

Talking about adoption
- for young people over 10

Adoption



department for
education and skills



What is adoption?

Adoption means being part of a new family when you can't live with the one you were born into. The people who adopt you become your legal parents and you live with them permanently.

Why are children adopted?

There are lots of reasons why children can't live at home. All families have their ups and downs. But some have real problems that they can't sort out. Maybe your parents find it hard to look after you properly and keep you safe.

Sometimes that means adoption might be the best option for you. Remember, though, that your opinions and feelings will always be taken into account. You have a right to have your views listened to – and acted upon. After all, it's your future.

You will be involved in making decisions about it every step of the way.



If there is anything in this leaflet you don't understand or want to talk to someone about, ask an adult you trust, like a teacher or your social worker.

What's it like being adopted?

It can make you feel all sorts of emotions at first – maybe happy, sad, relieved, confused. It's different for everyone – you're unique. But you're not alone. Hundreds of children and young people are adopted every year.

Gradually things settle down. It's worth bearing in mind, though, that your new family will be trying to get used to you too. It won't be perfect all the time – life just isn't like that for anyone. But everyone will do the best they can to make you welcome and happy.



I'm worried because I won't know anyone

You are moving on into a new life, with a new family. That may sound scary but it doesn't have to mean leaving behind the people and things that are important to you.

There will be people around to support you through this time – like your Children's Guardian. They will listen to your worries and be able to reassure you. And they will help sort out any problems you may have.

One thing you can be sure of is that everyone will want the best for you and want to make you feel at home.

What are adopters like?

Families come in all shapes and sizes - there may be one parent or two, perhaps other children. They may live in the town or the country, in a big house or a small flat.

Whoever they are, they will have been checked out by social workers to make sure that they know how to look after children.

And one thing all of them have in common is that they want to adopt someone like you and make them a permanent part of their family.



Will my real parents know I am OK?

When you belong to a new family, it doesn't mean that you forget the family you were born into.

You may still see your birth mum or dad, brothers and sisters or other people who are important to you. But if meeting up is not possible, you will be able to have contact through letters and cards.

What is a social worker?

A social worker is someone who helps children and their families when they have serious problems.

They also find new parents for children who need them.

Who can I talk to about adoption?

It is really important that you can talk about adoption to an adult you trust. And that you have all the help you need. Everyone recognises this, so there are services especially for you:

- You can talk to your social worker or Children's Guardian, who will make sure:
 - you know what's going on and what it's going to mean for you in the future
 - you have someone to talk to about what's happening
 - you keep in touch with your mum and dad if you want – and anyone else who's important to you
- There are national and local support groups for you to talk to other people your age about what's going on.



Some adoptions mean that a birth parent and a step-parent adopt a child or young person who already lives with them.

The step-parent then becomes a legal parent.

What if my mum and dad don't want me to be adopted?

Sometimes children's birth parents are against their child being adopted. If that happens, your Children's Guardian speaks to you, your parents and the people who want to adopt you. They may also talk to your teacher, doctor or social worker. Then they write a report to the court explaining what everyone wants and whether they think adoption is right for you.

Your family has to go to the family court to find out whether the adoption will happen. You may be able to speak to the judge too.

The adoption agency has to show the court that you can't safely return home and that adoption is the best plan for you. Then the court makes a placement order so you can go and live with your new family.

If everyone else thinks adoption is the best plan – and the judge agrees – the adoption still goes ahead.

Your feelings always come first.



What is a Children's Guardian?

A Children's Guardian makes sure you understand what's going on – and finds out your feelings about it. They make sure the court knows what you think about adoption and what you would like to happen.

You can trust them and talk to them.

What if I do not want to be adopted?

You should make your feelings known to either your Children's Guardian or your social worker. The Children's Guardian or social worker will listen carefully to your reasons and explain how you feel to the judge.

The judge may not always make the decision you want – but they will try to decide what is in your best long term interests. If they agree that you should not be adopted, they will not make an adoption order.

What happens next?

1. Your social worker and your Children's Guardian listen carefully to your views and feelings about being adopted.
2. Then they write a report with everyone's views about it.
3. The adoption panel considers all the details and advises on whether adoption would be the best thing for you.
4. An adoption plan is made, with a timetable of what needs to be done by everyone to make the adoption happen.

5. If your parents don't agree that you should be adopted the court makes a placement order so that the adoption agency can go ahead.
6. The adoption agency knows people who want to adopt someone, so they talk to you and carefully match you with the right family for you – where you will be happiest and feel settled, safe and at home.
7. You meet the adoptive family and get to know each other.
8. Then you go and live with them in their home and get to know them well.
9. If you are happy and settled and want to stay with your new family for good, the adoption agency asks for an adoption hearing in front of a special family court.
10. The judge listens to everyone involved and makes a decision. If they think adoption is best for you they make an adoption order. That means your adoptive parents become yours by law and they will be your family for the rest of your life.

What happens at the court?

A judge or magistrates decide what happens in a family court. They may ask a Children's Guardian to talk to you about how you feel and what you want to happen. If you have a social worker the judge will also ask them what they think.

Once they have listened to what everyone has to say (that's called an 'adoption hearing'), the judge makes a decision on what they think is best for you. Remember – they will always put your interests first.



What is a court like?

- There are criminal courts, for people who may have committed a crime and have to be punished.
- There are family courts, where the judge or magistrates help sort out family problems. It's not to do with people breaking the law. Your safety and welfare are most important to them.
- You usually go along to the family court too, with your Children's Guardian.

Because these decisions are so important, it can take the court a long time for it to make a final decision about who should look after a young person. But they will let you know as soon as they can.

Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions or worries about adoption or what's going to happen, talk to an adult you trust, like your Children's Guardian. They will understand.

Everyone wants to help you and make sure you live with a family who loves and cares for you. You will be part of that family for the rest of your life.

Independent advocates

There are people who can speak up for you if there are things you are not happy about. You can talk to an independent advocate who can help with your problems. There are organisations that can find an independent advocate for you and support groups, such as Talk Adoption, who will listen and help.

These organisations will find an independent advocate for you:

Talk Adoption

Phone free on 0808 808 1234

Web. www.talkadoption.org.uk

Voice of the Child in Care

Phone free on 0808 800 5792

Email. info@vcc-uk.org

National Youth Advocacy Service

Phone free on 0800 616 101

Telephone. 0151 649 8700

Children's Legal Centre

Phone free on 01206 873 820

Web. www.childrenlegalcentre.com

For more information on your rights in adoption, ask your social worker or Children's Guardian. Or look at these websites:

www.talkadoption.org.uk

www.cafcass.gov.uk

www.childrensrights.org

www.need2know.co.uk

For further information please visit

www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/AdoptionandFostering

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