

You can also look at these websites to find out more.

- www.talkadoption.org.uk
- www.childrenrights.org
- www.childline.co.uk
- www.right4me.org
- Or you can contact the Children's Rights Director at Ofsted. They spend a lot of time checking that children are well cared for. They listen and talk to children and young people and then tell the Government and inspectors of local authorities what children think about the way they are looked after.

Their telephone number and address is:

Children's Rights Director, Ofsted

Aviation House, 125 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T: 0800 528 0731

W: www.rights4me.org

Childline

T: 0800 1111

W: www.childline.org.uk

**Achieving for Children
Adoption and Permanency Team**

T: 020 8547 4620



Being adopted What does it mean?

A guide for children

All children should have families to look after them and help them to become strong, healthy and happy grown-ups.

Families come in all shapes, sizes and colours. All children start off with a birth family, as everyone has a birth mum and dad. In some families, the mums or dads are not able to do all the things they should do to keep their children safe, healthy and happy, and not all children are able to live with their birth families so they need new families.

Whilst families are not all the same shape, size and colour, they are also made up of all sorts of people and children also become part of a family in a variety of ways. Some children are born into them, some live with aunts and uncles, grandparents, friends, special guardians or foster carers, and some children are adopted into their families.

Foster carers may look after older children for many years, and sometimes they adopt children too, but they usually look after young children for a short while until they can move on to a new family, an adoptive family. Adoptive families are forever families.

There will be lots of other adopted children living nearby and there are adopted children all over the country. There are also lots of famous grownups and characters that have been adopted.

- Paddington Bear
- Stuart Little
- Babe the Pig
- Superman

Can you think of any other friends or famous people?



Building a wall of bricks

Bringing up children is a bit like building a wall. To make tall, strong walls, you need a good foundation and then using just the right type and amount of cement, you carefully lay the different bricks.

Children need love and the cement is like the love they need, but they also need lots of different kinds of caring to help them grow properly and the bricks are like the different types of care that children need building up a strong support structure. If you take some of the bricks away, the building will not be strong.



Not all birth families are able to provide all of these things and so, sometimes, children who can't live with their birth families live with foster carers until they can move to a new family.

- A family who will love them and take care of them and do all of the things on the brick wall
- A family who will be able to look after them to help them to become strong, healthy and happy grown-ups
- A family that they will be part of forever
- A family that will have been chosen specially for them
- This will be their adoptive family.

So what happens next?

Your social worker will already have talked to you about the plans for the future and will have told you about the court and the wise judge who makes all the big decisions for children who can't live with their birth families. The judge will read all about you and your birth family and your adoptive family. They will listen to everyone and then decide if you should be adopted. If judges think this is the very best thing for children they make an adoption order and adoptive families become forever families.

After this, you will also go the court with your adoptive family to meet the judge. This will be a very special day for everyone. It is called the 'celebration hearing' and that's what everyone will do...celebrate!

Your social worker will also talk to you, your foster carers and your birth family so that they know all about you. Important things like:

- your favourite games and toys, and what you like doing
- your favourite food and food you don't like
- your favourite story books, television, programmes or DVDs
- what time you got to bed and what time you usually wake up in the mornings
- what special days and festivals you celebrate
- and lots and lots of other important things that can go into your 'all about' book

Can you think of all the other important things you would like them to know about you?

Your social worker will also talk to you about what sort of family you would like. All of this will help your social worker to find just the right adoptive family for you. You are very important and it may take a while to find exactly the right family, so until then you will stay with your foster family.

The social worker and your foster carer will be able to tell the adoptive family about you before they meet you and you will be told all about them and be able to see photographs and a book about them. They will meet you, your social worker and your foster carer and you will all have time to get to know each other well before you to live with them.

Your social worker will still visit you regularly for quite a long time after you move to make sure that you are OK. Then, when everyone is sure that you have settled in happily, you will all go to court to see another wise judge and you will fully adopted and be part of your new family.



Some questions you may have

What if I don't want to be adopted?

You should talk to your social worker or your guardian and they will listen to you and explain how you feel to the judge. The judge may still feel that a new family would be the best option and your social worker will help you to understand why they think that adoption is the best thing for you.

Will I be able to keep in touch with my birth family?

Being loved by and being part of your new family doesn't mean that you have to forget your birth family, and although they weren't able to look after you in all the ways grown-ups should, they will never forget you and will want to know that you are alright.

Sometimes your adoptive parents may send a letter about you to the 'letter box' social worker in the Adoption Team. They will send this on to your birth family so that they will know that you are OK. Sometimes the social worker will also ask your birth family to write back to your adoptive family with their news, but they may not always be able to do this.

Meetings may be arranged with someone from your birth family. This could be a brother or sister, a birth mum or dad, or grandparent if this is agreed, if it is safe and if this is OK with you. You will be given plenty of time to settle into your new family first. Again, your social worker will be able to talk to you about this.



How will I remember or find out about my birth family?

A life story book will be written with you or for you by your social worker. This book will be all about you and will tell you all about your adoption and life with your adoptive family and all about your birth family and your life before you were adopted.

Your social worker will also write a letter to you telling you all they know about your birth family and why you were adopted. This will be given to your adoptive family for safe keeping until you are old enough to read and understand it.

There is quite a lot for you to think about and you could write down any question you have or you could ask a grown up to write them down for you.

You may have lots more questions and you can ask your social workers to give you some other books about adoption or you can ask them about anything else you would like to know.

Who will help me if I am worried or unhappy about any of this?

You will always be asked about your views and feelings and if at any time you are worried about anything you can talk to your social worker or someone else you know and trust - perhaps your foster carer or a teacher.

You can also talk openly to the Independent Reviewing Officer at your next review. They will already have given you their telephone number and email address, so if you want to speak to them between the reviews you can contact them. If you have lost their number your social worker and foster carer will have it and be able to give it to you.

If you are still not happy and want to tell us about something or someone, then ask your social worker for a copy of the leaflet which tells you how to make a complaint.