



adoption   
*a heart*

Thank you for taking the first step into finding out more about adoption. Whether you are after more information, or are ready to start your adoption journey, we hope this information pack provides you with everything you need to know.



Adoption@Heart is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) where adoption services from Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall have come together to deliver adoption services across the region with a view to recruiting adopters, family finding for children and provide support to children and adopters.

It is designed to help speed up the adoption process, improve the life chances of those children waiting to be adopted, and improve adopter recruitment and support.

Adopters make a huge difference to children who normally have had a very difficult start in life. We are appealing for adopters who can give our children lots of individual time, understanding and ongoing support.

We are looking to recruit adopters from within a diverse section of the community, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, disability, race or faith.

From your initial enquiry, to that first meeting, right the way through to the end of your adoption journey and beyond, Adoption@Heart will support you every step of the way.



**Adoption is one of the biggest and most important decisions of your life. It's a life changing experience but one that is certainly rewarding.**

## WHAT IS ADOPTION?

Adoption is a legal process which transfers parental responsibility from the child's birth parents to their adoptive parents. Adopters will become the child's legal parents with the same rights and responsibilities as if the child was born to them.



### **What kind of adopters do our children need?**

Here at Adoption@Heart our children are looking for parents who can give them lots of individual time, understanding and on-going support. We are looking for a diverse section of the community, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, disability, race or faith.

Our children need parents who will help them know and value their birth history and be willing to have some form of on-going contact with the birth family. At first this sounds quite scary, but don't worry. We will support you through the entire process and your privacy will always be maintained.

## **We would like you to adopt if...**

- You are **21 years of age** or over
- You have a **spare bedroom**
- You can **financially support a child**
- You have lived in the UK for **12 months** or longer
- You have **no criminal convictions or cautions relating to violence towards children or adults** - there are many convictions and cautions that may exclude applicants, but we need to understand the context of all to assess suitability
- We would like you to be a **non-smoker** if you wish to adopt a child under 5
- We would like one main carer able to take at least **6 months leave from work**





## ROUTES INTO ADOPTION

### Traditional route

Children come into care for several reasons and usually when they have experienced or are at risk of significant harm (physical, emotional sexual abuse or neglect).

Children's Services are given powers by the court to ensure the child is cared for safely. This often means the child is placed with foster carers.

Assessments will be undertaken with birth families to help understand their capacity to parent their child. If it is decided that the parents or extended birth family are unable to care for the child, the child's plan will become one of adoption.

This plan will be presented to court and if the court agrees they will make a placement order that gives Children's Services the power to place a child with prospective adoptive parents.

The adoption agency will identify a family who they believe can meet all the child's needs throughout their life.





## **Early permanence**

Here at Adoption@Heart, we also look at a different route into adoption known as early permanence.

For some children the plan of adoption is known at a very early stage, so an early permanence placement is considered.

This is a means of placing a child with prospective

adopters who are also approved as foster carers at an earlier stage whilst assessments of the family and court processes are ongoing.

At the end of the proceedings, if the courts decide to make a placement order for the child, the placement then becomes an adoptive one.

# THE ADOPTION PROCESS

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## Pre-Stage 1



Register and attend an  
**information event**

Complete your  
**Expression of  
Interest** form

We will call and have a  
**brief conversation** about  
your circumstances



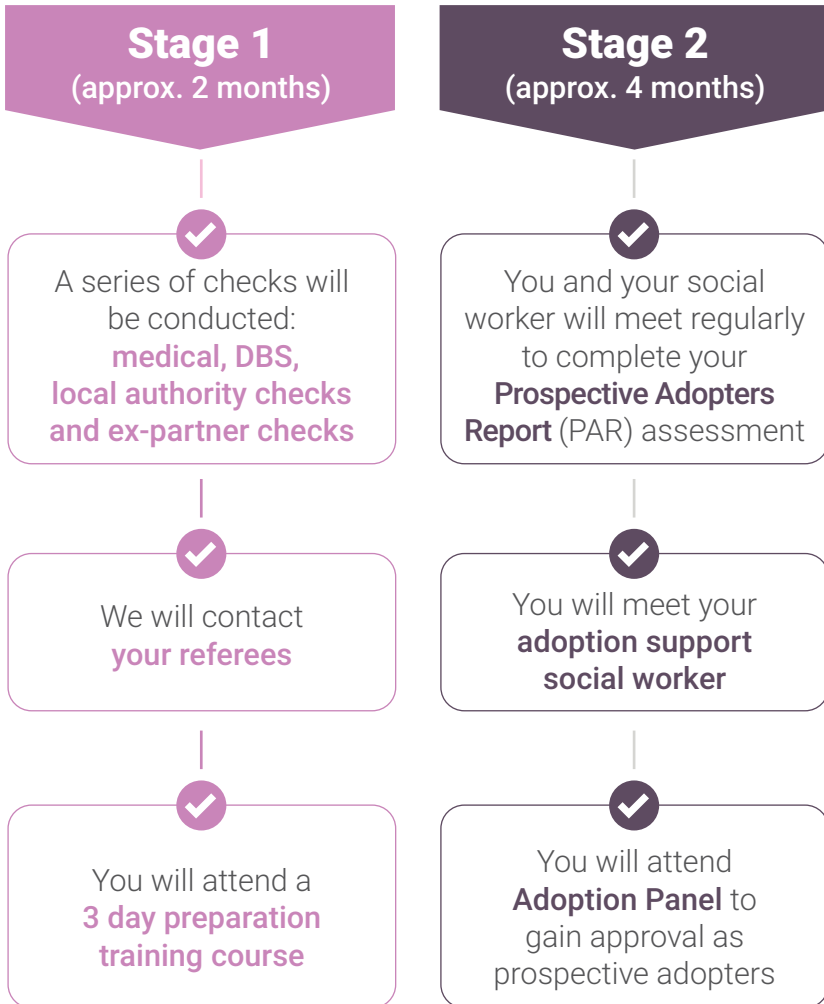
We will meet you  
**at your home** to find out  
more about you



We may then invite  
you to complete a  
**Registration of  
Interest** form



# Preparing you for your adoption journey



## MATCHING

Matching is key to the long term success of adoptive placements. It is the process of identifying suitable approved adoptive parents for a child or children whose plan is adoption.

Our four local authorities have children with plans of adoption. Here at Adoption@Heart, we know the needs of the children we are finding families for and we know what types of adopters we need for our children.

Throughout your adoption journey, your social worker will already be thinking about matching you with our children. They will gain a better understanding of your strengths and what skills you possess that can help you better prepare for caring for a child.



Once you are approved as adopters, your social worker will meet with you and discuss potential matches. They will provide you with lots of information about the child or children including: their background, health and development and what contact arrangement is in place with members of the child's birth family post adoption.

You will meet with the child's social worker and foster carers and have a visit arranged to meet with the child known as a 'chemistry visit'. This gives everyone involved the chance to get to know each other.

If everyone agrees that the match should go ahead, it will be presented to our Adoption Matching Panel, who will make a recommendation about the proposed match. The Agency Decision Maker from the child's Local Authority will make the final decision, considering reports presented to panel alongside panel's recommendation.

Once the match is agreed, a period of introductions with you and the child will be

arranged during which you will be introduced to them as their adoptive parent/s.

The timing and length of these introductions varies depending on the needs and age of the child – don't worry, a social worker will be with you offering support and guidance every step of the way.



When the child has moved into your home, you begin the process of adjusting to be a family unit. If after 10 weeks, everyone agrees the placement is working well, you apply to the courts for an Adoption Order which legally transfers parental responsibility from the Local Authority to you as parents. The child must live with you for at least 10 weeks before this can happen.

## SUPPORT

### **We will support you every step of the way**

Adoption@Heart understands that the adoption journey for both the child and their parents is a lifelong process that will often have many ups, downs and challenges along the way.

During stage 2 of the adoption process, you will be allocated your own adoption

support worker who will support you through the linking, matching and placement of a child.

However, support for families continues to be available should you wish to access it after the legal part of your adoption journey ends and throughout your child's life.



## Below is a snapshot of the support services we provide:

- ✔ Monthly adopter's support group
- ✔ Family fun days and social events that take place throughout the year
- ✔ Newsletter
- ✔ Support with facilitating contact arrangements and letter box contact
- ✔ LGBT+ adopters can become individual members of New Family Social for free
- ✔ Assessment of adoption support needs
- ✔ Parenting support on adoption issues
- ✔ Adoption focussed parenting programmes
- ✔ Access to a range of therapeutic interventions including; Theraplay, DDP, Therapeutic Life Story Work
- ✔ Advice and consultation provided by the Adoption@Heart Clinical Psychologist and Therapist
- ✔ Life story work through training workshops and individual specialist therapist support
- ✔ Workshops to help you learn and use therapeutic play techniques
- ✔ Training on adoption issues such as parenting teenagers and talking to your child about adoption



## DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT...

“ If anyone is considering starting the adoption process, we would encourage them to take the first step and attend an information event to find out more. This process could change your life forever. ”

“ Having adopted two children, hearing them call you dad and knowing that you will be there for them throughout their lives makes me feel like that as a family we can do anything and be happy. All they want is to be safe and loved. We have plenty of that to go around. ”

“ We wouldn't swap them for anything in the world. We constantly tell them that we needed them more than they needed us. They completed our family and they now appreciate how special being an adopted child is. ”



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