and families together.

Link Maker

You will be given access to Link Maker, which is a national database where local authorities will upload profiles of children, and we will ask you to create your profile as approved adopters. It allows you to search for children, and local authorities to view your profile. It is a tool used to share information and to find the right families for children. Our Family Finder will work with you to co-ordinate your search and help you to register your interest in any children that you are drawn to.

Information about children

If you register your interest in a particular child, and if the local authority social worker is interested in finding out more about you, your social worker will carry this forward. The child’s social worker will wish to visit you to find out more about you, which also gives you the opportunity to find more out about the child. If both you and the child’s social worker feel that you are the right “match” for the child, you may be invited to meet with:

- » The child’s foster carer - who can give you more information on the child’s personality, their likes and dislikes
- » The child’s local authority medical advisor - who will have undertaken a medical check on the child and will have access to their medical history.
- » Other professionals – this is judged on a case by case basis, but may include school teachers, nursery nurses or any other professional involved in the child’s life.

You and your social worker will work together to prepare an adoption support plan which reflects on the reasons for the match and anticipates any support you may need going forward.

Matching Panel

This Matching Panel is held at the child’s local authority so may mean you need to travel. Its main purpose is to explore how you will meet the needs of the child. Again, the Panel will make a recommendation and the final decision is then passed to their Agency Decision Maker.

Introductions and Placement

If the match is approved, you then begin introductions. Introductions is where you will finally get to meet the child in person, and the aim of introductions is to help transition the child from their foster carer to you. This usually takes place over 7 to 14 days and involves you visiting the child in the foster carer’s home and gradually taking on more of the care giving responsibilities for the child. In the later stages of introductions, the child will usually visit your home and begin to settle with you. You social worker and the child’s social worker will support you throughout introductions. Then when everyone agrees that they are ready the child is “placed for adoption”. The local authority who placed your child will still have legal responsibility for them until the adoption order is granted.

The Adoption Order

Your child's social worker and your social worker will continue to visit you for several months after placement to offer support, including attending regular review meetings to discuss how things are going. When your child has been living with you for 10 weeks, you can then apply to the court to adopt your child, and your social worker can help you with completing this application. The court will set a date for a final hearing to consider your adoption application. These court dates can sometimes take a few months to come through, but at the final hearing the court generally grants the Adoption Order. This means that you are given 100% of the parental responsibility for your child. You will receive an adoption certificate which shows your child's new surname and replaces their birth certificate. An adoption Order is irrevocable and a child has the same legal rights as any birth child (e.g. right of inheritance).



After the Adoption Order

You can contact us at any stage in the future should you need any support or advice. We offer bi-monthly support groups regionally before and after the adoption order and we also offer access to online training and various workshops which you are very welcome to attend. We encourage you to keep in touch, and we send regular newsletters to our adopters.

If you need extra help we can assist you to approach your Local Authority to assess your needs. The local authority that placed your child with you has responsibility to support you for the first three years that your child is with you. After three years that responsibility transfers to your own Local Authority. A Local Authority, once contacted, has a duty to assess your needs and may apply for funding for any therapeutic support that is be needed.



What's next?

Registration of Interest form

If you feel that adoption is the right pathway for you, then please contact us today to request a Registration of Interest form.

Or, if you would like someone from the team to talk through the process or to answer any questions you may have, please get in touch today and we will be more than happy to help.

Call 0800 5877 791 or email contactus@adoptersforadoption.com

We look forward to starting your adoption journey with you.

