

# Guide to adoption

## So contact us...

- **Adoption Support** – Once the Adoption Order is made, you have become a family. Like all families, there may be times when you want support and advice. The Derbyshire Adoption Support Team is a team that exists to provide this very support to adoptive families. You will receive a newsletter, invitations to training and social events which will give you the opportunity to meet up with other adoptive families. If at any stage you want more individual support, you can meet with a social worker at an adoption surgery. The Adoption Support Team can also offer support to any contact arrangements adoptive families might have.

If you wish to discuss any matters raised in this leaflet, please contact the Adoption and Permanence Service.


By Phone:

By Post:

By Email:

## Information for people wishing to adopt



 **DERBYSHIRE**  
County Council  
Improving life for local people

Derbyshire Adoption Service





## What is adoption?

In Derbyshire there are children of all ages who, for many reasons, are unable to live with their families and can never return home. One of the best ways to ensure they can be cared for, in a safe, secure, loving home for the rest of their lives is for them to be adopted. Adoptive parents take on all the rights and responsibilities for those children, as if they had been born to them. At all times, in maintaining decisions about children, we consider the welfare of the child before anything else. Decisions about placement, contact or adoption support will be driven first and foremost by the child's needs.

## Who can adopt?

There are very few people who we would not consider as adoptive parents. There is no upper age limit on adoption, and many people of all ages become successful adoptive parents. Whether you are on your own or in a relationship, working or not working, regardless of your race, religion or sexual orientation, we really value your inquiries.

Adoptive parents do not need any formal qualifications but you do need to be able to care for a child and be sensitive to the additional needs of an adopted child. Caring for any child can be hard work at times, and you will need both the energy and determination to see it through, and make a positive change to a child's future.

We will help, support and train you through every step of the adoption process and beyond, doing all we can to ensure that the placement is successful. However, remember that choosing to adopt a child is not a decision to be taken lightly.



## Who cannot adopt?

There are very few people who we would consider not to be adoptive parents. Anyone who has committed certain serious criminal offences, including violent crime and crimes against children, will not be able to adopt. People with certain medical conditions need to think about their ability to raise a child into adulthood. We advise to wait until six months after any life changing experience such as marriage, unemployment, major surgery and after the most recent attempt at fertility treatment.

We will accept inquiries from people who smoke, but the amount you smoke is something we will have to take into consideration. We will not place children aged 0 – 5 years old with smokers, nor will we place children with asthma or respiratory problems in homes where people smoke.

## Who are the children who need adopting?

There are lots of different types of children, in Derbyshire, who need to be adopted, from babies and toddlers to children aged 10 or 11. We also have sibling groups needing adoptive homes, where they can live and grow up together, as a family. There are many more older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities than there are children under 2 years, who need adoptive parents. We prioritise applications based on the needs of children waiting.

Many of the children who need to be adopted will have suffered abuse or neglect in their past. Others may have physical or learning disabilities. Many of these children will have needs beyond those of their peers, because of their circumstances and require a special type of care and understanding. What they all have in common, is that their parents are unable to care for them and they need a permanent family who will love and care for them, for the rest of their lives. Most of the children will have some form of contact with their birth family, either through written correspondence or face to face meetings.

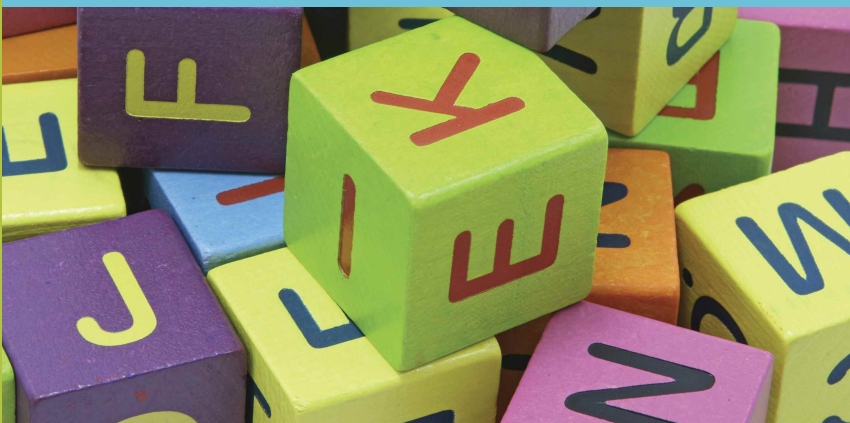
## How do I become an adoptive parent?

- **Expression of interest** – After reading through this leaflet and discussing it with your family, please complete the enclosed expression of interest form if you are still interested in proceeding with your enquiry. We will arrange an Initial Visit to your home by a social worker from the Adoption, Assessment and Placement Team. This will be within two months of receipt of the expression of interest form.
- **Initial visit** – A social worker will visit you at home and explain the adoption process in more detail. It gives us a chance to find out about you, and for you to discover what we can offer to prospective adoptive parents. It will also help you to decide whether you want to proceed further, and make an application. We will confirm the content of your visit with you in writing. If you want to proceed with an application and we agree it is appropriate, we will write to you confirming the timescale for allocating a social worker to you. If we do not agree that an application from you would be appropriate, we will write to you, giving our reasons.



- **The assessment begins** – If we agree to proceed, you will be allocated a social worker who will support you in completing the Application Form, preparing for adoption and writing your Home Study report. The Application Form gives basic factual information about you and also gives us permission for checks to be undertaken about you, in case there are any reasons why you should not be considered for adoption. We will also ask you for a number of references;

1. A family reference – one for each person who is adopting
2. Two personal references from people who have known you for a number of years
3. Employers reference if you are currently in work
4. Children from any previous relationship, even if they are now grown up
5. The school of any child you are currently parenting
6. Previous significant partners, unless there are very clear reasons why they should not be contacted
7. Your GP or health visitor



- **Preparation** – This is where you find out about adoption in far greater detail. It is something you can do at home as well as in the preparation groups we run. This is a time to reflect, to consider and discuss what it means to bring a child into your life, forever. It is also a time for you to consider what parenting skills you have and what you need to develop. Your social worker will help you with this. Our job at this stage is to give you all the information you might need to make this commitment, and to talk about the needs and experiences of children currently needing adoptive families. Your job is to consider if adoption is right for you.

The Home Study is when we start to examine your suitability to adopt, by building up a complete profile of you and your family. It may begin before you attend the preparation groups. An adoption social worker will visit you at home, and, with you, consider how your life and background will influence your ability to care for an adopted child, from your childhood right up to your current circumstances. In order to gain as complete a picture of your home as possible, you will be interviewed separately and together (if you are a couple); if you have children already, your worker will want to spend time with them too.

The Home Study is a very demanding piece of work. It is far more than just looking at your lifestyle or where you live. It looks at you very closely, as both an individual and as a family member and, where applicable, as a part of a couple. It will throw up both your strengths and weaknesses and at times may feel intrusive and uncomfortable. We do need however, to get as much information as we can about you and your way of life; adoption is for life, it is about changing a child's future forever and we, and you, must be sure that it is the right decision.



- **The medical** – You will have a detailed medical examination from your own GP who will send a report to the Agency's Medical Advisor. You are responsible for payment of any costs incurred. The medical advisor will make a recommendation about your medical suitability to adopt and your social worker can then discuss any issues that arise from this with you.

**The adopter's report** – Your social worker will then write a detailed report, called the Adopter's Report. You will have the opportunity to read it and make any comments you want – your opinions and comments will be recorded. You will then be visited by another Social Worker to confirm that you are satisfied with the Adopter's Report and who will discuss issues arising from the assessment. That social worker will also write a report which you will be shown. The process of Home Study should not take any longer than six months.

- **The adoption and permanence panel** – The Adoption and Permanence Panel is a group of people who all have a great deal of knowledge and experience of the adoption process and children who need adoptive families. It includes social workers, health care professionals and independent members some of whom have personal experience of adoption. It is their role, from the information presented to them, to approve prospective adopters and to agree the placement of children with adoptive families. The panel can only make recommendations which are confirmed (or not) by the Agency Decision Maker.

Your social worker will attend the panel, to answer any questions about your ability to be an adoptive parent and clarify any issues that the Adopter's Report may have raised.

You will be invited to attend the panel, although it is your choice whether or not you attend. You will be told on the day of the panel what the recommendation is. The authority will then contact you within a week of the decision being made, to let you know whether or not you have been approved.

- **Finding a child for you** – Once you are approved as an adoptive parent, your social worker will take care to identify appropriate children for you. Your details will be passed to the social workers of children who seem right for you. We hope to place a child from Derbyshire with you, but, if we cannot, we will consider children from our neighbouring authorities and then from across the country. It may take some time to identify the right child for you.

Not every child who becomes available will be suitable for you and you may have discussions about a number of children before everyone involved in the adoption process is satisfied a placement can go ahead. You will be given full information about the child who seems appropriate for you to enable you to make a decision. This will include information about the child's need to maintain contact with members of their birth family. When you, your social worker and the child's social worker want to proceed, reports about the placement will be presented to the Adoption Panel.

When children are placed with you, your role as their parent and the responsibilities that come with that role will be clearly defined, so that you will know exactly what is and what is not expected of you as an adoptive parent.



- **Placement of your child** – Once a decision has been made you will be invited to a Life Appreciation Day to meet with people who know the child. You will receive more information and be able to ask questions. If you still want to go ahead there will be meetings to plan the introductions. Introductions will start slowly and then build up, giving you and the child the opportunity to get to know each other better before they come to live with you.

Please remember – you will never be on your own during this time. Your worker and the Adoption Team will be there to support, give advice and guide you at all times. If at any stage, you decide this is not the right placement for you, you must tell your social worker.

If you do decide to adopt, there will still be help available through the Adoption Support Workers and through other adoptive parents in Derbyshire.

- **The Adoption Order** – When a child is placed with you, both you and your child's social workers will visit regularly to support you. There will also be regular childcare reviews. During this time, you will share parental responsibility with Derbyshire County Council. When the child has settled in fully and you are confident in your role as parent, you can apply to the court for an Adoption Order. The fee will be paid by Derbyshire County Council. The Adoption Order transfers all rights and responsibilities for the child to you and the child's birth parents will cease to have any legal rights over the child.

