

Time to adopt? Time to talk to us!



Changes to Adoption Services - Yorkshire & Humber

In Yorkshire and Humber adoption services are changing to be delivered on a regional basis. This means that local authorities will no longer individually providing adoption services but will combine to form a larger, more effective regional adoption agency.

In the north of Yorkshire and the Humber this will be happening in stages over the next few months. From April the local authorities in the area will be recruiting adopters jointly through a new regional recruitment website www.oneadoption.co.uk or by calling 01904 566007. 'One Adoption North and Humber' will join together North East Lincolnshire Council; Hull City Council; North Yorkshire County Council; City of York Council; East Riding of Yorkshire Council; North Lincolnshire Council, the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) including Adoption Support Agencies (ASAs).



What does this mean if I want to adopt in my area?

Working regionally will allow children to be placed in a more timely way and improve the adoption and therapeutic support offer as well as enabling us to share best practice and develop our services more effectively. While the names of the agency in your local area will eventually change, the people and ethos remains the same. Our aim being to continue to provide quality adoption support that meets the needs of those involved in adoption:

- Shared good practice across the region;
- We will place children for adoption in a more timely way;
- We will recruit families for the children who are waiting;
- We will share across the region the range and accessibility and quality of adoption support.
- We will provide a timely assessment and approval process for those wanting to adopt.

Whilst we work on the above you are still able to contact North Lincolnshire's Adoption Service directly. You can contact us at:

Tel. 01724 297024.
North Lincolnshire Adoption Service
Church Square House
30 – 40 High Street
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN15 6NL

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about adopting with North Lincolnshire.

This booklet will provide you with more information on;

- The adoption process
- Children who need adoptive families
- The support that we provide to adoptive families

You may still have questions after you have read this booklet but that's normal. What you are considering is life changing. We understand this and that is why you will also have the opportunity to meet with an Adoption Social Worker who will be able to answer any questions that you have.

At each stage of your adoption journey we will make sure that you are supported. We are a small, experienced, dedicated team who really care about the service that we provide.

We are interested in hearing from people who live in North Lincolnshire and also those who live outside of North Lincolnshire.

If you do not think adoption is for you but you know of someone else who is thinking about adoption then please 'spread the word' that North Lincolnshire Adoption Service would like to hear from them.



What is adoption?

Adoption is the legal process by which children, who cannot be brought up by their birth parents, or other significant, connected people, become a full, permanent member of a new family. When you adopt a child you become their legal parent(s) with the same rights and responsibilities as if they were born to you. So adoption is a very important step which should not be undertaken without very careful thought and preparation. Adoption is a lifelong commitment. Like all parenting it presents challenges and difficulties, some of which require perseverance to work through. But it can also be intensely rewarding as you see your child develop and grow.

Which children need adoption?

In the past, adoption consisted almost exclusively of the placing of babies 'given up' by their birth mothers. This was in the context of a society which regarded having a child 'out of wedlock' as taboo. As society has changed so has the nature of adoption and the types of children available for adoption. Instead children are more likely to:

- Require continuing help as they grow due to their early life experiences
- May have medical problems or delayed development
- There may be issues arising from birth parent's misuse of alcohol and / or drugs during pregnancy
- Have experienced physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect
- Children may not have experienced the consistency of care of a main caregiver and may have had numerous carers
- May present some behavioural problems as a result of their experiences
- Brothers and sisters who all need to be placed together
- Have some positive memories of their birth family



Some issues to consider

Babies 0-12 months

It is very rare now for a baby to be placed for adoption at the request of his / her birth mother. Most babies placed for adoption may have been removed from very difficult circumstances. Some may have special needs and there can be uncertainty as to the future development of the child both emotionally and physically. Many may have been removed from families where there was misuse of drugs and the babies were born with drug withdrawal symptoms. They may have been removed from a birth mother who misused alcohol during pregnancy and so there may be uncertainty as to how that is going to impact on the baby in later years.

Children 1 – 4 years

Some of these children are part of family groups of two or more children. Many may have experienced neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. All these children will need love and security along with the extra patience and understanding required to deal with the effects of their early experiences.

Children 5 years and upwards

We are always looking to recruit adopters who can consider parenting an older child. The difficulty of settling children into new families does not necessarily increase with age and will depend upon the child's personality and individual life experiences. They need love, security, patience and understanding and those adopters who chose to parent an older child often describe the rewards of parenting a school age child.

Sibling Groups

The number of children who require an adoptive placement with a sibling(s) is growing. We are always keen to recruit adopters who feel that they can consider parenting two or more children. In certain cases financial support can be considered.

Children with disabilities and special needs

Children with disabilities include children with a physical or learning disability or both. These may be serious or mild. They may include Downs Syndrome, Spina Bifida and Cerebral Palsy. Some of these children may require special educational and medical help.



Children's contact needs

In the past, when children were placed for adoption it was believed that they needed a 'clean break' and ties with their birth family were cut. This view has now changed. Many adults who were adopted as children have told us that as they were growing up they would have liked information about their birth family. This would have helped them to have a better sense of their history and identity.

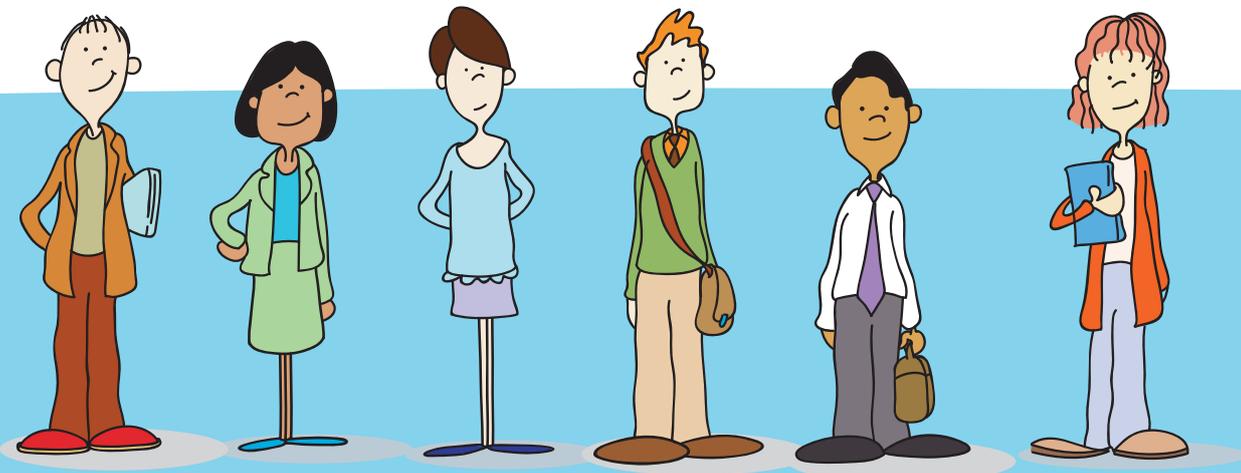
All adopters must be prepared for some form of on going contact after adoption between a child and significant people from their birth family. This usually takes the form of an exchange of written information with the birth family via an Adoption Agency. This could be once or twice yearly. Indirect contact is administered through a 'Letterbox' system to help safeguard the confidentiality of adoptive families.

For some children, direct (face to face) contact is appropriate. This could be with a brother or sister who are placed with a different adopter, birth parent or with a grandparent who has cared for the child. Birth families are not given the address of adopters and we will support you and the child if direct contact is planned. Part of our role involves mediating between adopters and birth families where, over time, a child's need for contact may change or difficulties arise.

It is important for prospective adopters and adopters to know that online social networking websites have begun to result in cases where unmediated contact between adopted children and members of their birth families has taken place, sometimes with serious consequences. Advice and information on this issue is provided during preparation training and / or is available on request.

During the process of preparation to become an adopter you will be given more information and the opportunity to ask questions about contact. It is important that after learning more about adoption you are honest with yourselves and us, about the level of contact that you can accept.





Adopt for North Lincolnshire

In North Lincolnshire we have a good understanding of the children we need to identify adoptive placements for and our recruitment strategy is designed to take this into account. The Adoption Team consists of workers who have years of experience in adoption. We are a hardworking and committed team who works hard to find the right placements for children and prospective adopters.

The National Adoption Register is also in place and has operated to speed up links between children waiting and approved adopters around the country. If no suitable matches are identified locally then the National Adoption Register will also be asked to search for potential matches.

North Lincolnshire Council also utilises Adoption Link Maker in their family finding and this is something that your allocated worker will discuss with you.

Nationally the profiles of children needing adoption are not unlike those in our own area in terms of needs and age ranges. However, some local authorities have more children waiting who are from minority ethnic groups and with specific religious and linguistic needs.

Who can adopt?

Adopters are needed from all walks of life to meet the needs of a wide range of children who are waiting for adoption.

People applying to adopt in North Lincolnshire are assessed on their own merits and abilities to parent an adopted child.

We do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, class, culture, sexuality or disability. Applicants can be assured that they will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

- Anyone wishing to adopt must by law be at least 21 years of age and mature enough to meet the demands of parenting. We do not operate any upper age limit but applicants must reasonably be expected to stay healthy enough to parent a child into adulthood.
- Single people, male or female can adopt and many single people have particular skills and experience appropriate to adoption.
- Applicants can be married or unmarried and of any sexuality.
- Usually couples should have lived together for at least two years before we can consider them as prospective adopters.
- Applicants can be home owners or in rented accommodation.
- Applicants may be childless, have children still living at home or have adult children who have left home.
- Applicants may be employed or unemployed.

Is there anything else which will be taken into account in deciding who can adopt?

Yes. But there are also some misconceptions which can lead to people ruling themselves out unnecessarily. Here are some examples of some frequently asked questions;

What if I've been convicted of a criminal offence?

This really depends on the nature of the offence. Not all criminal offences are an automatic bar to adoption. You must declare any cautions or convictions and agree to checks being carried out on you. Such checks are undertaken through the Disclosure and Barring Service, the NSPCC and the local authority and will need to be done on all members of the household aged 16 years and over.

We cannot approve anyone with convictions or cautions for certain specific offences outlined in government regulations. These offences includes domestic or sexual violence or any convictions against children.

Do you ask for any other references?

Yes, we will ask you to provide us with the names of people who we can contact and visit. They will be asked to provide an opinion on your ability to

care for children and suitability to adopt. At least two of the references you need to provide must be from people who are not related to you. We may also wish to contact previous employers particularly if you have worked with children. If you have had significant previous relationships we will ask to contact former partners. Here the purpose will be to establish if there are any concerns relating to violence or potential risks to children. Where you have children of your own, including those who have grown up, we will also want to speak with them and involve them in the adoption process.

Might I be turned down on the grounds of being overweight?

Not in itself. Again you will be assessed in relation to your capacity to provide for the developmental needs of a child through to adulthood. Your weight therefore will be considered within the context of your overall state of health and fitness, both now and into the future.

What about my health more generally?

All applicants must undergo a medical examination within Stage One to assess their physical and mental health. This is important to ensure that people are likely to stay fit and well enough for some time to come. Many of the children placed for adoption have experienced significant losses in their lives so we must avoid compounding these losses by placing children with people who are likely to suffer from serious health problems. This does not mean that a previous illness of condition will act as an automatic bar.

If you are in reasonably good health and no future problems are envisaged you won't be ruled out. We have a medical advisor who scrutinises all medical reports and advises us in every case.

What about serious illness?

If you have had treatment for a serious illness, you may want to speak to your GP first about whether they feel this could impact on your ability to adopt a child. The agency will seek full information from your GP and will want to establish the impact of the illness and future prognosis and our Medical Adviser may want to contact your hospital consultant for further details before being able to make a recommendation. If there is a significant risk that you may not be able to care for a child throughout their dependent years, the Medical Adviser will seek further information and advise the Adoption Agency accordingly.

Can I adopt if I've suffered from mental health issues?

If you have experienced or are currently experiencing a mental health problem you would not automatically be ruled out as an adopter. An agency would need to carefully consider all the factors around the condition before making a decision.

For example, if you have suffered from depression in the past, it would be advisable to talk to your GP before making an adoption application to find out their views and whether they would support your application.

What the agency needs to know

The Agency's Medical Adviser will want to understand the circumstances that led to depression and be reassured that you will be sufficiently robust to cope with the inevitable stresses of adopting a child.

Positives in recovery

Some applicants have used medication, counselling and other therapies during stressful times in their lives, particularly when going through the sadness of unsuccessful treatment for infertility. The agency would look at how you had used support and this could be considered a strength in your application. If you are continuing to use some medication this will not automatically rule you out but further information would be needed from your GP about your agreed medication plan and your resilience to manage future stress.

As well as existing health conditions, an agency will want to discuss lifestyle issues such as smoking and alcohol consumption. These issues are not barriers to adoption but they could present health risks in the future.

Can I adopt if I smoke?

Although you may not be automatically excluded from adopting, most agencies will strongly encourage you to give up because of the known medical risks of passive smoking for young children. If you hope to adopt a child aged 0–5 years, you will be asked to give up smoking at least six months before the home study phase of the process (Stage Two) starts because of the medically recognised associated health risks to

children. Although this is not a legal requirement we implement this as it is in the best interests of the child's health.

If you are interested in adopting a child aged 5 or over we will ask you to consider how you will ensure your smoking does not impact on a child placed with you and how you will encourage them to follow a healthy lifestyle.

We will engage with you to provide information, advice and access to support to help you give up smoking or you can approach your GP for information about smoking cessation programmes.

With regards to the use of e cigarettes we would always seek a view from the Agency Medical Advisor but we would prefer that the route taken is that of the above.

What about fertility treatment?

We understand that for many people they will wish to explore as fully as possible having a birth child before considering adoption. Where fertility treatment is on-going we do not accept applications to adopt. Where it has proved unsuccessful we believe that it is important for applicants to have time to adjust to the prospect of not having a birth child before progressing with an application. Your readiness to move forward is something that you will think about together with an Adoption Social Worker.

Finally, please remember If you have any anxiety about health issues you can discuss your concerns with the agency when you make your first approach. Please don't assume

something will automatically rule you out and we would always encourage you to discuss with us first.

While different people can adopt, we are looking for certain core skills, qualities and attitudes. We therefore need adopters who can;

- **Accept and respect a child's family history.**
- **Talk openly with the child about adoption and share information throughout childhood.**
- **Promote the child's identity needs in terms of culture, ethnicity, language and family of origin.**
- **Understand how a child feels about being adopted, how this may change over time and how behaviour may be affected.**
- **Appreciate how abuse, neglect, trauma, separation and loss can have an impact on a child's development.**
- **Tolerate imperfection in children and themselves.**
- **Be patient and recognise the positives in children.**
- **Show resilience and perseverance in the face of a child's challenging behaviour.**
- **Be flexible and reflective thinkers who are prepared to acknowledge how they may need to alter their approach to meet a child's needs better.**

- Be open to seeking and receiving professional support where appropriate.
- In our experience a great many potential adopters already possess skills and / or competencies relevant to adoption when we first meet them. Experience of parenting is not the only way through which someone may be able to demonstrate a knowledge of children's needs and the sensitivity we are looking for.

Thinking about Early Permanence?

You may already have heard about early permanence. We are looking for people who think this might be right for them.

Early permanence covers what is known as 'fostering for adoption' and 'concurrency'.

Early permanence places a child during the period of temporary local authority care with foster carers who are also approved as adopters. If the court agrees that the child should be adopted then they will make a legal order which is called a Placement Order. The adoption agency then approves the 'match' between the adopters and the child. The placement then becomes an adoptive placement.

The advantages to early permanence for the child are;

- They are placed with carers who may become their adopters depending on the decision that the court makes. It must be remembered that until the court decides that adoption is right for the child, the parents case remains to be decided.
- It enables the child to be with people who may become their permanent parents at an earlier stage.
- It allows the early months and years of the child's life to be what most children need and expect.

Remember...

You will probably have lots of questions about early permanence and you don't have to decide about this straight away. You will have opportunity to speak to your Adoption Social Worker about it some more. Further reading and training can also be provided.

Intercountry adoption

An Intercountry Adoption is an adoption of a child who is habitually resident in one country by an individual or couple who are habitually resident in another country.

Intercountry Adoption is a complex process with very stringent legalities as compliance is required through UK legislation as well as the relevant countries legislation. It is important to note that the legislation in different countries is often not the same.

Intercountry Adoption is not an easy option. A thorough assessment is completed before a child is placed away from their country of origin, community and extended family. If you are thinking about intercountry adoption then it is important that you think carefully about the long term impact on both yourself and the child.

If you are considering Intercountry Adoption we will initially gather information from you. North Lincolnshire Council works in collaboration with other agencies to offer potential intercountry adopters the specialist service they require.

If you want to consider, or would like more information about becoming an Intercountry Adoptive Parent, please contact the Adoption Service and speak to one of our Adoption Social Workers.

The Adoption Process

Why do we assess people who wish to adopt?

It is essential for the welfare and safety of a child that consistent and thorough assessments are carried out. Assessments are also carried out to ensure that adopters have the capacity to meet the needs of any child placed with them. Assessments should also help to ensure people who wish to adopt are able to respond to the lifelong issues associated with adoption.

The Adoption Team supports potential adopters throughout the whole process. We will talk to you about the different things you have to offer and why you feel adoption is the right path for you and your family. You will be fully involved in the assessment. They will discuss with you the checks that are required and please discuss any worries / questions you have about this with the worker.



Here is a summary of the process we follow:

STEP ONE

Pre Assessment Information Stage

You have made an Initial Enquiry - The Adoption Team will send out information to you and you will be able to speak to a worker over the telephone to ask any questions that you might have. We always try to contact you within 24 hours upon receipt of your enquiry. This can be longer if the enquiry was made over a weekend or bank holiday. However, it will never take more than ten days for us to contact you and to have sent you written information.

If you would like to progress to an initial visit then an Adoption Social Worker will arrange to come and see you at your home. This gives you a chance to talk about adoption in more detail. They will talk to you about North Lincolnshire's current need for adopters and your own wishes and expectations. They will begin to build up a picture about you, your circumstances, your motivation and what you may be able to offer a child. They will also discuss whether there is anything that could prevent you proceeding at this stage.

STEP TWO

If you decide that you would like to Adopt with North Lincolnshire then we will need you to complete the Registration of Interest form. Within five working days of you sending the form back a decision will be made by the Adoption Service as to whether to proceed to Stage One or not. You will be notified in writing.

STEP THREE

Stage One – Initial Preparation / Training which is Prospective Adopter-led

Stage One begins when we accept your registration of interest. This stage should take around two months but this is dependent upon all required checks having been returned. During this stage we need to undertake DBS checks; Local Authority check and to have received your adoption medical. It is important that you complete the DBS application forms in a timely way and that you also arrange your medical with the G.P for as soon as possible. If you have any worries or questions about this then please speak to your worker.

During **Stage One** we also complete any other checks that are felt to be required and this can include internet checks. Again, if you have any questions about this then please do not hesitate to discuss with your worker. Your worker will discuss any checks to be undertaken with you.

You will also need to provide at least three personal referees who will be interviewed during **Stage One**. These

need to be people who know you well. Two of them should not be related to you.

We will also ask questions regarding any animals or pets living with you.

During **Stage One** you will receive information about training and workshops that are being held to help you prepare for adoption. Your Adoption Social Worker will ensure you are booked onto the training. The expectation is that by the end of Stage Two and prior to your assessment being presented to Adoption Panel, you will have attended all of the Preparing to Adopt sessions.

The Preparing to Adopt workshops go through the adoption process more fully and you will learn about the children who are waiting for adoptive families. There will be the opportunity to learn from experienced adopters. Most applicants say that they find the workshops very useful, particularly mixing with others who have the same goal.

If you have difficulty attending the workshops you should contact the team to discuss your situation beforehand and we may be able to arrange for you to attend a workshop in a neighbouring authority. You would still be assessed by North Lincolnshire.

Remember the purpose of the workshops is to assist you in making an informed decision about adoption, so ask as many questions as you want.

You are free to withdraw at this or any other stage of the process.

At the end of **Stage One** we will tell you of our decision as to whether to proceed to **Stage Two**.

STEP FOUR

You must then tell us if you wish to proceed to **Stage Two** within 6 months of the decision. You are able to take a break of up to 6 months between **Stage One** and **Stage Two**.

STEP FIVE

Stage Two – Agency-led Intensive Training / preparation and assessment

Stage Two of the Adoption Process will not begin until you have completed Stage One and have notified us that you want to proceed to **Stage Two**. **Stage Two** should take 4 months and is about intensive training and assessment. Together we will create an assessment plan; this will detail for example, the assessment process, dates of meetings / visits and agreed training. Your Adoption Social Worker will guide you through this.

Your worker will visit you and discuss with you your personal background, situation and your strengths in relation to adopting a child. We ask for all sorts of information as we have to be certain that adopters will be able to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

If you already have children, your worker will talk to them to find out their wishes and feelings. If your children are at school, they will speak to the teacher. If you work or have worked with children, they will speak to your employer.

More information will be given during day one as to the information that is gathered and which then forms your completed prospective adopters report (PAR).

The Adoption Service will provide you with a copy of the assessment report and invite you to send observations on the report within 5 working days.

Second Opinion Visit

Occasionally, there is a need for a second opinion from another Adoption Social Worker. This is where the draft prospective adopters report has highlighted a concern, or clarification regarding a particular issue is required before the report is finalised.

STEP SIX

Adoption Panel

Your report then goes before the Adoption Panel who will make a recommendation about your suitability to adopt. You are invited to attend the Adoption Panel and you will be supported by your Adoption Social Worker. If you choose not to attend, this will not prejudice your application in any way.

The Adoption Panel is made up of people who all have a connection with adoption, either through personal or professional experience.

When the panel makes their recommendation on your suitability to adopt you will be informed straight away if you are there. Or, if you chose not to attend the panel, within no more than two working days.



STEP SEVEN

Agency Decision

Once the Panel have met and made their recommendation the Agency Decision Maker will make the decision. In North Lincolnshire, the Agency Decision Maker is the Assistant Director of Children's Services or the named Principal Social Worker. Once the decision is made you will be informed verbally within two working days and in writing within five working days.

Stage Two only ends when the decision is made about whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt.

If approval to adopt is not given? If the Agency Decision Maker considers that the prospective adopters are not suitable to adopt a child, the agency must;

- Notify the prospective adopters in writing that the Agency Decision Maker is minded to not approve them as suitable to adopt a child. This is called a 'qualifying determination'.
- The agency will also notify the prospective adopters of the reasons for that decision and send a copy of the recommendation of the adoption panel if those recommendations are different.

The prospective adopters then have 40 working days starting from the date that notification was sent to decide what they wish to do next.

What are the options?

At this stage the prospective adopters could;

Accept the decision of the Agency. The Agency will write to the prospective adopters to formally notify them of the decision and the reasons for it.

OR

Send in further information or comments for the Agency to consider. The Agency Decision Maker makes a final decision following these representations; this may include a referral back to the Adoption Panel for recommendation before the decision is made.

OR

Choose to use the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Prospective adopters may request a review of the qualifying determination by writing to the IRM. Please note, the IRM can make a recommendation which is not binding on the Adoption Agency but will be considered by the Agency Decision Maker.

The above will be a difficult time for you and we understand this and your Adoption Social Worker will support you and ensure that you have the information that you need.

If you are approved as prospective adopters

Following approval you will be given support during the waiting period whilst a potential match is identified. Your Adoption Social Worker will keep in touch with you.

Adoption Register

Agencies must refer prospective adopters to the Register as soon as possible and in any event no later than 3 months from approval unless they have identified a particular child with whom they are considering placing with the prospective adopter. Agencies must ensure that the information the Adoption Register holds on the prospective adopter is kept up to date. Prospective adopters may choose to refer themselves to the Register, three months after approval.

The Adoption Register holds details of prospective adopters and children who need adoptive families. The administrators of the register then contact your worker regarding possible matches.

You will also be invited to subscribe to national publications and electronic publications such as Adoption Link Maker which feature children in need of an adoptive family.

If a placement has not been made, we will hold a review with you after a year. This is to discuss how you are coping with the wait; any change in circumstances and your approval status.

However, it is important that you do not wait until the review to discuss the above with us. For example, if you have experienced a change in circumstances it is important that you discuss with your worker immediately as it may be that a review needs to be held sooner.

STEP EIGHT**Matching**

Working with you, your Adoption Social Worker will carefully consider which child(ren) to match you with. You will be given a lot of written information about the child and a chance to meet with their social worker to help us and you decide if this match is the right one. You will also have the opportunity to meet key people or expert professionals, for example a medical advisor, who possess detailed knowledge about a child. In most cases a Child Appreciation Day is held to bring together a wide range of people who have worked with or cared for a child to provide a comprehensive history of their life to date. If everyone agrees to proceed, the social workers will write an Adoption Placement Report for consideration by the Adoption Panel and the Decision Maker. This report outlines the child's needs and how they will be met by you and the support to be provided.

You will be invited to attend the Adoption Panel, which will be in the area that the child lives. The recommendations of the Adoption Panel will again be sent to the Agency Decision Maker for the decision whether to proceed with the placement.

STEP NINE**Meeting the child and introductions**

After the match between you and the child has been approved there follows a carefully planned programme of introductions. The purpose of the introductions is to give you the time to get to know your child and for your child to get to know you.

Firstly, there will be a planning meeting to make sure that support is in place and everyone knows what is happening and when. It will also outline who is responsible for what. It is usually after this meeting that you will meet your child for the first time.

You and the child will be given time, after the first few meetings with each other, to think very carefully about whether or not this link feels right. Your Social Worker will support you throughout.

Having decided to proceed, you and the child spend longer periods of time together in preparation for an agreed moving in date. The length of introductions varies according to the age and needs of the child.

Introductions are tiring, exciting and emotional. It is really important that you speak to your Social Worker throughout and take the support and advice that they will offer. Family or friends can support you by helping you practically, for example, preparing meals for you upon your return from a day spent with your child, looking after any pets and washing / ironing.

Financial assistance may be given in meeting the costs of the introductory period e.g. travelling costs and accommodation. Adopters also often receive a grant towards the cost of essential items of equipment and in some cases they are eligible for other sources of financial support.

STEP TEN**Moving in**

When the child is placed with you, your Adoption Social Worker will keep in touch through visits and by telephone. The child's Agency has a duty to review the child's placement up to the adoption order being made. The child's Social Worker will also undertake visits during this period. Your worker will give you more information about this.

The first few months of any placement can be exciting, tiring and at times difficult. Your child may be sad about leaving the familiarity of their foster family and anxious about being in new surroundings with new carers and maybe a new school. You will perhaps be having to adjust to being parents for the first time.

Children may need to talk about their birth family or other people who have been important to them. It will help your child enormously if you can accept that your child has these memories and can talk sensitively about them. Your social worker will continue to visit regularly to offer advice support and encouragement.

STEP ELEVEN

The Adoption Order

The Independent Reviewing Officer and / or your Social Worker will advise you about making the application to a court for the Adoption Order. Although you will share parental responsibility for the child with the child's birth parents and the local authority, you will not be the child's legal parents until this Order is made.

Your child will need to have lived with you for at least 10 weeks before you could make an application to the court to adopt him / her.

Your Adoption Social Worker will help you with your forms if necessary. The child's Social Worker and your Social Worker will write a report for court. You will receive notification of the adoption hearing from the court, marking the end of a lengthy but worthwhile process.

After the Adoption Order is made it is likely that you will continue to have at least yearly contact with the Adoption Team to provide information for the birth family through the Letter Box system, or your child may have on going face to face contact. You will be asked to sign a written agreement regarding the agreed contact plan.

There is a duty on all local authorities to maintain a range of support services for children and adoptive families. This includes advice, information and counselling, financial support, training events, support groups and support for contact arrangements, social events and newsletters.

Adoptive families are entitled to receive on request an assessment of their needs for support services. Where services are agreed they may be provided through the Social Work Team, Adoption Service, Health or the Education Directorate or a combination of these and other agencies. In North Lincolnshire we have long been committed to supporting adoptive families through some of the services listed above. We remain committed to developing our services further to meet the support needs of adoptive families living in our area.

You may also have heard about the Adoption Support Fund and this is something that we can discuss with you and provide information on.



What adopters say about...

Eligibility

"I thought we'd be considered too old as people in our forties, but we were quickly made to feel that we might have a lot to offer a child."

"I simply didn't realise that single people can be approved for adoption."

"I thought that my own past would be bound to count against me. This proved to be far from the case."

"We really were pleasantly surprised to learn that we didn't have to be married or employed to be considered."

The Initial Visit

"We were both very apprehensive about the first visit. What if the social worker didn't like us? Instead the social worker was so helpful and encouraging that we soon felt at ease."

The Preparation Group

"It was not at all pushy – we got to know the full picture, both pluses and minuses."

"Everyone was on a level playing field."

"I really got a lot out of meeting experienced adopters. The rewards as well as the difficulties came across strongly. It made me more determined than ever to adopt."

"We thought we knew a lot about adoption, but now we are much more aware about attachment, the need for openness and birth parents feelings and we are more sympathetic now."

The Assessment

"It was nothing like as hard as I thought it might be. Even though it was very personal we felt very involved in our own home study and that we made a big contribution."

"It opens up a lot of stuff you haven't thought about. I started to take a fresh look at myself and my views about certain things."

"By the end we were much more prepared to consider the child retaining some contact with the birth family if it's thought to be in their interest."

The Adoption Panel

"I can't say I enjoyed attending as so much depended on the recommendation. But I was still glad that I had the opportunity to go and speak on my own behalf. The panel members were also very welcoming and fair."

Adoption Support

"We contacted Social Services again after six years when we were experiencing some difficulties with the children. Ringing up felt a bit like having failed. But if we hadn't sought the support when we requested it our son would not have got what he needed."

"The support we received helped us to step back and see things differently. We have been able to adjust our expectations of the children and tried new strategies which are now beginning to pay off."

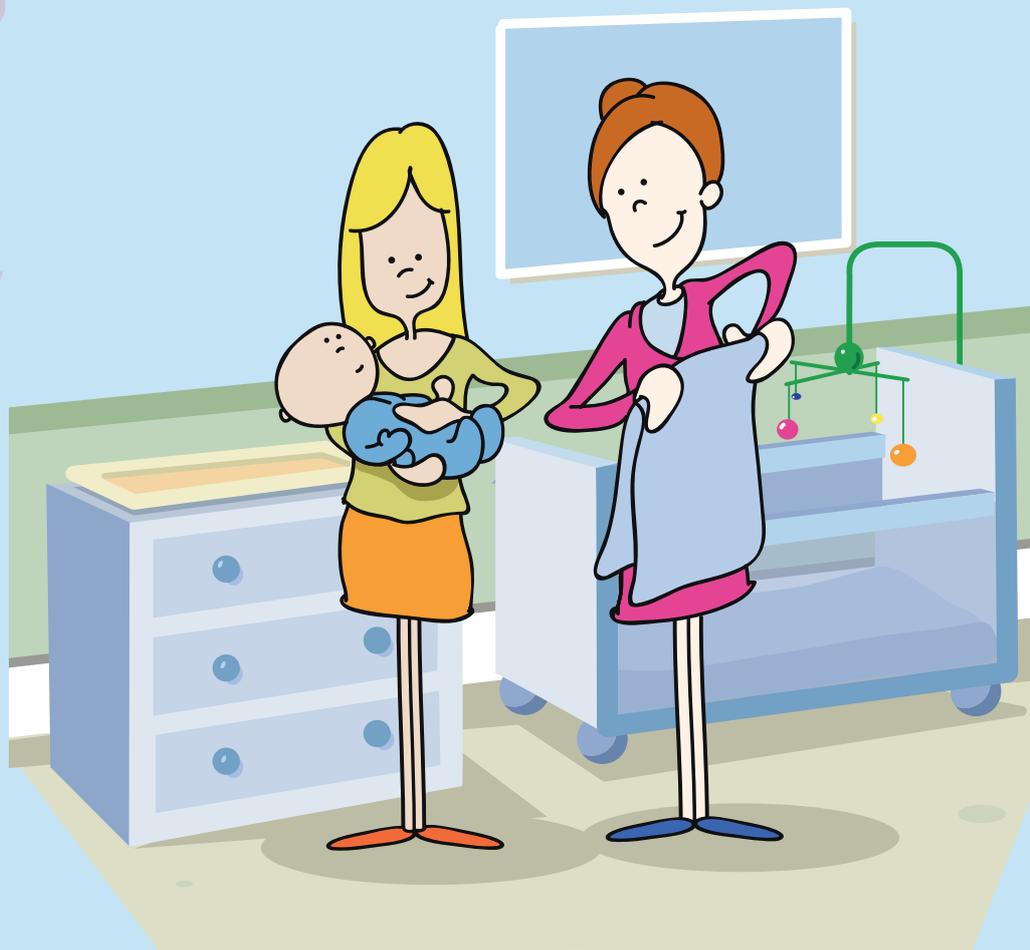
Financial issues

Parenting any child is expensive and making financial adjustments will need serious consideration when you are applying to adopt. You are expected to meet the general living costs of the child you adopt.

Some things to bear in mind:

- If you are in work and considering stopping work to be at home for the child, how will you manage with the loss of income?
- Have you discussed with your employer if you are able to take adoption leave / maternity leave and shared parental leave and, if so, under what terms?
- Once you have a child placed with you for adoption, you will be entitled to claim child benefit from the day the child was placed with you.

However, you may be able to get Adoption Financial Support which is means tested and depends on the needs of the child. You may also get help from your child's Agency with the initial "setting up" costs arising from the need for certain items and equipment. In addition you may receive help with the legal costs of adoption. This would be from your child's Agency.



Making a difference

Do something amazing... adopt with North Lincolnshire

Many children who are adopted, no matter their age, have lost something that is important to them and may need help to work through their feelings of sadness and loss. They may have experienced harm and learnt that adults cannot be trusted and find it hard to believe that their adopted parents love them, or that there is such a thing as that 'one safe place' to grow up in. We can understand why they feel this way – life has taught them not to expect otherwise and to expect to be hurt.

Young children can often have as much difficulty in settling into a new family as older children. Their development in terms of trusting and bonding may have been interrupted over and over again. They may have been frightened, worried, angry and powerless in situations where important adults have disappeared without warning and strangers have had to care for them. When they move to adoptive families they bring all these feelings with them, but may have no words to explain those feelings or to understand. Their only language is behaviour and often anger and fear are expressed in the kinds of behaviours adults find difficult. It takes time for children to learn to trust. Children may put up barriers when they are wary or apprehensive to protect themselves. This can be a hard time for new parents who want so much to love their children.

Here are some examples of adoptive parents who have worked hard to develop trusting and secure relationships and by doing so they have really made a difference to their child and their child's future.

Kate

Kate was five when she was placed with her adopters. Before moving to live with her adoptive parents she had lived in five different homes. The Court had decided that adoption was the right plan for Kate as her birth mother had not been able to give Kate what she needed.

For the first eight weeks in her adoptive placement Kate settled really well. She did everything that was asked of her. She never complained and always wanted to do whatever her parents suggested. After six months together they went on holiday for a week and had a lovely time. When they came home things gradually started to change. Kate became very angry, showing controlling and defiant behaviour. Her parents would describe doing something nice with Kate, like going out for the day, but then as soon as they returned home she would 'kick off', usually by throwing things around and deliberately breaking her toys. Her parents took advice and support was in place. They were patient and even though it was hard they tried not to get angry or to push Kate away. They reassured her and told her they loved her. Even though there were times when they questioned if they did and how much longer they could go on. Then one day, Kate and her parents were sitting drawing and Kate had done a

picture of a man and woman. She then became angry and scribbled on the paper so hard that the pencil went through the paper. She went on to describe the man in the picture and the physical harm she had experienced from him. The woman in the picture was her birth mother. Kate told her parents that when she told her birth mother about the 'man', Kate and her 'first mummy' had gone away to the seaside but then later went back to the house where the man who had hurt Kate was living. Kate was angry with her 'first mummy' because this was when Kate was hurt again.

Kate is now 10 years old. She still gets angry but she has built up trust with her parents and is able to talk to them about how she is feeling. Her parents know that Kate will always have this anger and there are certain times when this might be triggered but they love her and state that they are a family and work through the difficult times together.

John

John was three years old when he went to live with his adopters. He had spent the first two years of his life with his birth parents. His early life was chaotic and he had spent a lot of time in a room where he could not move around. His basic care needs had not always been met, for example, the home environment was unsuitable and not safe, irregular meals and a general lack of care i.e. unclean clothing. Over time John built a loving relationship with his adopters. He was an active little boy and really enjoyed playing football with his adoptive dad. His weight was now what it should be and his speech had improved with the help of a speech therapist. He had regular meals and everyone who met John said what a confident and happy little boy he appeared to be. When John was 5 years of age, his parents started to notice that food was going missing from the fridge. After a few weeks his parents started to smell something unpleasant in his bedroom. When they explored they found a pile of food that John had taken from the fridge. He had not appeared to make any attempt at

eating it but had shoved it under a pile of toys under his bed. His Mum found this really hard to understand. She was worried that people would think that she was not feeding John and that was why he was taking food. Following advice, they went shopping with John and bought him a pack up box of his choice. With John, they put some acceptable snack food in the box, for example, breakfast bars and boxes of raisins. They chose food that would not decay. They then put the pack up box under John's bed. They told John that they would check the box every week and replace what had been eaten. They never had to replace anything as it was enough for John to know that there was food there if he needed. He stopped taking food from the fridge. His parents believe this was when he finally started to trust them to look after him and to make sure that he had what he needed. He no longer felt that he had to look after himself.



Sarah and Jim

Sarah was 8 months old when she was placed for adoption with her brother Jim who was 2 years old.

Sarah was a placid baby and a joy to care for. Her adopters could not believe how easy she made the transition to their care. Jim was a lively toddler who liked to have things his own way. It was very tiring for their adopters who were learning about being parents to two very young children and making the adjustments that this required. After three months they acknowledged that it was not how they thought it was going to be and that they were struggling to make a connection with Jim. They were worried because they had felt their connection to Sarah was instantaneous. However, with support, reassurance and time they slowly began to feel they were making a connection with Jim. When asked when they felt the turning point was for them, they cannot recall. They describe their relationship with Jim as something very gradual that developed over time. Although, his Mum remembers his first day at nursery and him walking off with his book bag. Just before he got to the door he turned around with a worried look and she waved and smiled and shouted out to him that she would be back at 3pm. She was stood outside nursery waiting to collect Jim at 2.30pm. She had not been able to stop thinking about how he was getting on all day. They both shared the biggest cuddle that day when Jim met his Mum waiting for him at the school gate.

Final words

When you are thinking of adopting a child, it is important to remember that you are adopting a person who is a child now, but who you will have to help through all their stages of development. Some children may need to regress to developmental stages that they have missed in order to be able to move forward. As they grow you will need to help them with the mixed feelings they have towards their birth family. No matter what has happened to a child, he or she is still biologically part of their birth parents. To feel good about themselves, she or he will need help in understanding and accepting what has happened.

The children who are placed for adoption have wonderful courage and resilience. We see the difference that patient, loving and committed parenting can make to a child. This makes all the difference in helping them to flourish and recover the positive healthy growth towards being happy adults.

Tell us what you think

We actively seek feedback from prospective adopters and others affected by adoption. We are always looking at ways to develop our services and so we welcome any feedback you would like to give. You can give this direct to your worker. Or, you can email the service manager directly at karen.everatt@northlincs.gov.uk. Alternatively, there is a feedback form on the North Lincolnshire Adoption Overview Webpage.

Most people are very satisfied with the Adoption Service from North Lincolnshire Council. However, we do want to know if you are not. Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will be able to place a child with you for adoption, we will make every effort to do so. If you are dissatisfied with the process and are unable to resolve this with your Adoption Social Worker, you can make a complaint.

You will receive a separate leaflet advising you about the complaints procedure.

Some final comments from adopters who have worked with North Lincolnshire

"We live in a different area but decided to come to North Lincolnshire because they placed our first child with us and we got an excellent service from them. Following us being approved at North Lincolnshire Adoption Panel we were matched with a child a month later!"

"Very good. Quick, good relationship with our Social Worker. Very pleased."

"We have found the whole process very enjoyable and relaxed. We have received excellent service, with no complaints."

"We have been listened to and given lots of information and questions have been answered."

"Our Social Worker was organised, sensitive and supportive throughout. We have been very pleased with the service we have received, especially given the geographical distances involved."



If Adoption is not right for you

If you decide that adoption is not right for you, there may still be a way through which you can make a positive difference to children or young people. For example, we are always looking for foster carers for children and young people, or carers who could provide a teenage with a supportive home environment as a bridge to eventual independent living. **You can find out more by speaking to the Fostering Service on 01724 297024**

Do something amazing...make a difference!

We look forward to hearing from you.

A & F

Contact us:

Tel: 01724 297024

Email: adoption.permanence@northlincs.gov.uk

Adoption Service
Church Square House
30-40 High Street
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN15 6NL

No English?

For information please call:

08000 193530 (Arabic) للحصول على المزيد من المعلومات اتصل بـ:

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Notes...

