



Family Care

Adoption Services

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Tick a box and help a child today



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What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal process that permanently transfers all rights and responsibilities for a child or children from the family that s/he has been born into to another family who have been chosen for them.

Adoption is for life, so choosing adoption for a child is a major decision. It affects not just the children themselves, but also their birth families and their adoptive families.

An Adoption Order will eventually be granted by Court, but before this can happen several other professional workers are involved:

- A Social Worker to assess the adopters, and prepare them for the arrival of their new child.
- A Social Worker to work with the child to prepare him for meeting and moving into a new family.
- A Guardian ad Litem who is appointed by the Court and is an independent worker for the child. S/he will talk to everyone involved and report back to Court.
- An independent counsellor to work with the Birth Family if they want this.
- A Court Judge to hear and grant the Adoption Order.



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Who Needs Adoption?

There are children in Northern Ireland needing adoptive families now.

Some are babies or very young children, while others are older and may have started school. Some children have a brother or sister and they need to live together.

These children have not had an easy start in life. They have been separated from the families that they were born into and are living with foster families.

Many of the children have suffered neglect or abuse, and may have delayed development or behavioural issues to deal with because of this.

All of the children need a new family of their own. They need the love and attention of parents who are fit and healthy and full of life.

Most of the children will still need to have information about their birth families, and may need to meet up with birth parents and siblings occasionally. Some may need to see other relatives such as grandparents or previous foster carers.

We have been placing children for adoption for many years, and we know how much children can develop and flourish in the right family. We have also seen how much it can mean to a family to have a new child to care for.



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Who can Adopt?

All kinds of people can adopt: You could be married or single, of any religious background, a first time parent or an experienced parent whose children are past the early years stage. You might be approved by another Agency and waiting to adopt.

Adopters need to be healthy and fit, so you will be asked to have a medical examination. If you have a health condition, we will need to discuss this with you in case it is relevant to your making an application.

If you are having fertility investigations or treatments, these will need to have ended before an assessment for adoption can begin.

You will be given time to come to terms with your feelings about this before starting into the emotional issues involved in an assessment to adopt.

We will also need your permission to carry out a Police and Social Services records check, as the legislation requires this. Anyone living with you aged 10 years and over will also have to have these completed.

If you have children we will meet with them as part of the assessment process. If your children are to a former relationship we will usually need to speak to your previous partner also.

If you have any worries or queries about your own situation, we would be very happy to meet with you to talk these over.



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How do you go about Adopting?

We will give you information about adoption and the opportunity to meet with an Adoption social worker. If you and the Agency agree that adoption is right for you, you will be invited to complete an application form.

With your permission, the Agency will complete a Police and Social Services check and request any relevant information regarding infertility, while you will need to have a medical examination. If these are satisfactory we will begin the assessment. If there are issues, we will discuss these with you before deciding if we can continue.

The assessment will be a succession of interviews exploring the strengths and challenges which you can bring to becoming an adoptive parent, and the needs of children in adoption. You will also attend a Preparation Course.

We will interview the personal Referees whom you have nominated and your employer if you work with children.

If you have children we will meet with them as part of the assessment. If they were born to a former relationship we will usually need to speak to your previous partner also.

When the assessment is complete you can read it before it is presented to the Adoption Panel. They will make the final decision about approving you as adoptive parents. If you are not approved we will explain the reasons for this. Once you are approved you will be reviewed every six months, but you may be matched with a suitable child/ren before that time.

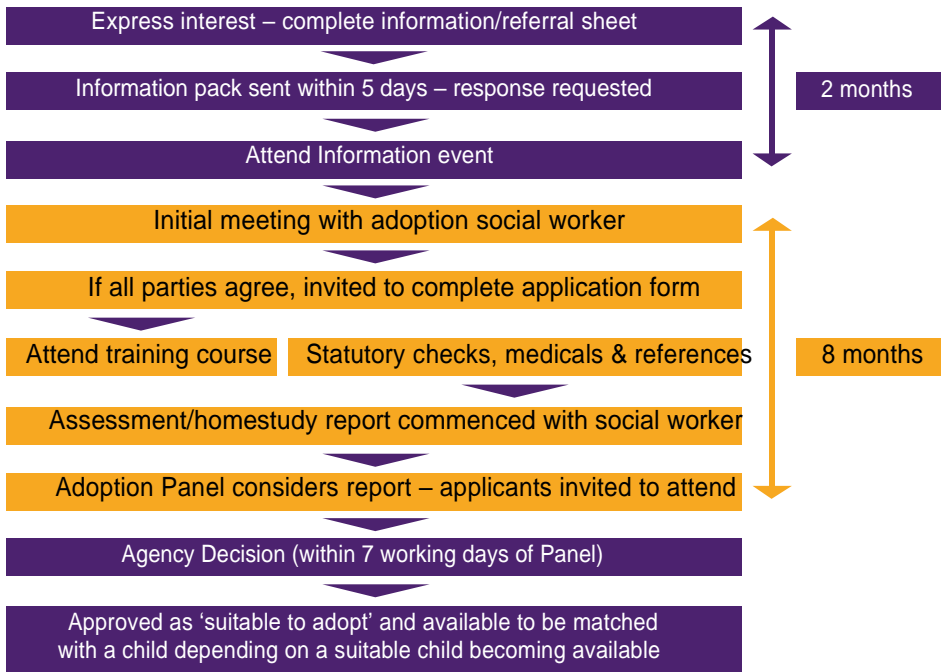


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How long does Adoption take?



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When will I be adopted?

Once you are approved as adoptive parents, your Social Worker will keep in touch with you to share information about suitable children. You will get details about health, background, and the reason that adoption has been chosen.

If you are interested in finding out more, you will be able to speak to the child's Social Worker and others who know the child. You can also get additional medical and developmental information from the Agency Medical Advisor.

If it is agreed that you are the right parents for the child, a Matching report will go to an Adoption Panel who approve the placement. Introductions will be organised between you and your new child, and a date agreed for moving in.

Learning to live together is a big adjustment and will take some time. Your Social Worker will visit every week for at least six weeks, and the child's Social Worker will also visit. Informal support is always available and there are formal monthly reviews to see how things are going.

After a few months we will talk to you about applying to Court and will help you to complete your application. A report is written by both Social Workers, and a Guardian ad Litem is appointed to independently assess the child's welfare.

On the day of the Adoption Hearing, you will all go to Court to hear the Order being granted, and later on you will be able to get a Certificate in your child's new adoptive name.



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Who will support us after Adoption?"

Once you have adopted you are not on your own, our Post Adoption Support Worker can offer you a supportive and non-judgmental service. If you ask for help and support this will be viewed as a strength not as a problem.

We can provide help for adoptive families in talking about adoption, dealing with concerns about school, addressing behavioural issues etc. We also run or can access ongoing training information sessions and workshops.

We will support your adopted child in dealing with information about their past and understanding their identity.

We can give you information about other services available. We can help you to prepare for and participate in birth family contact, and can also assist with indirect contact by exchanging letters with birth family members.

We know that parenting any child is demanding, but for adoptive parents there may be additional challenges.

Some children in adoption have ongoing needs coming from their early experiences, especially those who have joined their new family when they are older.

We know that caring for children with extra needs is a lifelong commitment, and we expect that families parenting a child through adoption may need help at sometime during their childhood.



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