

A young person's guide to adoption support



ADOPT
LONDON
WEST



We hope that being adopted means you'll have good times with your family. However we also understand that being adopted can be tough – it can make you feel confused, overwhelmed and sometimes sad. We've created this leaflet to tell you about where you can find help and support.

Why are children adopted?

Some people find it hard to be parents and don't always have the right knowledge or information about how to look after children properly or safely. This is why social workers may need to get involved if parents are having problems looking after children over a long time, or if children might end up being hurt in their parents' care.



If children are not cared for properly then social workers sometimes have to find new parents who will be able to give them the love and care that they need.

Social workers believe the following things are important:

- You have the right to grow up as part of a loving family that will care for you properly.
- You should not stay with adults that can't make you feel safe and protected, or that cannot take care of you.
- Your wishes and feelings are very important and you should always be asked what you think and be listened to.
- You should be able to live with your brothers and sisters, if you have any.
- Your background including your culture and religion are important.
- It is not good for you to wait a long time for a new family.
- Social workers should be available to support you and your new family for as long as you need.

Social workers think that the following things are important for people who want to adopt children:

- Adoptive parents should be kind, understanding and be able to keep you safe.
- They should be able to cope with any problems that you may have.

- They should be able to ask others for help when you need it.
- They should stand by you when there are difficult times, as well as when there are good times.
- They should be fun, and have a sense of humour.
- They should not smack you.
- They should help you to stay in touch with important people in your life.

How do social workers find new parents?

There are a number of different things that need to happen to find new parents for a child, and all of this can take some time.

First a social worker needs to find out everything about you and write the most important things down in a report. This will help them know what would be the best family for you. Social workers also have to find out all about people who want to be adoptive parents. They check that they would be good at caring for you by asking them lots of questions and writing this down in a report.

When social workers find a family that they think will be right for you, they ask people at a special meeting called a Panel meeting if they agree. The Panel are a group of people who know a lot about choosing the best families for children.

When do children move to live with adopters?

Once everyone agrees that the right family has been found for you, you will spend time with them so everyone can get to know each other. After some time, and when everyone is ready, you will move into their home to live with them. This is usually a happy time for everyone, but we understand it can also be quite frightening for children as well.

It takes time to get used to living in a new house and with a new family. Social workers will continue to talk and listen to you, to make sure you are happy.

What happens next?

Everyone who is involved with you thinks very carefully about the plan that you should be adopted before it is agreed. It is a very big step to take if children cannot be brought up with their own birth family. That is why a lot of people are involved to help to make the right plan for you.

When you have lived with your family for a while your new parents will ask a Judge to agree that they can become your new family. The Judge will listen to what everyone wants, and if they agree that you should be adopted then they will give what is called an Adoption Order, which makes you a member of your new family.

It can be difficult to understand why adoption takes so long, but because it is forever it's very important and needs to be done properly. This might all seem very complicated to you, so if you do not understand anything please ask us and we will be happy to explain things to you.

After you have been adopted, social workers think that you should expect the following:

- A life story book. This is a book which is all about you, your family and the things that have happened to you in the past.
- A later life letter. This is a letter given to you when you are older. It explains in more detail why you were adopted.

- To know that your birth parents and other important family relatives are well, and will be offered any help and support that they might need.
- Contact with members of your birth family where everyone agrees this would be helpful for you. This may be by letter or by the occasional meeting.
- Regular visits from a social worker before an Adoption Order is made, and continuing support for you as long as you and your new parents need it.

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Who can you contact if you are unhappy or want to talk?

We know that being adopted may not always be easy and there might be things that you don't understand or would like help with. It makes a difference to talk to someone who knows what it means to be adopted.

We have specialist social workers who know a lot about adoption and who work with adopted children, young people and their families. They are able to help you understand your adoption, to listen to your views and feelings, and to talk to you.

Here are some of the things that you might want help with understanding:

- Your life story and why you were adopted.
- Information about your birth family.
- Help arranging to keep in touch with brothers and sisters, your birth mum or dad, and other relatives and friends.
- Managing your feelings. Sometimes you might feel angry, sad or confused.

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- Coping with school. Some children who are adopted find school very difficult and need extra help.
- Keeping you safe from anything that upsets you, such as bullying or getting into trouble.

You can ask your parents about any of these things. They might be able to help you themselves or they may know where to go to find out more. You or your parents can also contact the adoption support team and we will help answer these questions.

Email: Adoptlondonwest@ealing.gov.uk

We also arrange fun things for you and your family to do, including meeting up with other adopted children, young people and their families.

If you would like to talk to someone else about any of these things now, or any time in the future, we can arrange for you to talk to an **Independent Advocate**, this could be a parent, a family member, a carer, key worker, or teacher. They could help and support you to get your views across about decisions that have been made for you, and to provide options which will help you make choices.



Useful contact details



We want to make sure you have lots of information about your rights, and the contact details of all the people who can listen to you and help you as much as possible. Your adoption story could be similar or very different to what's described in this booklet. You may be unhappy about what is happening, and want to tell someone about it. Or you might have a suggestion on how we can do things better. Whatever your reason, here is a list of independent people and organisations who would welcome a call or email from you.

Talk Adoption offers a free helpline and confidential email for young people under the age of 26. They give advice on anything about adoption and you do not have to give your name to them.
Email: Action@talkadoption.org.uk
Call: **0800 808 1234**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner promotes the rights, views and interests of children. They help children and young people who find it hard to make their views known. You can call them on: **0800 528 0731** or email help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Childline provide a free helpline for all children. Call **0800 1111** www.childline.org.uk

The National Youth Advocacy is a charity that provides advocacy and legal help to children and adults Call: **0800 616 101**

www.kooth.com is a website for children and young people aged 11–25 years old. They offer a free online counselling service, and they won't tell anyone that you have called. So you can talk to them about adoption or anything else that is worrying you in confidence.

Ofsted oversees all the adoption agencies to make sure they are doing a good job. You can call them to talk about anything that you are not happy about. Call: **0300 123 1231**, email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or you can write to them: **Ofsted Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.**

Comments, complaints and compliments

Even though it can be hard to speak up when you are not happy, we hope you will find a way to tell us what is going wrong. That is how we learn to make our services better for children and young people.

If you want to share your views or feedback on the service you have received, or if you want to complain about any services that you have received from Adopt London South and don't feel that we have helped you, please contact email: Adoptlondonwest@ealing.gov.uk

If you need this leaflet in an alternative format or a different language please contact us.