

## What is adoption?

Sometimes, for lots of different reasons some children cannot live with the family they were born into.

Adoption means joining a new family and living with them until you grow up. Lots of children are adopted every year, so please don't feel that you are on your own. If you want to meet other children who have been adopted, ask your social worker to arrange this for you.

## Who decides if I should be adopted?

A judge and a court may decide that the best thing for you is to grow up within a new family. A court is a building where a judge makes decisions about things, including where and who you should live with and whether or not you should be adopted.



To help the court and the judge to make a decision they will ask lots of people to tell them about you. Your social worker and someone called a children's guardian will talk to you about being adopted and what it might be like. They will also ask you what you think and how you feel about being adopted. You can ask any questions that you want.

If you are not happy please tell your social worker or someone else such as your foster carer or independent visitor. Sometimes it can take a long time for the court to make the right decision for you. Your social worker will talk to you about how long this might take.

## Is adoption different to fostering?

Yes. Being adopted is different to being fostered. Adoption means you will have new parents and possibly other relatives, such as new grandparents, brothers, sisters and cousins. These people will become your forever family.

## Who finds a new family for me?

Your social worker and a group of people known as an adoption panel will help to find a new family for you. The adoption panel will ask your social worker to tell them about you and what your wishes are. The adoption panel will need to know what kind of family you would like to live with and what kind of family will look after you best. If you want to tell the adoption panel anything about yourself or the type of family you would like ask your social worker or foster carer to help you. You can even write a letter or make videotape to show the Adoption Panel if you like.

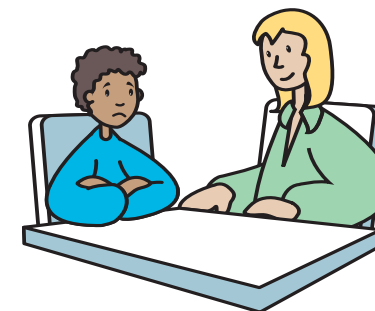
## What about my birth family?

The court will listen to everyone involved before they decide if adoption is the best thing for you. Birth parents and family can still love you even if it is not safe for you to live with them.

When children go to live with new families it does not mean that you forget about your birth family. Talk to your social worker about how you feel about keeping in contact with members of your family and people who are important to you.

## How do you feel?

Sometimes you might feel sad or unhappy about being adopted. If this is the case and you want to talk to someone you can phone any of the people on the contact card or on the list of people included on this leaflet.



If you want to have someone who is separate from social services or the court you can ask for an independent advocate to help you to make sure that you are listened to. You can ask your social worker or foster carer to help you or you can telephone the Advocacy Service yourself on 01253 290049

## Where will I meet my new family?

Your social worker will talk to you about your new family and tell you what they are like. They will show you some photographs of your new family before you get to meet them. If you are happy with this, your social worker will then arrange for you to meet your new family. This meeting usually takes place where you live now, but could be somewhere else if you prefer.



You will probably feel anxious about this meeting, so talk to your foster carer and social worker about your feelings. You will get lots of opportunities to spend time with your new family to make sure they are the right family for you.

We understand that you might be worrying about lots of things...everything is new and unfamiliar...you may feel sad about things that you are leaving behind...but you may also feel a bit excited about all the new things that you will experience. Talking about your feelings often helps you to understand things a bit better.

## What is an adoption order?

If you are happy living with your new family after about 6 months you and your new family will go to court to get something called an "Adoption Order". At the court you will meet a judge who will decide whether or not you should be adopted. You may feel scared but there is no need to be. It won't take too long and the judge will explain things to you. Most children say that it is a happy occasion and most families mark the occasion with a celebration.

### What if I am not happy?

If you are unhappy about the way your social worker or the Adoption Agency has handled your adoption try to talk things over with your foster carer, new family or independent advocate. If you are still not happy and wish to make a complaint you can contact The Commission for Social Care Inspection tel: 01257 236850.



## Important Phone Numbers

- Social Worker 01253 477666
- Children's Advocacy Service 01253 290049
- Voice of the Child in Care Freephone: 0808 800 5792  
Email: [info@vcc-uk.org](mailto:info@vcc-uk.org)
- National Youth Advocacy Service Freephone 0800 616 101
- The Manager of the Adoption Service 01253 477649
- The Commission for Social Care Inspection 01257 236850
- Emergency Services 999

**If you would like to have this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio-cassette, computer disc or if you would like this leaflet in another language, including British Sign Language, please telephone 01253 477291.**

# Your **Guide** to **Adoption**

