adoption how it works

“Now things have fallen into place we’re like a real family. We wouldn’t change it for the world.”

adoption how it works

To become an adopter, you need preparation and we need to get to know you and what you have to offer. The process has to be thorough, both for the child's sake and for your own peace of mind.

What are the stages?

1. Information evening

When you have read this information pack, you need to come to one of the information meetings held monthly – dates in the letter with this pack. You will be able to talk to a social worker, foster carers and adopters about your interest in adoption and ask any questions. The social worker will explain our criteria of who can adopt and our current need for families for children. You will be given a registration form if it seems that you may meet the initial requirements.

2. Registration

You send in your completed registration form. Please contact the Recruitment line on 01274 434331 for advice or help filling in the form.

3. Home Visit

When we receive your registration form, we will arrange for an adoption social worker to visit you for a fuller conversation about your interest in adoption and whether it is the right time to proceed.

Following the home visit we will decide whether we are able to begin an application or if there are problems which prevent an application or which need more time to resolve. The decision will be based on our eligibility criteria. We will write to you to explain what we think and how to make representations if you disagree with us.

4. Starting an Application

If the home visit indicates that it is the right time for you to proceed, you will be invited to submit an application form. We will approach your local Social Services, Child Protection Register, Primary Care Trust (Health Authority), NSPCC, Probation and the Criminal Records Bureau to check if they have information which may be relevant to your application. We will also ask you for the names of 4 people who know you well and can give you personal references. Later in the assessment we may also want to meet other significant people in your life who can help with information about you as an individual or couple.

5. Medical

You will have a medical check up with your own doctor. If you have a health problem or disability, please talk to us about its impact on you. We will advise you about the information we need to consider your application; which may include reports from specialists.

6. Preparation

You will be asked to attend a series of preparation and training groups with other prospective adopters, to learn from social workers, adopters, foster carers, birth parents and adoptees about what adopting involves.

7. Preparing the Prospective Adopter's Report

A social worker from the Adoption and Fostering Unit will visit you at your home on a number of occasions to complete a report, and will talk to your children if you have any. The social worker will also visit your personal referees and will want to meet relatives from your extended family. If you have been in a previous relationship, particularly where you have cared for children, we will need to talk to you about making contact with your former partner and / or children.

8. Adoption Panel

Your report is presented to the Adoption Panel, which recommends whether you can be approved as an adopter. You are encouraged to attend the Panel and have the opportunity to answer any questions Panel members may have. The panel makes a recommendation to a senior manager who makes the final decision. If you are in disagreement about the decision you will be advised about the choices that are open to you.

9. Approval

Following approval, your details will be considered by social workers in the adoption team who are looking for families for children. The starting point is the needs of the child or children who need a family and social workers will look at what different families may have to offer.

10. Adoption

Once a suitable child has been identified, matched with you by the panel and placed with you for a certain period of time, the adoption will be legalised in either the County Court or the Magistrates Court.

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adoption staying in touch

“Our children need to know and understand their family roots.”

Adoption - Ordinary people doing something special

adoption staying in touch

There is clear evidence that children benefit from an open acceptance within their adoptive family of their full history. Children have a right to know they are adopted and to know about their past in order to become mature adults.

Knowing about the child's past and family:

It is essential that children have full information about their past and their birth family so that they can make sense of what has happened to them and why they have been adopted. We will give you all the information we have about your child's past and it is important you are understanding and honest in sharing this with them.

Contact with birth family:

Nowadays, it is usual for adopters to keep in touch through an adoption agency with the child's birth parents, relatives or other people who have been important to them. This helps the child, the birth parent and you to make sense of their lives and their past. It also helps to keep open a sharing of information about health, family details and changes.

Contact takes many different forms. Most usually this involves a letter, and sometimes a photograph of the child which are exchanged annually between the adopter and the birth parent through the Adoption and Fostering Unit. We call this our Letterbox Service; you will receive a leaflet about this at a later stage of the process. If you would like a copy now, please ask for one.

We always try to arrange a meeting between adopters and their child's birth parents or grand parents within the first year of adoption. As they are growing up it is very helpful for your child to know that you have met their birth parent, and can answer some of their questions, such as what their birth mother looks like. At some stage in their lives, like all children, adopted children will ask 'Who do I look like?'

An adopted child may have brothers and sisters who have been adopted in other families or being brought up by foster carers or relatives who are not their birth parents. The child you adopt may need contact – direct or indirect – with brothers and sisters and we will help you with contact arrangement.

Both birth parents of the child you adopt may go on to have other children. If we have this information we will inform you. If this happens and the child will also need to be adopted we will write to ask you about the health and development of your child which may be important to the youngest child. You would also be able to let us know if you wish to be considered as adopter(s) for this child.

Confidentiality:

We do not give any information which might identify adopters to birth families, for example, surnames and area where you live. With your consent, we can pass on to birth parents some brief information about yourselves that you would like them to know.

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adoption and you

“We have adopted our children because we feel we can give them security, love and care for their lives.”

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adoption and you

Adoption is a lifetime commitment to a child. When you adopt, you become the child's legal parent. They will usually take your surname and will become part of your family just as if they were born to you.

Why do people choose to adopt?

People choose to adopt for a variety of reasons, including a desire to share some of the good things they have with a child who is less fortunate. For some people adoption is their only option when they are unable to have children themselves. Others choose to adopt to make their family feel complete.

The children who need adoptive families

Adoption is no longer about babies. Many of the children who need you to be their family are aged two or over. In the Bradford district there are a variety of children from a mixture of backgrounds and ethnic groups. All have one thing in common: a longing for a place in a family.

About 2/3 of the children are White British. About 1/3 may have one or both parents who are of Asian (mainly Pakistani), African-Caribbean, African, Middle Eastern and European backgrounds. Some of the children may have one or both parents who are themselves of dual heritage.

Sometimes we are seeking adoptive homes for groups of brothers and sisters. Usually they need to stay together in a new family. Sometimes they may need to be adopted separately and stay in touch.

Some children will have particular needs. These may include uncertainty about their development, due to drug and alcohol use by parents or previous experiences of separation, and abuse. There are also some children with a physical or learning disability, and there is a particular shortage of people to adopt these children. All children who are adopted experience separation from their birth parents. Some have experienced neglect or abuse. These backgrounds may lead to difficulties making relationships and behavioural problems and therefore the children will need help and support throughout their childhood.

Who can adopt?

We welcome applications from people of all walks of life, whatever your ethnic group, religion, gender, sexuality or disability. You may be single, married, living with a partner, hetero-sexual, gay, divorced, widowed, in employment or unemployed.

As our children needing adoptive homes are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, we particularly welcome applications from people who are Asian, African Caribbean, of mixed heritage or in mixed heritage partnerships.

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To become an adoptive parent, you have to meet certain requirements that are set down in law and have certain characteristics and strengths in order to meet the needs of children who can not grow up in their birth families.

The Legal requirements:

1. You will be at least 21 years of age
2. You will not be able to be considered as a prospective adopter if you or another adult in your household has been convicted of a "specified offence". These are predominantly offences against children. If you have convictions or cautions for any offences please tell us and we will advise on whether they will prevent an application
3. You need to be domiciled or habitually resident in the British Isles. Please ask us for advice if you are in doubt about whether you meet the requirements. Where there is a joint application, only one of the applicants need to be domiciled in the British Isles or both should be habitually resident here.

The following sections describe what the Bradford Adoption Service is looking for.

About you

You will:

- Discuss with us your age and the age of the child you wish to adopt. If you are over 45, it is more likely that we will consider you for a child over the age of 4, but we can be flexible depending on our need for placements and that you are offering. If you are over 55, we would wish to talk to you about your health and ability to bring up a child to adulthood.
- Live within the Bradford district, or within a reasonable traveling distance outside this area. If you live outside of Bradford, we are more likely to be able to consider your application if you are offering a much needed resource.
- Discuss with us if you suffer from any physical or mental health condition.
- Have your own network of support from family and friends and show that you can make warm relationships.
- Tell us about your ethnicity or religion. We will discuss with you if your ethnicity or religion mean that it would be hard to place a child with you. We will advise you if it appears that other adoption agencies may be in a better position to take up your application.

Your circumstances

you will:

- Be single, married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner, including same sex relationships.
- Have ended any infertility investigations or treatment at least 6 months ago.
- Be a non-smoker if you wish to adopt a child under the age of 2.
- Not have any convictions or cautions for offences of violence within the last 8 years. This applies to any member of your household who is aged 18 years or more.
- Not be currently pursuing an application to adopt with any other agency.
- If you have an adopted or birth child, she or he will be over the age of 18 months at the time you apply, and if you already have an adopted child, at least twelve months has elapsed since the making of an adoption order.
- Be committed not to use corporal punishment.
- Not be the owner of any dangerous pets or dogs listed as dangerous under legislation.

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adoption and you

Becoming a parent – you will:

- Have adequate accommodation and an awareness of safety issues for a child. You do not have to own your own home in order to adopt.
- Ensure that you will be available to offer full-time care from placement until the child is sufficiently settled and secure. This will usually be a minimum of 6 months. There are now national guidelines on statutory adoption leave, for which some applicants may be eligible.
- Have some understanding and previous experience with children, and show you enjoy being with children.

The 'special' aspects of becoming an adoptive parent – you will:

- Be able to recognise that adoption is a life-long process and be willing to make use of support when it is needed.
- Have an attitude of openness and be committed to explaining to your child about their adoption.
- Help your child to keep in touch, either directly or indirectly, with significant people from the past.
- Be able to try to understand a child's behaviour and help them make sense of this.
- Have reached a stage in your life where you feel settled and are not experiencing a great amount of change or difficulty.

If you proceed with an application to adopt, we will explore these questions with you:

- Can you accept that a child may have had damaging experiences in the past, but not use these to explain all the child's difficult behaviour?
- Are you able to feel empathy, able to put yourself in someone else's shoes?
- Are you able to understand and manage your own emotional needs, and not expect an adopted child to meet these needs?
- Can you respond to situations in a 'thinking' way rather than just automatically?
- Can you show, if you are childless, that you have resolved your feelings about this sufficiently to accept an adopted child for who he or she is, rather than as a replacement birth child?
- Have you the potential to learn, adapt, successfully manage 'changes' like moving house or leaving home, and cope with loss such as bereavement?
- Can you reflect on your life experiences and recognise their influences on you?
- Can you recognise what you do well and areas you find difficult?

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adoption support and guidance

“We’ve always been well supported by the Adoption & Fostering Unit.”

Adoption - Ordinary people doing something special

adoption support and guidance

Throughout the process of adoption, we will provide support and guidance.
We will help you to understand the issues and anxieties that the adoption process can involve. Once you have successfully adopted a child, we are available through our Adoption Support Services to support and guide you if you encounter any problems.

Financial Support:

We recognise that an addition to your family can be costly. To help, we can offer a placement grant which can assist you in purchasing equipment and adjusting to a reduction in income and increase in expenditure.

Some children, because of their particular needs and circumstances, may qualify for a regular payment of Financial Support. Eligibility for these payments is based on the child's needs and the adopter's income and is reviewed annually.

All adopters are entitled to claim Child Benefit and Tax Credits.

Legal and Adoption fees:

There is no charge for the services we provide. However, at the very end of the process, when you apply to adopt legally, there is a court administration fee to pay. The fee in all courts is £140 (March 2007). As part of the legal process of adopting, you may need the advice and support of a solicitor. In certain circumstances we can offer help with costs.

Adoption Support:

At the time you are matched with a child or children, your social worker and the child or children's social worker will draw up a plan to make clear what type of help will be available to meet the needs of the child or children you are adopting.

We recognise that there may be times during your adopted child's childhood when you as a family, or the child, may need support. You may, for example, wish to seek advice about how to help your child understand about their background or how to cope with some particularly difficult behaviour. You are legally entitled to ask the adoption agency for an assessment of your support needs. We are able to offer a range of support services, run by ourselves or a partner agency such as support groups, training events, or assistance in accessing specialist educational or health services.

Bradford encourages prospective adopters to join Adoption UK. This is a national organisation run by adopters for adopters, which has a range of helpful information for adopters at all stages. An information leaflet is enclosed with this pack and you can visit their website at www.adoption.org.uk for more information.

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