



# Children's Guide to Adoption

**This book belongs to**

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**This booklet is designed to answer some of the questions you may have about adoption. It has been given to you by your social worker because a decision has been made that you should be cared for by an adoptive family.**

Walsall Council Adoption Service Statement of Purpose says;

*“The vision of Walsall Council Adoption Service mirrors what we say in our Children and Young People’s Plan 2011 to 2014. This vision ‘Better Together for Children’ means that everyone should work together to try and make safe decisions for children.*

*We want all children to be safe and happy living with their birth family. If this is not possible then we should try very hard to find a different permanent family for children to live with as soon as possible.”*



## So what does this mean for you?

It means that every professional who knows you, such as your teacher and head teacher, your health visitor or school nurse, your doctor and your social worker need to do all they can to keep you safe. To keep you safe, we all need to talk to each other about what is going well for you and what is not going so well for you.

Your social worker and their managers will listen very carefully to what you and your birth family want, we will explain to you and your birth family why some decisions need to be made and what we can do to support you. If it is not safe for you to stay with your birth family, we will explain to you the reasons why. If it is decided that you should be adopted, we will find an adoptive family who will keep you safe and help you to understand why the decision was made for you to be adopted.

If you have brothers or sisters and the decision is made they should also be adopted, we will do all we can to find you an adoptive family where you can stay together. However, sometimes no matter how hard we try we don't find adoptive families who can safely care for more than one child and sometimes brothers or sisters have to go to different adoptive families. If this happens, we will do all we can to help you stay in contact with your brothers or sisters.

We will also help you and your adoptive family to stay in contact with your birth family; this is so you can know they are safe and for them to know you are safe. We will also make sure you have information that will help explain why you were adopted.

We care about what happens to you and we will do all we can to support you in every way possible.

The rest of this booklet will explain to you what adoption means and what is likely to happen in the next couple of months.

## What is adoption?

ADOPTION means finding a new family for children who can't live with their birth family.

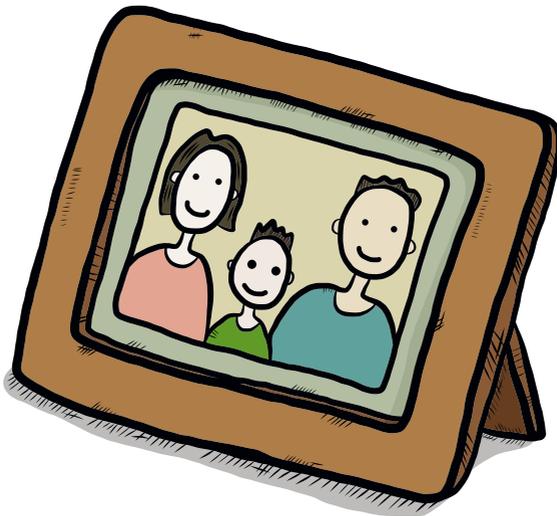
It is a legal process, which transfers the responsibilities of birth parents to adoptive parents. This makes the child a full permanent member of their new family.

## What about your birth family?

IT is understandable for a child to want to know about their birth family. Adoptive parents are encouraged to help children to remember their birth family and to understand the reasons why they can't live with them.

Often it is not possible for children to have direct contact with their birth family after they have been adopted but they may be able to continue to exchange letters and sometimes photographs so that the child knows how their birth family is getting on.

Sometimes children can still see members of their birth family, particularly brothers and sisters if they are not placed together in the same adoptive family. Your social worker will talk to you about what sort of contact is best for you.



## Who decides that a child is adopted?

IF you are being looked after by children's services your progress is reviewed regularly at meetings. You can attend these meetings if you wish and your social worker should talk to you about what will be discussed, so that you can share your thoughts and feelings.

One of the things, which will be discussed in these meetings, is whether it is possible for you to return home. If it is not possible for you to return home then other plans have to be made for your future. Some children will remain in foster care but for other children the decision is made that they need a new adoptive family. This will be a joint decision made by the people who know you best including your social worker, foster carers and sometimes your parents. Some birth parents agree for their children to be adopted and some do not agree. Your social worker should discuss with you why adoption has been chosen for you and find out how you feel about it.

You social worker has to prepare a report for the Adoption Agency Decision Maker (ADM) detailing why he or she feels adoption is right for you. The Agency Decision Maker has to consider this fully to decide whether they agree with the plan.

## Who is the Adoption Agency Decision Maker?

THE Adoption Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is the assistant director for specialist children's services.

The ADM has years of experience in making important decisions about children and their families.

To help them make their decision they have to seek advice from the local council's legal team, the medical adviser, your social worker, your carers and someone with specialist knowledge of adoption. They will also take special account of what you want to happen.

## How will your adoptive family be found?

WHEN it has been agreed that adoption is the right plan for you, your social worker will start working together with a social worker from the adoption team to find the right family for you. Your social worker will want to talk to you about the kind of family you would like. They will write about you and the kind of family that you need.

You will also see a doctor for them to check your health. Your foster carers will be asked to give information, photographs and maybe a DVD to share with your new family.

Sometimes there will be a new family waiting for you who seem just right. Your social worker will see them and start to get to know them. She/he will talk to them about you.

Sometimes families can be found quickly but sometimes it can take a while to find the right family. If we do not have the right family for you straight away then your social worker, with the help from the social worker from the adoption team, will start to look for a family. This means they will contact other adoption teams and your social worker may want to put your photograph and a little information about you in a family finding magazine which sometimes have on-line sites as well. This means that more families have a chance to learn about you!

Your social worker will talk to you about this and you can be involved if you want to.

## What happens when a family has been found?

WHEN a family has been found there will be a matching meeting to decide whether they are the right family for you. Your social worker and foster carers will be at the meeting together with a social worker for your new family.

A report saying why the family has been chosen will be taken to the adoption panel and if the panel agree that the family is right for you then they will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision. Once this has happened, plans will be made for you to meet your new family.

## What is the Adoption Panel?

THE Adoption Panel is a group of people who all have an understanding of children and adoption.

They can be social workers, adoptive parents, people who were adopted, birth family members, solicitors, doctors, people who work in education and health, and representatives from the local authority.



## How do children meet their new families?

MOST families prepare a family book and DVD about themselves which you can look at before you meet them. You will usually meet your new family in your foster home. After you have met them and got to know them you will be able to spend time with them on your own.

During visits to your new home you may stay overnight and you may also get the chance to meet other members of your new family.

After a few days getting to know your new family there will be a meeting to make sure everything is going well and plan the move to your new home.

## Moving in with adoptive parents

YOUR new parents will know that you may be quite sad to leave your foster carers so do not be afraid of talking to them about the way you are feeling.

You will be able to take all of your belongings and clothes with you when you move. You will be helped to get used to your new home and school. Your social worker will come to see you in the first week to make sure you are settling in. You can ask about anything you are not sure about. Your social worker will be able to let your birth family know that you have moved but will not give them your new address.

Similar to your having a social worker, your new family also have a social worker. This social worker will also visit you and your new family to make sure everything is going well for you all.

There will be a meeting after one month and then every 3-6 months or so to make sure everything is OK up until you are adopted.

You will be given a Life Story Book which should have photographs and information about your birth family, foster carers and other people who have been important in your life. There will also be a 'later life letter' which your adoptive parents will keep safe for you to read when you're older. This letter explains why you couldn't live with your birth parents and how decisions were made for you to be adopted.





## How are adoption orders made?

WHEN you are settled in your new family your adoptive parents will apply to the court to adopt you. If your birth family has agreed for you to be adopted then a Reporting Officer from the court will go to see them and ask them to give permission legally by signing a form. A court may have already decided that you should be adopted even if your birth parents didn't agree.

If your birth family did not agree for you to be adopted then the judge will have to decide whether adoption is right for you. The judge may ask someone called a Children's Guardian to see you to talk to you about what you think.

On your adoption day the judge will read all the reports and will make sure they will have all the information they need to decide whether to make an adoption order. You will go to court with your adoptive parents and your social worker. The judge will ask whether you are happy to be adopted. The adoption only takes a few minutes. You will usually change your last name so your name will be the same as your new family.

After you are adopted the court will send a copy of the adoption order to your adoptive family so they can send for an adoption certificate which will confirm your new last name. Your social worker will let your birth family know that you have been adopted.

## After you are adopted

AFTER you have been adopted your new family will look after you as if you'd been born into their family. They will be there to support you as you grow up. You will no longer have to be visited by your social worker but if you need any advice or support because of your adoption you can still have this. You can speak to a social worker at the adoption service or you can speak to other post adoption services, which will be there to help if you need them.

Here is a list of people that you can talk to at different stages of the adoption process.

Your Social Worker, they can be contacted on .....

Your Independent Reviewing Officer, they can be contacted on .....

The Social Worker from the adoption team .....

If you would rather talk to someone else there are a number of people or organisations you can approach. These are;

### **Children Society Black Country Advocacy Service**

The Workspace,  
All Saints Road,  
Wolverhampton,  
WV12 1EL

Phone 01902 877563  
Freephone 08006523839  
Fax 01902 877566

### **Talkadoption**

Telephone: 0800 0568 578  
Website: [www.afteradoption.org.uk/](http://www.afteradoption.org.uk/)

Talkadoption allows adopted young people to get together, talk about their

experiences of adoption and take part in creative and fun activities to help build their confidence and self esteem. They can also help with any worries or questions you may have.

### **National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**

Telephone: 0808 808 1001  
Website: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)

The NYAS advocacy service provides children and young people with information about their rights and entitlements. They support children and young people to make complaints and to make sure their voice is heard.

## Childline

Freephone: 0800 111

Website: [www.childline.co.uk](http://www.childline.co.uk)

You can contact Childline about anything. No problem is too big or too small. Whatever your worries it's better out than in.

Roger Morgan  
Children's Rights Director  
Ofsted  
Aviation House  
125, Kingsway  
London,  
WC2B 6SE

Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Website: [www.rights4me.org.uk](http://www.rights4me.org.uk)

With their team, the Children's Rights Director spends a lot of time listening to what children and young people who...

- live away from home
- are adopted
- are receiving social care support

...Have to say about how they are looked after.

If you're not happy with how you're Social Worker or the Adoption Service has handled your adoption and you wish to make a complaint you can ask a grown up you trust to help you complain or you can make the complaint yourself by contacting the following people:

## Corporate Performance Management (Tellus)

Walsall Council  
Civic Centre  
Darwall Street  
Walsall  
WS1 1TP

Telephone: 01922 650000

Or

## Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Or

Roger Morgan  
Children's Rights Director  
Ofsted  
Aviation House  
125, Kingsway  
London,  
WC2B 6SE

Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Website: [www.rights4me.org.uk](http://www.rights4me.org.uk)



## **Children's Guide To Adoption**

Freephone No: 0800 073 0597  
Website: [www.adoptionblackcountry.co.uk](http://www.adoptionblackcountry.co.uk)

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